

Becoming the Sons and Daughters of God

1. How is one born by the 'Light of Christ' and how is that different than being "Baptized"? Receiving such a birth does what for the individual?

Under gospel topics on lds.org The Light of Christ is described as the "... divine energy, power, or influence that proceeds from God through Christ and gives life and light to all things. The Light of Christ influences people for good and prepares them to receive the Holy Ghost.

D&C 88:12-13 – Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space— The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things.

One manifestation of the Light of Christ is what we call a conscience. Conscience is a manifestation of the Light of Christ, enabling us to judge good from evil. The prophet Mormon taught: "The Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God. ... And now, my brethren, seeing that ye know the light by which ye may judge, which light is the light of Christ, see that ye do not judge wrongfully; for with that same judgment which ye judge ye shall also be judged"

Being born of the light of Christ enlightens the soul and increases the capacity of one's "conscience" to be able to more accurately judge between good and evil. Being born of the Light of Christ invites the presence of Holy Ghost into our lives, persuades one to believe in Christ, influences people for good , and prepares one to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

President Joseph F. Smith said that this Spirit of Christ "strives with ... men, and will continue to strive with them [if they will resist the enticings of Satan], until it brings them to a knowledge of the truth and the possession of the greater light and testimony of the Holy Ghost." (*Gospel Doctrine*, Deseret Book Co., 1973, pp. 67–68.)

Being born of Christ can change one's life and those who have lived a life fighting against the light of Christ .When they are born of the Light of Christ they will notice a huge difference. This is why so many of our Christian brothers and Sisters focus so heavily on being "born of Christ" or "born again". They notice the difference in their lives. Unfortunately because of that difference many of them then say that accepting Christ and being born of Him is all that is needed and have even rejected the need for baptism. The Light of Christ is not the finish line. It is preparatory to being able to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

While being born of the light of Christ invites the Holy Ghost and Christ's power and goodness into our lives, being baptized is a covenant that we make to do the things required to not just invite but to always have the Holy Ghost with us and Christ's goodness and power. In the baptismal covenant we promise to take Christ's name upon us, to always remember Him, and to keep His commandments.

How is one born again by the 'Light of Christ' and how is that different than 'being baptized'?
Receiving such a birth does what for the individual? I want to start with a quick reminder of how

we answer the questions we have about the gospel, and how we study the doctrine. The other day in a zoom meeting gospel doctrine class, the instructor started off by readings scripture, which hinted to "deeper" doctrine, he even paused to say he didn't really know what that scripture was referring to, and assuming that it was something we couldn't know, he started to lead the group away from the question rather than stop to look for an answer. How often are you reading the scriptures and you think "I wonder what that means", do you actually stop and dig deeper, or do you assume like Laman and Lemuel that "the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us" 1 Nephi 15:9. We have got to start reading the scriptures with a shovel and faith and like Nephi "believing that the Lord [is] able to make [all things] known unto [us]." 1Nephi 11:1 Always start with prayer, asking not that God simply give you the answer but that he will help you find the answer and they he is able and ever willing to answer you. Write down your questions and with persistence, dig for your answer. Stay in the scriptures. Follow footnotes, look up references, fasting is always helpful in keeping the mind sharp but not usually necessary. I testify that God is giving away the secrets of the universe to even the least of us who show up with a shovel. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy." Acts 2:17-18. Guide to the scriptures teaches that "To have the Spirit of the Lord cause a mighty change in a person's heart so that he has no more desire to do evil, but rather desires to seek the things of God." Acts 2:37 " Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? This is the the first step putting us on the path to DO more.

- I. In what ways did the Light of Christ prepare us for the gospel?
- II. Thinking back to our baptisms, how did we feel on that day? How do we feel today? Do we still have the same fire? Do we still sing the song of redeeming love?
- III. What are some ways we can get non-members to recognize the Light of Christ in them?
- IV. Why do you think so many stop with the Light of Christ and don't grow from there?

2.How is one being born again by the "Holy Ghost" different than being "Baptized"? Receiving such a birth does what for the individual?

