

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



Edited by
Daniel H. Ludlow

*The History, Scripture, Doctrine, and Procedure
of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

Macmillan Publishing Company
New York

Maxwell Macmillan Canada
Toronto

Maxwell Macmillan International
New York Oxford Singapore Sydney



Copyright Brigham Young University, 1992.

Archived at Book of Mormon Central by Permission.

mercies of Christ, setting at naught the value of his atonement and the power of his redemption (Moro. 8:4–20).

The authority to baptize was restored by John the Baptist to Joseph Smith and Oliver COWDERY on May 15, 1829 (JS—H 1:68–72). From the early days of the restored Church, missionaries have been sent to “declare repentance and faith on the Savior, and remission of sins by baptism” (D&C 19:31; 55:2; 84:27, 74). “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not, and is not baptized, shall be damned” (D&C 112:29). This is the central teaching of the GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST (3 Ne. 11:31–40).

Consequently, persons coming into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at age eight or older are required to submit to baptism, even though they may have been previously baptized in other churches (D&C 22). Likewise, excommunicants undergo baptism again once they have qualified for readmission into the Church.

The form of the ordinance is prescribed in latter-day revelation, which makes clear that the baptism must be performed by a person who has priesthood authority and that it requires completely immersing the penitent candidate below the water and then bringing the person out of the water (3 Ne. 11:25–26; D&C 20:72–74). Baptism is followed by the LAYING ON OF HANDS for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Contemporary Church practice provides for the candidate to be interviewed and approved by an authorized priesthood official (usually the BISHOP or other officer presiding over the congregation or a MISSION official), who determines whether the applicant meets the qualifying conditions of repentance, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and an understanding of and willingness to obey the laws and ordinances of the gospel. It is also necessary that an official record of each baptism be kept by the Church.

Baptism may be performed in the font provided in many meetinghouses or in any body of water that is suitable for the sacred occasion and deep enough for complete immersion. The candidate and the person performing the ordinance will be dressed in plain and modest white clothing. The ceremony is unpretentious, typically attended by the candidate’s family, close friends, and interested members of the congregation. A speaker or two may offer a few words of instruction and joyous welcome to the candidate.

The earlier practice of rebaptism to manifest repentance and recommitment, or for a restoration of health in time of sickness, is no longer practiced in the Church.

Belief that baptism is necessary for the salvation of all persons who reach the age of accountability (D&C 84:64, 74) does not condemn persons who have died without the opportunity to hear the true gospel of Jesus Christ or to receive baptism from proper priesthood authority. Latter-day Saints believe that proxy BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD should be performed vicariously (1 Cor. 15:29; D&C 124:28–35, 127–128), and that it becomes effective if the deceased beneficiary accepts the gospel while in the spirit world awaiting resurrection (see 1 Pet. 3:18–20; 4:6; cf. D&C 45:54). This vicarious work for the benefit of previous generations, binding the hearts of the children to their fathers (Mal. 4:5–6), is one of the sacred ordinances performed in Latter-day Saint TEMPLES (D&C 128:12–13).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Meslin, Michel. “Baptism.” In *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Mircea Eliade, ed. Vol. 2, pp. 59–63. New York, 1987.
- Smith, Joseph Fielding. *Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol. 2, pp. 323–37. Salt Lake City, 1955.
- Talmage, James E. *AF*, pp. 109–42. Salt Lake City, 1984.

CARL S. HAWKINS

BAPTISMAL COVENANT

When a person enters into a Latter-day Saint baptism, he or she makes a covenant with God. Baptism is a “sign . . . that we will do the will of God, and there is no other way beneath the heavens whereby God hath ordained for man to come to Him to be saved” (*TPJS*, p. 198).

