

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



Edited by
Daniel H. Ludlow

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of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

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BORN IN THE COVENANT

Latter-day Saints make several formal COVENANTS with God such as baptism, confirmation, ordination to the priesthood, and eternal marriage, commonly called temple marriage. A temple marriage or SEALING refers to the ceremony in which a man and a woman are married (sealed) to each other for TIME AND ETERNITY in a temple by the AUTHORITY of the holy priesthood. Children born to the couple after this marriage are automatically sealed to their parents eternally and are spoken of as having been born in the covenant.

Children born to parents not members of the Church or to members who have not been married (sealed) in a temple by priesthood authority are not born in the covenant. However, if these parents subsequently are sealed in temple covenants they can have their children sealed to them, and can secure the same eternal family ties as if all were born in the covenant.

For the eternal blessings of being sealed as a family member to be valid, each must remain faithful to his or her covenants.

[See also *Salvation of the Dead.*]

RALPH L. COTTRELL, JR.

BORN OF GOD

Born of God or “born again” refers to the personal spiritual experience in which repentant individuals receive a forgiveness of sins and a witness from God that if they continue to live the COMMANDMENTS and endure to the end, they will inherit ETERNAL LIFE. The scriptures teach that just as each individual is “born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit,” so must one be “born again” of water and the Spirit and be cleansed by the blood of Christ (John 3:5; Moses 6:59). To be born of God implies a sanctifying process by which the old or NATURAL MAN is supplanted by the new spiritual man who enjoys the companionship of the Holy Ghost and hence is no longer disposed to commit sin (Col. 3:9–10; Mosiah 3:19; *TPJS*, p. 51). When individuals are born again they are spiritually begotten sons and daughters of God and more specifically of Jesus Christ (Mosiah 5:7; 27:25). The Book of Mormon prophet ALMA₁ calls

this inner transformation a “mighty change in your hearts” (Alma 5:14).

LDS scripture and literature contain numerous examples of individuals who have undergone this process of spiritual rebirth. Enos relates that after “mighty prayer and supplication” the Lord declared that his sins had been forgiven (Enos 1:1–8). After King Benjamin’s discourse, the people said that the Spirit had “wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts,” and that they had “no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2). Of his conversion experience, Alma₂ says, “Nevertheless, after wading through much tribulation, repenting nigh unto death, the Lord in mercy hath seen fit to snatch me out of an everlasting burning, and I am born of God” (Mosiah 27:28). Similar experiences are recounted about King Lamoni and his father (Alma 19, 22). In an account written in 1832, the Prophet Joseph Smith describes his FIRST VISION as being significant not only for opening a new DISPENSATION of the gospel, but also for his personal conversion. He writes, “The Lord opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord and he spake unto me saying Joseph my son thy sins are forgiven thee. [A]nd my soul was filled with love and for many days I could rejoice with great joy and the Lord was with me” (PJS 1:6–7).

MORMON explains the “mighty change” that must occur if one is to be born of God. The first fruit of repentance is the BAPTISM of water and fire, which baptism “cometh by faith unto the fulfilling of the commandments.” Then comes a REMISSION OF SINS that brings a meekness and lowliness of heart. Such a transformation results in one’s becoming worthy of the companionship of the Holy Ghost, who “filleth with hope and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer” (Moro. 8:25–26).

LDS scriptures teach that spiritual rebirth comes by the GRACE of God to those who adhere to the principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ, namely, faith, repentance, baptism, and reception of the GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST. For the process to be genuine, however, one must be diligently engaged in good works, for as James says, “faith without works is dead; . . . by works [is] faith made perfect” (James 2:20, 22). A mere confession of change, or receiving baptism or another ordinance, does not necessarily mean that one has been born of God.

Other Christian faiths also emphasize the

importance of being “born again.” Unlike many of these, Latter-day Saints do not believe this experience alone is sufficient for SALVATION. Instead, the process of spiritual rebirth signals to Latter-day Saints the beginning of a new life abounding with faith, grace, and good works. Only by ENDURING TO THE END may the individual return to the presence of God. Those who receive the ordinance of baptism and are faithful in keeping the commandments may enjoy the constant presence of the Holy Ghost who, like fire, will act as a sanctifier, and will witness to the hearts of the righteous that their sins are forgiven, imparting hope for eternal life.

Persons who have experienced this mighty change manifest attitudinal and behavioral changes. Feeling their hearts riveted to the Lord, their obedience extends beyond performance of duty. President Harold B. LEE taught, “Conversion must mean more than just being a ‘card-carrying’ member of the Church with a tithing receipt, a membership card, a temple recommend, etc. It means to overcome the tendencies to criticize and to strive continually to improve inward weaknesses and not merely the outward appearances” (*Ensign*, June 1971, p. 8). Latter-day Saints believe that individuals who are truly born of God gladly give a life of service to their fellow beings—they share the gospel message, sacrifice their own time, energy, and resources for the benefit of others, and in general hold high the light of Christ, being faithful to all the commandments.

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ED J. PINEGAR

BRANCH, BRANCH PRESIDENT

A branch is generally the smallest organized congregation of the Church (normally fewer than two hundred members). At first, local Latter-day Saint congregations were known as “churches” (D&C 24:3; 26:1). Soon these units were more commonly called “branches” (D&C 72:23; 107:39), reflecting the manner in which they were formed—members sharing the gospel and creating new congregations in neighboring communities.

As the Church has grown, STAKES, composed of several large congregations known as WARDS,

are formed in centers of strength. In MISSION areas, DISTRICTS are composed of smaller congregations known as branches. Branches may also be found in stakes, typically in outlying communities where a smaller number of Church members can support only a less complete organization. In recent years a new kind of branch has emerged. In large urban centers an increasing number of ethnic minorities, isolated from the majority because of language and too small as a group to form a ward, have been organized as a branch. Furthermore, the Church has outlined programs that may be followed by isolated families or groups that are too small to form even a branch.

A branch is headed by a branch president, whereas a WARD is presided over by a BISHOP. Unlike the bishop, who must hold the office of HIGH PRIEST, the branch president need not be a high priest, but must be an ELDER in the MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD. The branch president and his two counselors have responsibilities similar to, and function like, a BISHOPRIC.

In the United States in 1990 there were 72 missions, 1,112 stakes, 7,750 wards, and 1,286 branches. Elsewhere there were 156 missions, 627 stakes, 2,786 wards, and 4,483 branches (*Ensign* 20 [May 1990]:22; *Deseret News 1991–1992*; Church Almanac, p. 94).

RICHARD O. COWAN

BRIGHAM YOUNG COLLEGE

President Brigham YOUNG founded Brigham Young College (BYC) in Logan, Utah, on July 24, 1877, just two years after he founded Brigham Young Academy (Brigham Young University from 1903) in Provo, Utah. Established to train the youth of the Church in northern Utah, southern Idaho, and western Wyoming, BYC had nearly 40,000 students in its forty-nine years of operation (1877–1926). At first a normal school primarily preparing elementary teachers (1877–1894), it then inaugurated college courses and for fifteen years granted bachelors’ degrees (1894–1909). During its final period (1910–1926), the school operated as a high school and junior college. With the Church Board of Education decision to discontinue its schools except Brigham Young University, Brigham Young College closed its doors in May 1926; gave its library to Utah State Agricultural College,