

Podcast Episode 7: Baptism

QUESTION: Who needs to be baptized, why is it so important, and what is the proper way to baptize?

DENVER: Baptism has always been required from the days of Adam until the present. Baptism is always the sign of acceptance of what it is that God is doing, a penitence, that is turning and facing God, and then walking in a new path. From the days of Adam, it will continue through the end of the millennium. And whenever there has been a believing people upon the earth, they have always been invited to partake of the ordinance of baptism as a sign of their faith.

How then does the authority to baptize come? Well, once John the Baptist came and laid his hands on Joseph, we've had a practice of continuing that and we ought to continue that. But before any of you baptize any other of you, do this-- do this: It's the same thing that Alma did in Mosiah, chapter 18. If you go back to Mosiah, chapter 18, before he baptized, Alma took Helam (this is Mosiah 18:12): *"...stood forth in the water, and cried, saying: O Lord, pour out thy Spirit upon thy servant, that he may do this work with holiness of heart. And when he had said these words, the Spirit of the Lord was upon him"* [verses 12-13]. He got the authority to baptize.

If you're going to use the priesthood, no matter what the church has told you and no matter what quorum leaders and respected others including your own father, perhaps, have taught you-- before you do so, ask God to give you the authority. And if you get it, you get it from Him. And then you're not dependant upon someone else. But get the authority from Him.

Power is required. It must come from Christ. The pattern must be followed. John the Baptist, when he restored the authority in Joseph Smith, verse 69 (*Joseph Smith History* 1:69) said that it *"...holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness."*

The gospel of repentance is returning to face God. Baptism by immersion is for the remission of sins. And John's declaration does not say that it will not be taken from the church; it says that it will be not taken from the *earth*. It was restored to remain on the earth. And no matter what happens among those that choose to abuse one another, it needs to be preserved by a faithful few, so that it doesn't cease from the earth.

It is still here, though it has been much neglected and it has been much abused. But with you, renew it. Renew it using Alma's example. He'd been previously ordained as one of the priests in wicked King Noah's court, and he had been ordained by him precisely because he was wicked. He qualified-- he was corrupt. Noah wanted him, and so he got ordained. But before he undertook to use the authority, he asked God to give him power. And God, seeing penitence on the earth, respected it and poured out His Spirit upon him so that Alma could baptize with authority. And the proof of that consisted not merely in what it was that Alma experienced with the Spirit empowering him to perform the ordinance, but it consisted also in the effect that the ordinance itself had upon both Helam and Alma, who himself went into the water at the same time. The Spirit was poured out upon them.

Continuing then with what Christ said: *“And he said unto them: On this wise shall ye baptize; and there shall be no disputations among you. Verily I say unto you, that whoso repenteth of his sins through your words, and desireth to be baptized in my name, on this wise shall ye baptize them—Behold, ye shall go down and stand in the water...”* [3 Nephi 11:22-23]. I would recommend if it is at all possible, that the water for a living ordinance be living water. I would get out of the buildings that are built by the hands of men and I would use the things of God. You're trying to connect to God. Use the things that He has made.

I recognize there may be circumstances where that becomes impossible. I've been baptized twice-- once in the Atlantic and once in a stream in the Little Cottonwood Canyon. Both times it was so cold my lips were blue. And I recognize that some of you hearty people may not want to experience a baptism that invigorates you to the point of turning your lips blue, but I would recommend when you go down and stand in the water, that it be living water.

“And in my name shall ye baptize them. And now behold, these are the words which ye shall say, calling them by name, saying: Having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen” [3 Nephi 11:23-25]. When I was baptized into the LDS church, the baptismal prayer was, “Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in name of the Father...” When I was rebaptized, I was rebaptized by one who had authority from Christ. Therefore, in that baptism, the words were, “Having authority of Jesus Christ...”

If all you are going to do is baptize someone again according to the LDS pattern with a commission in a church, don't bother doing it. But if you follow these principles, and if the Spirit empowers you to baptize, then baptize having authority from Christ. And follow His words. We've deviated long enough. It's time to return.

“And then shall ye immerse them in the water, and come forth again out of the water. And after this manner shall ye baptize in my name; for behold, verily I say unto you, that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one; and I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one. And according as I have commanded you thus shall ye baptize” [3 Nephi 11:26-28].

I’m telling you in the name of the Lord, that that commandment is renewed again, by Him, today to you. This is His command. Do it on this wise. Any-- ANY who desire to be baptized, should be baptized. If you have this authority and you practice this, and anyone comes to you, baptize them. Refuse no one. Freely you get from God, therefore, freely give to others. Do not charge to perform an ordinance. The ordinance is between them and God and they need to have it performed between them and someone God has asked to do it. You become the people God asks to do it.

Before baptism, teach them the doctrine of Christ, which Christ immediately discusses following His instruction on baptism. *“Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will declare unto you my doctrine. And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me. And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God. And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father; and whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also; and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost” [3 Nephi 11:31-35].* That’s the purpose of the baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. The doctrine of Christ is connected to this so that once baptized, you can have the testimony of the Father concerning His Son shed upon you by the power of the Holy Ghost.

