

## BAPTISM, AND WHY WE BLESS INFANTS.

This talk was given September 30, 2000 in the Sabbath meeting at Voree. Many outsiders were present that day for the blessing of my son Matthew, and was written to give them an understanding of why we bless infants instead of baptizing them.

Today I would like to explain the Latter-Day Saints beliefs concerning blessing of infants, so that any not familiar with these beliefs may understand and know why we do things the way we do.

In order to understand the ordinance of blessing of infants I feel I must first explain our beliefs concerning baptism, and the reason why we believe that an infant is not a lawful candidate for baptism.

According to our faiths understanding of what the gospel says, the first principles of the gospel are Faith, Repentance, Baptism, and Confirmation. I would like to start by reading a few scriptures out of the New Testament. Matthew 3: 27-29+38 tells us, “ And in those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, And saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For I am he who was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord and make his paths straight. I indeed baptize you with water, upon your repentance; and he of whom I bear record cometh, who is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear, ( or whose place I am not able to fill,) as I said, I indeed baptize you before he cometh, that when he cometh he may baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire.

John 3 tells us, “ Jesus answered, verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of the water and the spirit he cannot enter unto the kingdom of God.” From the gospel of Mark. And he, Christ, said unto them (Referring to the twelve Apostles) Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

The gospel is the good news of mans redemption, that there has been a way prepared for us to return to the presence of God, by following the laws and commandments that he has given us. To be damned seems like a very harsh thing, but it simply means that those who fail to comply with the gospel as set forth by Jesus Christ will be stopped from entering the kingdom of God. When you damn something it is stopped, kind of like when you damn up a river you stop it. Luke tells us, “ And he ( John the Baptist ) came into all the country round about Jordan preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” And in the book of Acts we are told by Peter speaking unto those who had heard the gospel on the day of Pentecost. Peter said unto them “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for a remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Matthew 3:32 tells us, “ And many were baptized of him ( John ) In Jordan confessing their sins.”

From these few passages we can learn a great deal. 1<sup>st</sup> That a person must believe, faith is the first principle of the gospel, Hebrews 11:6 tells us, “But without faith it is impossible

to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and keep his commandments. 2<sup>nd</sup> You must be repentant. Times and Seasons vol. 3 p. 578 “ Repentance in the full sense of the word, is a sorrow for sin- breaking off from sin by righteousness, or in other words, to change our course of life, and wherein we have done wrong in the sight of God, we should reform and do it no more; and thus become humble like a little child, and walk in the ways of the Lord, that we may grow up in Christ our living head. “ Repentance is a prerequisite to baptism, and should always be adhered to by sinners, Christ was without sin, and consequently he did not repent.” Nevertheless Christ had to be baptized for it is the doorway of all into the kingdom. Repentance is the second principle of the gospel, after a person has had faith and repented, they are then baptized to wash away all former sins , this must be done by those holding the authority to perform this sacrament, or it will avail nothing. They then receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, which is given by the laying on off hands, again by those holding the authority to do so. So we can see the first principles are, first faith and repentance, which are prerequisites to baptism, the baptism, confirmation, which is the receiving of the gift of the holy ghost, in that order.

Now I would like to talk more about baptism the doorway into Gods kingdom. I am going to read from the BOOK OF THE LAW now. The law was given to Moses on Mount Sinai, and was kept in the Ark of the Covenant with was eventually lost to the Jews. It is our belief that the Prophet JAMES J. STRANG restored this Law to the Earth. The law is; “ EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN OF THE WATER, HE CANNOT ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD. BUT NO MAN MAY HAVE BAPTISM OF WATER, EXCEPT SUCH AS HAVE FAITH TOWARDS GOD, AND COME UNTO HIM THROUGH THE MINISTRY HE HAS SENT; REPENTING OF EVIL DEEDS, AND SEEKING TO LEARN RIGHTEOUSNESS BY THE LIVING WORD; FOR THIS IS THE DOOR OF ALL INTO THE KINGDOM; FROM EIGHT YEARS OLD AND UPWARDS; THROUGH WHICH IF YE ENTER NOT, YE SHALL NOT SEE GOD. FOR THE KEYS OF THE MINISTRY OF THE REMISSION OF SINS, IN THE SACREMENT OF BAPTISM, HATH THE LORD YOUR GOD BESTOWED UPON HIS APOSTLES; AND THROUGH THEM, UPON THEIR FELLOW LABORERS, THE HIGH PRIESTS, ELDERS, AND PRIESTS; COMMANDING THEM TO PREACH PEPENTANCE AND REMISSION OF SINS, TO ALL NATIONS THROUGHOUT THE EARTH.” We can see this commandment corresponds exactly to what is written in the Bible.

