
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.*]

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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