“And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things. And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them. Therefore, go forth unto this people, and declare the words which I have spoken, unto the ends of the earth” [3 Nephi 37-41]. This is Christ’s doctrine-- nothing more, and certainly nothing less.

The doctrine of Christ requires that we repent and be baptized. This is the sign He asks to demonstrate faith in Him. Faith requires action, or dwindles and is lost. The importance to the Lord that we act on His doctrine cannot be overstated. Repentance and baptism are directly related to salvation and cannot be left undone.

Christ declared His doctrine in 3 Nephi 11:32-40. His doctrine came from His Father, and mentions baptism four times. Only the first is positive. The three subsequent times, it is negative. The first time: *“And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God”* [verse 33].

The second time: *“And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned”* [verse 34].

The third time: *“And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things”* [verse 37].

And the fourth time: *“And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God”* [verse 38].

This is a 3:1 ratio of negative warning to positive promise. I do not believe the Lord or His Father are negative. This approach is more reflection on us, than on Them. God is extraordinarily positive. But we need the clarity of being told the downside, and to be warned because unfortunately, a positive promise does not adequately motivate us.

Immediately following His doctrine, Christ warns against rejecting, changing, adding to or altering His doctrine. *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them”* [verse 39-40].

His doctrine also includes this commandment: *“Therefore, go forth unto this people, and declare the words which I have spoken, unto the ends of the earth”* [verse 41]. This is what He commanded to be declared unto the ends of the earth before the sermon that we got at Bountiful that mirrored the Sermon on the Mount. If you believe this doctrine of Christ, you’re required to be baptized and then declare Christ’s doctrine to others.

The first time I was visited by the Lord, He showed me just how significant baptism is to abide the day of His return. He showed me baptism is of central importance to preparing for His return.

What He revealed did not seem to involve the baptism offered by the LDS church. At the time, I was a devout Latter-Day Saint and did not understand how that could be possible. He revealed future events and therefore, for me to understand, more time needed to pass. The things I saw did not appear to give any greater meaning to baptism offered by the LDS church than baptism by any other denomination. I've since come to understand that the form of baptism in the LDS church has been changed and no longer conforms to the doctrine of Christ. Like all other churches, that institution declares both more and less than Christ's doctrine and claims to establish it as His.

In the intervening years I've come to see that the baptism offered by you, this people, appears to be the only one offered on earth that meets the requirements of what I was shown by the Lord years ago. For this reason, it is important for us to baptize as many as will accept the doctrine of Christ. Since we do not ask others to become part of a new institution nor demand they accept anything other than the doctrine of Christ, we can and should baptize anyone willing. We must invite others to join us in baptism. However great or little our success, others must be invited. Right now, what is most important is to preach the doctrine of Christ and baptize people, so that we at least have someone living at the Lord's return.

Baptism began before 1830. While the mode of baptism by immersion remained constant, both the language and the purposes changed. The original baptism prayer set out in the church *Articles and Covenants* used the identical prayer found in the *Book of Mormon*. The words of the prayer, after calling the initiate by name, included "Having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you..." and so on. Those words were changed in the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants* to "Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you..." and so on. Once altered, the words were never changed back. The *Book of Mormon* commends one baptismal prayer given by Jesus Christ, and the *Doctrine and Covenants* commends a different prayer.

Proxy baptism of the living for the dead was added in 1840. Originally proxies of either sex could be baptized for both men and women. That later changed, and vicarious proxy work could be done on behalf of the same sex only.

The purpose of baptism grew from remitting sins and joining the church to include rebaptism as a means for rededication and purification, and rebaptism for the healing of the sick. Emma Smith was rebaptized in October 1842 for her health. In April of 1842, another additional clarification limited baptism and rebaptism for rededication for the living to be performed in living waters, like a lake, stream or river. Baptism for the dead or for the healing of the sick were only to be performed in a temple font. So you see, the practice of baptism expanded while Joseph was alive, even though it was perhaps the most stable feature of the original.

There was an example taken from the Book of Mormon in which Alma, who had been ordained in the court of King Noah-- he was chosen precisely because he was wicked. Alma, who probably had a line of authority that was compromised by wickedness that had intervened, went out to baptize Helam. And before he did so, he asked Heaven to give him the power to baptize. Okay? He got the power to baptize, and he baptized Helam.

Everyone who has been ordained in the LDS tradition, who fits in the category that President Boyd Packer in General Conference lamented (that we have done a good job of spreading the authority of the priesthood, but we've done a poor job of getting power in the priesthood)-- go out and obtain from Heaven the connection that gives the power in the priesthood. And let's have those who get the power from Heaven, let's have them go out and baptize again so that we know it is done with power and not done merely with an authoritative tradition, lacking in power that cannot be accepted by Heaven.