“The human families in their sins are foreigners and strangers to God; consequently they must be adopted in order to become citizens of his kingdom. Baptism of course then is the ordinance of adoption.” Times and Seasons vol. 3. P. 578 The Apostle Paul tells us in his epistle to the Galatians, Gal: 3-27-29. “ Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through the faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they, which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither

Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." We believe those who have faith in God, are repentant of former sins, who have come unto the priesthood that God sent, and are at least eight years old are the ones who are eligible for baptism, and may become members of God's kingdom. We believe that baptism should be performed according to God's law. Book of the Law: "For sin is an offense against God, he being the party wronged, has the right to forgive or withhold forgiveness." And also to prescribe the manner in which it will be accomplished.

It is our belief that the scriptures teach that the proper mode of baptism is by immersion. To begin with let me say that there is not a single passage in the entire Bible to prove that either sprinkling or pouring was used in apostolic times for baptism. I am only going to quote a couple of passages to be brief, and a couple of testimonies of notable men.

ST. John 3:3+4 "Jesus answered and said unto him, verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus said unto him, how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mothers womb and be born again? And what is it to be born again? The Book of the Law tells us, "For a birth is a coming forth out of something that covers and conceals, such is baptism, only when the subject, being covered in water, is brought forth out of it." So to be born again is to be buried in the waters of baptism completely immersed in the water, and then to come forth out of the water.

The best example of this is the one set by our savior himself. In Matthew 3:41-45 we are told, "And then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan, unto John, to be baptized of him; but John refused him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and why comest thou to me? And Jesus answering, said unto him, suffer me to be baptized of thee, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And John went down into the water and baptized him. And Jesus, when he was baptized went up straightaway out of the water; and John saw, and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Jesus." What better example could we ask for, we know that Christ is our perfect example, and has shown all men how to obtain salvation. For he said, "Do ye those things with ye have seen me do, and, this is love that we walk after the commandments."

John 3:23- "John was baptizing in Enon near to Salim because there was much water there." Acts 8:35-39- "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch said, see here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still; and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch: and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing." Now the question arises, if sprinkling or pouring was used here, what is there in the above accounts that even hint at such a thing? What would be the use of going down all the way into the water, and

getting right into it, in order to be sprinkled or poured? What would be the sense in needing much water if only a few drops were needed for sprinkling? “ And Jesus when he was baptized went up straightaway out of the water.” Baptism is a Greek word, and may be translated immersion, as when we immerse something in water, that it may be wholly covered. We believe the act of baptizing is the immersion of believers in water. Thus also it was performed by Christ and his Apostles.” Here I will leave this matter for everyone to decide for himself or herself as to whether baptism was anciently performed in any other way than immersion. But I will also add the testimony of a few distinguished scholars.

Mosheim says: “Immersion only was used in the first and second centuries.”

Martin Luther the founder of Lutheranism says: “ The term baptism is a Greek word; it may be rendered dipping as when we dip anything in water, that it may be entirely covered with water. I could wish, he says, that such as are to be baptized should be completely immersed into the water, according to the meaning of the word, and the signification of the ordinance, as also without doubt it was instituted by Christ.”

John Wesley founder of the Methodist church says: “Buried with him in baptism, (Romans 6:4), alludes to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion.”

Jeremy Taylor, the learned Bishop writes: “The custom of the ancient churches was not sprinkling, but immersion, in pursuance of the sense of the word in the commandment, and in the example of our blessed savior.”

These quotes seem to verify that the ancient mode of baptism was by immersion, and not any other means.

Now I would like to bring out the reason why we do not baptize infants. The Book of the Law states: “ For this is the door of all into the kingdom; from eight years old and upwards; ECT.” By the law of God, children are not held accountable for their actions until they reach the age of eight years of age. This is when they reach the age of accountability. Before they reach this age their minds are not sufficiently developed to understand the difference between good, and evil, right, and wrong. I found it very interesting that then my Mother was going to school for nursing, she found that in her psychology class this is exactly what they taught concerning children.