Candidates promise to “come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, . . . to bear one another’s burdens, . . . to mourn with those that mourn, and . . . to stand as witnesses of God . . . even until death” (Mosiiah 18:8–9). A person must enter this covenant with the proper attitudes of HUMILITY, REPENTANCE, and determination to keep the Lord’s commandments, and serve God to the end (2 Ne. 31:6–17; Moro. 6:2–4; D&C 20:37). In turn, God promises remission of sins, redemption, and cleansing by the Holy Ghost (Acts 22:16; 3 Ne. 30:2). This covenant is made in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

The baptized can renew this covenant at each SACRAMENT MEETING by partaking of the SACRAMENT. This continual willingness to remember Christ and to keep his commandments brings the Lord's promise of his Spirit and produces the "fruits" (Gal. 5:22) and "gifts" (D&C 46) that lead to ETERNAL LIFE.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Tripp, Robert M. *Oaths, Covenants and Promises*, pp. 11–19. Salt Lake City, 1973.

JERRY A. WILSON

BAPTISMAL PRAYER

The wording of the baptismal prayer used in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is prescribed in the earliest compilation of instructions for Church operations (D&C 20). When an individual is baptized, the person with the proper priesthood AUTHORITY goes down into the water with the candidate, raises his right arm to the square, calls the individual by the full legal name, and says, "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," and then immerses the candidate (D&C 20:73). A version of the prayer that differs only slightly from this was given by Jesus Christ to the NEPHITES and is recorded in the Book of Mormon (3 Ne. 11:25).

Earlier in the Book of Mormon there is a somewhat different account of the baptismal prayer that was spoken. When ALMA₁ in the second century B.C. established the Church among the Nephites, he prayed: "O Lord, pour out thy Spirit upon thy servant, that he may do this work with holiness of heart" (Mosiah 18:12). The baptismal prayer that followed emphasized the COVENANT represented in BAPTISM and the need for a subsequent baptism of the Spirit: "I baptize thee, having authority from the Almighty God, as a testimony that ye have entered into a covenant to serve him until you are dead as to the mortal body; and may the Spirit of the Lord be poured out upon you; and may he grant unto you eternal life, through the redemption of Christ, whom he has prepared from the foundation of the world" (Mosiah 18:13; *see* BAPTISM OF FIRE AND OF THE HOLY GHOST).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

It is informative to compare LDS practice and scriptural accounts with the Christian tradition as reported in E. C. Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, London, 1970.

JERRY A. WILSON

BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD

[This entry consists of two articles:

LDS Practice
Ancient Sources

The first article traces the development of the LDS doctrine of baptizing for the dead. In the second article, the dean of the Harvard School of Theology discusses the practice in ancient times.]

LDS PRACTICE

Baptism for the dead is the proxy performance of the ORDINANCE of baptism for one deceased. Joseph SMITH taught, "If we can baptize a man in the name of the Father [and] of the Son and of the Holy Ghost for the remission of sins it is just as much our privilege to act as an agent and be baptized for the remission of sins for and in behalf of our dead kindred who have not heard the gospel or fulness of it" (Kenney, p. 165).

The first public affirmation of the ordinance of baptism for the dead in the Church was Joseph Smith's funeral sermon for Seymour Brunson in NAUVOO in August 1840. Addressing a widow who had lost a son who had not been baptized, he called the principle "glad tidings of great joy," in contrast to the prevailing tradition that all unbaptized are damned. The first baptisms for the dead in modern times were done in the Mississippi River near Nauvoo.

Revelations clarifying the doctrine and practice have been given from time to time:

1. This was a New Testament practice (1 Cor. 15:29; cf. D&C 128; *see* BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD: ANCIENT SOURCES).
2. The ministry of Christ in the SPIRIT WORLD was for the benefit of those who had died without hearing the gospel or the fulness of it (1 Pet. 4:6; *see* SALVATION FOR THE DEAD).
3. Such baptisms are to be performed in temple fonts dedicated to the purpose (*TPJS*, p. 308; cf. D&C 124:29–35). In November 1841 the font