The evidence of Alma's authoritative baptism was the outpouring of the Spirit. There had been those who have been baptized and spent their life in mormonism, or some other sect mormon-related, who say they never felt like they had the confirmation of the Spirit. They have gone out, sought for, obtained power from Heaven, baptized, and the ordinances had an effect upon people. The purpose of renewing baptism is to take what may be a hollow gesture performed by people who have authority with no power, and turn it into an event with power that connects people to Heaven, so that we can renew the Restoration like it was renewed in the days of Alma, through Alma and in the model of the *Book of Mormon*.

I have learned, for example, that there were 24 people baptized on a single Saturday morning in the Boise River. Those were Latter-Day Saints renewing baptismal covenant-making between themselves and God. They didn't intend I think, by that, to depart from membership in the LDS church, but they did intend to reconfirm their commitment to the Lord. And I believe there's *Book of Mormon* precedent for that. I used the example of Alma and Helam from the *Book of Mormon* in which Alma, who had been ordained in the absolutely corrupt court of King Noah (he was ordained precisely because he was one of the priests that would be wicked with King Noah), decided that he was going to repent and he was going to renew his covenant. Before baptizing Helam, he prayed and asked God to give him the power to baptize. It was poured out, he baptized him, and despite the fact that the ordination was defective from an institutionally corrupt place, the baptism was honored and both of them received an outpouring of the Spirit.

If you are unconvinced by your original baptism, have someone renew their priestly ordination by petitioning to Heaven to give power to them. When the power is given, then go out and get baptized again, this time not just by the authority of the priesthood, but also by the authority of

Heaven-- the power of Heaven to renew a covenant. Renew the covenant of baptism as a sacrament between you and God, and then attend whatever church you will.

Christ lives. He is the One who redeemed all of us. He has a rightful claim as the Father of us all. In the resurrection, we come forth out of the grave as His children because He purchased, with His blood, our continued life. We symbolize that when we're baptized by going under the water and coming up again to be born again a new creature in Christ, as a preliminary ceremonial, necessary sign that we accept Him.

Take a look at *Doctrine and Covenants*, section 68, beginning at verse 25: *“And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents. For this shall be a law unto the inhabitants of Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized. And their children shall be baptized for the remission of their sins when eight years old, and receive the laying on of the hands”* [verses 25-27].

We believe and practice this doctrine of Christ. We practice baptism by immersion in living waters, meaning lakes, rivers, streams and oceans, where there is life. We prefer living waters for a living ordinance. We have authority from God to perform baptism and other ordinances, such as the sacrament. But we are not jealous with our authority and are willing to share it with any man who is willing to accept and follow the doctrine of Christ.

As to the commandment to be baptized, even Jesus Christ went to be baptized by John *“to fulfill all righteousness”* (Matthew 3:15). *“And now, if the Lamb of God, he being holy, should have need to be baptized by water, to fulfil all righteousness, O then, how much more need have we, being unholy, to be baptized, yea, even by water!”* [2 Nephi 31:5].

If any of you want to be baptized, you can request it through our website and someone local will respond. Baptism is an ordinance between you and Christ, and does not mean you are joining a formal institution, because we have no institution.

Christ's simple command to “follow me” was given repeatedly. Three times it's recorded in Matthew, twice it's recorded in Mark, once in Luke, and twice in John. Christ showed the way, and as part of that He was baptized to, according to his own mouth, “fulfill all righteousness.” It was only after Christ was baptized that the Father commended Jesus and said He was well pleased. Christ also had His disciples baptize His followers. You can read about that in John, chapter 4.

Christ spoke to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, and converted him by that contact. Following his conversion, Saul was healed of blindness, renamed Paul, and immediately baptized. Paul tied baptism to resurrection in Romans, chapter 6. He declared that to be baptized is to put on Christ, in Galatians 3. There is only one faith, and it is in only the one Lord whom we worship, and it requires one baptism to be included in the body of believers, according to Ephesians. Peter explained that baptism saves us in 1 Peter, chapter 3.

Christians who follow Christ will all be baptized. If you've not been baptized or would like to be baptized again, there are those who have authority to administer the ordinance who will travel to you, or there are some locally who are available to perform the ordinance. The ordinance is free, the service is provided without any charge or expectation of any gift or donation.

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #9 entitled "Marriage and Family" given in St. George, UT on July 26th, 2014 and Talk #10 entitled "Preserving the Restoration" given in Mesa, AZ on September 9th, 2014;
- his conference talk entitled "The Doctrine of Christ," given in Boise, ID on September 11th, 2016;
- a Q&A session entitled "A Visit with Denver Snuffer" held on May 13, 2015;
- a KUTV television interview that aired on June 15th, 2015;
- the presentation of Denver's paper entitled "Was There an Original," given at the Sunstone Symposium on July 29, 2016;
- a talk entitled "Zion Will Come" given near Moab, UT on April 10th, 2016;
- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #1 given in Cerritos, CA on September 21st, 2017 and Talk #2 given in Dallas, TX on October 19th, 2017.