Going back to gospel topics at lds.org is reads, "The Holy Ghost [unlike the Light of Christ, which is Christ's influence and power] is a person, a spirit, the third member of the Godhead. He is a messenger and a witness of the Father and the Son. He brings to men testimony, witness, and knowledge of God the Father, Jesus Christ His Son, and the truths of the gospel. He vitalizes truth in the hearts and souls of men. "There is a difference," said the Prophet Joseph Smith, "between the Holy Ghost and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Cornelius received the Holy Ghost before he was baptized, which was the convincing power of God unto him of the truth of the Gospel, but he could not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost until after he was baptized. Had he not [been baptized], the Holy Ghost which convinced him of the truth of God, would have left him." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 199.)"

So Cornelius was born again of the light of Christ and received the Holy Ghost but not the gift of the Holy Ghost.

"The gift of the Holy Ghost confers upon one, as long as he is worthy, the right to receive light and truth. Obtaining the gift of the Holy Ghost is preceded by faith, repentance, and baptism. Retaining the spirit, power, and guidance of the Holy Ghost requires a righteous life—a dedicated effort to constantly comply with the laws and ordinances of the gospel."

So we see that being born again of the Holy Ghost or receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost gives one the

right to receive light and truth and qualifies a person to retain with them always the spirit, power, and guidance of the Holy Ghost so long as one lives up to their baptismal covenant to take upon us His name, remember him, and keep his commandments.

Being born again of the Holy Ghost also does something else for the salvation of a person that being born again by the light of Christ or only receiving the Holy Ghost cannot do for us.

JST Matthew 3:38;39 - I indeed baptize you with water, *upon your repentance; and when 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. Thus came John, preaching and baptizing in the river of Jordan; bearing record, that he who was coming after him had power to baptize with the Holy Ghost and fire.*

Receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, or being born again of the Holy Ghost is also referred to as the baptism of fire. One can only receive this baptism of fire after being baptized by water and making that covenant to take upon us His name, remember Him, and keep His commandments. That baptism by fire is essential to our salvation. It is the spiritual cleansing power that by fire purges from our very spirits the sins we have committed. Baptism is a covenant and physical cleansing. But being born of the Holy Ghost gives us the permission to have His spirit with us always and purges the chaff from us making us the wheat and holy.

How is one born again by the ‘Holy Ghost’ and how is that different than ‘being baptized’? Receiving such a birth does what for the individual? I like how it was worded in moses 6:6 "And thus he was baptized, and the Spirit of God descended upon him, and thus he was born of the Spirit, and became quickened in the inner man. And he heard a voice out of heaven, saying: Thou art baptized with fire, and with the Holy Ghost." Where baptism washes the outer body, the baptism of the holy ghost washes the inner body, or the spirit.

- I. When Joseph Smith was asked what was the difference between his faith and all other Christian denominations Joseph Smith responded, “we differed in mode of baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. We considered that all other considerations were contained in the gift of the Holy Ghost.” What did he mean?
- II. What does being sealed by the holy spirit of promise mean? How does that relate to the Holy Ghost?
- III. How does being the salt of the earth relate to the Holy Ghost?

3. How do these births, as well as baptism relate to one’s forgiveness of sins? Personal sanctification? Etc.? How does one know when they have received this complete rebirth?

Being born of the light of Christ prepares us for baptism and to be able to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Being born of the light of Christ is the first step in the repentance process.

Alma 19:33 - And it came to pass that when Ammon arose he also administered unto them [Lamanites], and also did all the servants of Lamoni; and they did all declare unto the people the selfsame thing—that their hearts had been changed; that they had no more desire to do evil.

The Lamanites received the Holy Ghost and were born again of the Light of Christ. Their hearts were changed and had no more desire to do evil. Having a change of heart and no more desire to do evil they then desired to enter into the path, or rather the baptismal covenant to take upon them the name of

Christ, always remember Him, and keep His commandments. Alma 19 goes on to explain that they revived of the ministering of angels, were baptized, received the gift of the Holy Ghost, became a righteous people, built a church, and the spirit of the Lord was poured out among them.