I am going to share with you some references from the New Testament concerning what Jesus said about little children.

Matthew 18:10+11 tells us, And this is Christ speaking, “ Take heed that ye despise not one of the little ones; for I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my father who is in heaven. For the son of man is come to save that which was lost, and call sinners to repentance; but these little ones have no need of repentance, and I will save them.”

Matthew 19: 13-15, tells us: “ Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them and pray. And the disciples rebuked them, saying there is no need, for Jesus hath said such shall be saved. But Jesus said suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid hands on them, and departed thence.”

Also Mark tells us: 10:11-14 “ And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them, and the disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw and

heard them, he was much displeased, and said unto them, suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, and put his hands upon them, and blessed them.” This is the example that we follow.

Jesus in the New Testament has told us, “ Do ye those things which ye have seen me do.” What better example could we have than Christ himself, blessing little children, and saying that such are saved through him.

What is it to become as a little child? The best description of this can be found in the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon is a record of God’s dealings with the forefathers of the American Indians. From the Book of Mosiah we are told: “ for behold he (Christ) judgeth, and his judgment is just; and the infant perisheth not that dieth in his infancy; (Corresponding with what Jesus himself said in Matthew saying, that such shall be saved) but men drink damnation to their own souls except they humble themselves and become as little children, and believe salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent. For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth of the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a little child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.”

Also from Moroni 8: “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; (This also corresponds to what he said in the Bible) 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; ...”

Now the curse of Adam is this, that all men must die, but, it is not only the temporal death of the body, but a spiritual death also, a death as to things pertaining to God, never being able to come back into his presence. For before we were born on this earth we existed with God in the spirit world. It is this spiritual death that is done away in Christ. Although all men must still endure the temporal death of the body, for this is necessary in the process of making us perfect. For we are told in the Book of Alma: 42: 6-9, “But behold, it was appointed unto man to die-therefore, as they were cut off from the tree of life they should be cut off from the face of the earth-and man became fallen man. 7. And now, ye see by this that our first parents were cut off both temporally and spiritually from the presence of the Lord; and thus we see they became subjects to follow after their own will. 8. Now behold, it was not expedient that man should be reclaimed from this temporal death, for that would destroy the great plan of happiness. 9. Therefore, as the soul could never die, and the fall had brought upon all mankind a spiritual death as well as a temporal, that is, they were cut off from the presence of the Lord, it was expedient that mankind should be reclaimed from this spiritual death. 11. And now remember, my son, if it were not for the plan of redemption, (laying it aside) as soon as they were dead their souls were

cut off from the presence of the Lord.” Through the atonement, he opens the way for all to come back into the presence of God. And especially those who obey the gospel and keep his laws and commandments. For salvation in the fullest sense of the word is being able to come into the celestial glory, where we will dwell with God Almighty and Jesus Christ for all eternity here on the earth. For Christ truly said the meek shall inherit the earth. As we are told in the Bible in 1<sup>st</sup> Cor 15: 21+22: “ For since by man came death by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” When Christ says: “That he taketh away the sins of the world”, this is what he is referring to, that he took away the curse of Adam brought on all men by his transgression, the spiritual curse that blocks us from coming back into Gods presence. Not that Christ is responsible for all of our individual sins, for there is many places in the Old and New Testament that state that we are to be judged according to our own works. I will site just a couple of examples.

Titus tells us: 1:16, “ They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.”

From the Gospel of James: 2:14-18-20-23+25, “What profit is it, my brethren, for a man to say he have faith, and hath not works? Can faith save him? 15. Yea, a man may say, I will show thee I have Faith without works; but I say, show me thy faith without works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. 16. For if a brother or sister be naked and destitute, and one of you say, depart in peace, be warmed and filled; notwithstanding he give not those things which are needful to the body; what profit is your faith unto such? 17. Even so faith, if it has not works is dead being alone. 18. Therefore wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead and cannot save you? 19. Thou believest there is one God; thou doest well; the devils also believe, and tremble; thou hast made thyself like unto them, not being justified. 20. Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered Isaac his son upon the alter? 21. Seest thou how works wrought with his faith, and by works was faith made perfect? 22. And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God. 23. Ye see then that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. 25. For, as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead.

