

BORN AGAIN

EXCERPTS FROM ADDRESS BY ELDER D. TODD CHRISTOFFERSON

It was Jesus who stated that entry into the kingdom of God requires that one be born again – born of water and of the Spirit (see John 3:3–5). His teaching about a physical and a spiritual baptism helps us understand that both our own action and the intervention of divine power are needed for this transformative rebirth – for the change from natural man to saint (see Mosiah 3:19). Paul described being born again with this simple expression: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Consider two examples from the Book of Mormon. About a century before the birth of Christ, King Benjamin taught his people of the Savior’s advent and Atonement. The Spirit of the Lord wrought such a mighty change in the people that they had “no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2). Because of their faith in Christ, they said, “We are willing to enter into a covenant with our God to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments ... all the remainder of our days” (Mosiah 5:5). The king responded, “Because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name” (Mosiah 5:7; see also D&C 76:24).

The case of Alma is also instructive. As he and his companions went about seeking to destroy the Church of Christ, they were rebuked by an angel. There followed for Alma three days and nights that he described as being “racked with eternal torment ... Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities,

for which I was tormented with the pains of hell” (Alma 36:12-13). Finally, after “repenting nigh unto death” (Mosiah 27:28), as he put it, there came to his mind the sweet message of Jesus Christ and His Atonement. Alma pled, “O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death” (Alma 36:18). Forgiveness came to him, and he stood and publicly confessed: “I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold I am born of the Spirit. And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters; And thus they become new creatures” (Mosiah 27:24-26).

As we reflect on these examples and other scriptures, it becomes clear that spiritual rebirth originates with faith in Jesus Christ, by whose grace we are changed. More specifically, it is faith in Christ as the Atoning One, the Redeemer, who can cleanse from sin and make holy (see Mosiah 4:2-3) ... As Nephi counseled: “Ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men.” (2 Nephi 31:20) ... I testify that as you continue in the path of spiritual rebirth, the atoning grace of Jesus Christ will take away your sins and the stain of those sins in you, temptations will lose their appeal, and through Christ you will become holy, as He and our Father are holy.

For the full address given at the 178th Annual General Conference in April 2008, please visit www.lds.org and click on “Gospel Library”.