So how does this apply to us personally and our personal sanctification and rebirth?

We too will feel the desire to no more do evil but good continuously. We will have a change of heart and everytime we partake of the sacrament, we renew our covenants to take upon us the name of Christ, always remember Him, and keep His commandments. This repentance and renewal allows the Holy Ghost to once again purge us by fire of our sins and sanctify us. This rebirth is a continual weekly and daily process. When I was baptized and given the gift of the Holy Ghost, I was reborn but I am a very different person today than I was then. The process of rebirth and sanctification through the Holy Ghost is an ongoing process that continues until we are purged and cleansed completely of anything that is ungodly and we become even as God.

How do these births, as well as baptism relate to one's forgiveness of sins? Personal sanctification? Etc.? How does one know when they have received this complete rebirth? Going back to acts 2 in chapter 38 after being born or pricked by the light of Christ the people asked what they should do "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." We are taught that baptism is for the remission of our sins. It is the cleansing and sanctifying process. While it would be hard for us not to recognize that we had been physically baptized by water, we don't always pay attention to or know how to recognize the baptism of fire. One example is found in Helaman chapter 5 where hundreds of Lamanites who were going to kill Nephi and his brother Lehi, instead found themselves overcome with a cloud of darkness. After hearing the powerful testimony of a fellow dissenter they began to pray and repent and "they were encircled about, yea every soul, by a pillar of fire" Speaking in 3nephi 9:20 Christ is referred back to this event "... him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, even as the Lamanites, because of their faith in me at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not." Even seeing themselves surrounded by fire they missed the fact that "the Holy Spirit of God did come down from heaven, and did enter into their hearts, and they were filled as if with fire." So even though we might miss the inner baptism I will testify that those who have been baptized once again are compelled to DO something and most frequently in the scriptures this action is that of sharing their personal witness of Christ with others. I came across reference sheet reference where once baptized they then began to speak with the gift of tongues. Section 84 gives us a list of other gifts of the spirit that come to those who act."Therefore, as I said unto mine apostles I say unto you again, that every soul who believeth on your words, and is baptized by water for the remission of sins, shall receive the Holy Ghost. And these signs shall follow them that believe--In my name they shall do many wonderful works; In my name they shall cast out devils; In my name they shall heal the sick. In my name they shall open the eyes of the blind, and unstop the ears of the deaf. And the tongue of the dumb shall speak; And if any man shall administer poison unto them it shall not hurt them; And the poison of a serpent shall not have power to harm them." So whether or not we recognize the moment we received the gift of baptism of fire we can recognize the fruit of those who use the gift.

- I. What does D&C 19:31 teach us? (I'll remove this question if either of you decide to use this scripture)
- II. What does personal sanctification entail?
- III. Once again, how does the Holy Spirit of promise relate?
- IV. How can we make the Sacrament always a process of sin forgiving and the Holy Spirit of promise verifying it?

4. What is the difference between improving our Christlike attributes and being completely born again?

Christ like attributes include attributes and gifts of the spirit that we were either born with or that were later given to us. These attributes help us serve God and fulfill his purposes and they help us to grow and become more like our Father in Heaven. They make us better but without being completely born again by the gift of the Holy Ghost, we cannot become perfected. It's like the potters clay if I can use a common example. A sculptor can create a beautiful work of art. He can let the sculpture dry, paint the sculpture and even add all sorts of decoration and embellishments, using the sculpture to adorn beautiful places, using it to house flowers, fruit, etc. But even though the sculpture has become beautiful and useful by the hands of the sculptor or Christ like attributes, it is not perfect and is very fragile and breakable. It cannot endure. Something else has to happen to perfect the clay so that it can endure. It has to literally be born again by fire. When the form of the sculpture is complete and painted, the sculpture is then placed in a kiln and fired at extremely high temperatures. This firing purges the clay of all impurities and literally changes the composition of the clay and paint. It is no longer clay but becomes ceramic and glass. Being sanctified by the fire of the Holy Ghost and being completely reborn does the same thing for us. We can be beautified and strengthened by Christlike attributes but being completely reborn and sanctified by the fire of the Holy Ghost will purge us of all impurities and literally change us. It will change our nature, our hearts, our disposition, even our bodies and our appearance. It will make us unbreakable and eternal.