From the book of Revelations, 2:23 “... and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.”

Jeremiah tells us: 25:14, “For many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of them also; and I will recompense them according to the works of their own hands.

From the book of Genesis: 15:12, “And it came to pass, that Abram (Name later changed to Abraham) looked forth and saw the days of the son of man, and was glad, and his soul found rest, and he believed in the Lord; and the Lord counted it unto him for righteousness.”

And again from Revelations: 20:12+13+15: “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13. And the sea gave up the dead, who were in it; and

death and hell delivered up the dead, who were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

As we can see from both the Old and New Testament, that good works are required of all men, and that it is through works that faith is made perfect, and through works that we are justified. For without faith it is impossible to please God, and perfect faith is not possible without good works. You may ask how do we know who’s names are written in the book of life? The book of life is a record containing the names of all the Saints of God who are members of the church of the firstborn. It contains the record of our baptisms. We can find in Philippians 4:3 “And I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow labourers, whose names are in the book of life.”

Continuing with Moroni: “And after this manner did the Holy Ghost manifest the word of God unto me; 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 children need no repentance, neither baptism. Behold, baptism is unto repentance to the fulfilling the commandments unto the remission of sins.” Little children do not have the mental capacity to exhibit faith, and they are innocent not having any sin, for they are not capable of understanding Gods laws, much less the breaking of them. Both faith and repentance as we have learned are prerequisites to baptism. “But little children are alive in Christ, even from the foundation of the world; and 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. 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. I love little children with a perfect love; and they are all alike and partakers of salvation.” For Christ said of such is the kingdom of heaven. “For I know that God is not a partial God, neither a changeable being; but he is unchangeable from all eternity to all eternity.

The law states: “WHEN THE LORD THY GOD IN MULTIPLYING BLESSETH THEE, AND GIVETH THEE A CHILD IN THINE OWN IMAGE; THOU SHALT BRING HIM BEFORE THE LORD THY GOD, IN HIS HOUSE, OR IN THE ASSEMBLY OF THE ELDERS; AND THEY SHALL LAY THEIR HANDS UPON HIM, AND BLESS HIM. THOU SHALT NOT DELAY TO DO IT; AND THOUGH THOU BE FAR AWAY, YET SHALT THOU BRING HIM BEFORE HE IS EIGHT YEARS OLD: THAT THE BLESSING OF THE LORD THY GOD MAY BE PUT UPON HIM; AND HIS HEART SHALL SEEK TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND ITS RIGHTEOUSNESS: FOR OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM. IF HE DIE, YET SHALL HE LIVE THEIRIN FOREVER. HE SHALL BE THINE 2. AND THE CHILD OF THY SERVANT ALSO, AND OF THY BONDMAN, SHALT THOU BRING TO RECIEVE THIS BLESSING: AND THE STRANGER THAT DWELLETH WITH THEE SHALL BRING HIS CHILD ALSO, TO RECEIVE HIS BLESSING: FOR THUS SHALL THE POWER OF THE KINGDOM BE A SHIELD UNTO HIM, AND HIS HEART SHALL CLEAVE UNTO ITS RIGHTEOUSNESS; THAT HE MAY BE

ESTABLISHED THERIN FOREVER. 3. AND WHOSOEVER SHALL BRING A CHILD TO BE BLESSED; WHETHER IT BE FATHER, OR MOTHER; OR MASTER, OR MISTRESS; THE SAME SHALL YE BE HONOURED AS FATHERS AND MOTHERS IN ISRAEL: BUT, IF YE DO IT NOT, AND EVIL BEFALL THE CHILD, HIS BLOOD BE UPON YOU. 4. THE APSTLES, HIGH PRIESTS, AND ELDERS, IN THEIR ASSEMBLIES; AND THE PRIEST THERUNTO APPOINTED IN THE TEMPLES OF GOD, SHALL BLESS WITH THIS BLESSING: FOR, BEHOLD, IT IS A GREAT SACRAMENT.”

We as Latter-Day Saints follow the example of Jesus Christ and bless our little children. Till next time LET TRUTH PREVAIL. Timothy Hansen. Elder.