What is the difference between improving our Christlike attributes and being completely born again? How does/do 'sins of rebellion' vs 'sins of weakness' fit into this? Which then becomes more important and why? My kids and I like to refer to our growth as making triangles. We start down the path and we are doing great heading straight but at soon as we start to get off even at the smallest of angles it will require work to get back on the straight and narrow path. The longer we continue down the wrong path the bigger our triangle of crap we have to clean up gets. We all agree it is easier to clean up after one meal then after a full day of not doing the dishes. No one wants to do the work to clean up big triangles of crap. So we try and remind ourselves to repent often but no matter how big our mess gets God always wants us and will help us clean it up. The real problems come with a refusal to clean up your mess, this rebellion is what keeps you from God's presence. As He warned Emma he warns us all, "except thou do this, where I am you cannot come." See D&C 25:15-16.

- I. How does nature vs nurture relate to this?
- II. Can you change the natural man? Can you train Christlike attributes?
- III. Which one becomes more crucial to fix first?

5. How does/do 'sins of rebellion' vs 'sins of weakness' fit into this? Which then becomes more important and why?

Sins of weakness are part of the process of repentance. They are the person learning and growing allowing the Holy Ghost to purge them of the sin but the purging can take time; sometimes years and years before the weak thing, that continues to sin becomes strong. Sins of rebellion are a very different situation. Once the sanctifying power of the Holy ghost has completely purged the sin from the person making the person strong, full of knowledge, and righteousness, and then the person having a fullness of knowledge then chooses to sin when there was no weakness, this is a sin of rebellion. This is someone who has received of the fullness of the spirit. This is someone who has received a testimony. This is someone who has eaten of the fruit of the tree of life knowing fully that the great and spacious

building is in direct rebellion to Christ, but chooses to enter therein anyways. Which then becomes more grievous and why? Well, what do you think? Is the person who is holding fast to the iron rod, who trips along the way, who is tempted by those in the building and has on occasionally visited the building worse than someone who has made it to the fruit but has willingly of their own full knowledge chosen to leave the fruit, and iron rod behind to enter into the building? No! The path down the iron rod is the learning and purging process. Once we have eaten of the fruit, we receive of the fullness of joy and the fullness of remission for our sins. Tasting of the fruit then leaving to go to the great and spacious building puts us in direct rebellion against God. This is why when Adam and Eve ate the fruit, God commanded that an angel be placed to guard the tree lest they partake of the fruit and die in their sins. They had walked and talked with God and because their eyes were opened they received a fullness of knowledge of their sin of ignorance. They then had to leave the garden and were separated from the presence of God so that they too would have to enter into the path holding to the iron rod, being cleansed and sanctified by the Holy Ghost before they again could be allowed to partake of the fruit of the tree. Can one repent of a sin of rebellion? Yes, but it is much more difficult as now not only the sin but also the spirit of rebellion also has to be purged from the individual.

The Lord, through this process, changes our very nature, how?

Our very natures are changed through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. Without His atonement there could be no remission of sin and the bands of death would have claim on every single one of us except Christ.

Alma 13:11 - Therefore they were called after this holy order, and were sanctified, and their garments were washed white through the blood of the Lamb.

1 Nephi 12:11 - These are made white in the blood of the Lamb, because of their faith in him.

How are we sanctified through the blood of the lamb?

I think we hugely underestimate Christ's atoning blood. I feel that we generally really have no idea what His atoning blood really means to us and it's sanctifying power.

There are divine laws that govern the universe. These are the laws by which God lives

2 Nephi 2:13 - And if ye shall say there is no law, ye shall also say there is no sin. If ye shall say there is no sin, ye shall also say there is no righteousness. And if there be no righteousness there be no happiness. And if there be no righteousness nor happiness there be no punishment nor misery. And if these things are not there is no God. And if there is no God we are not, neither the earth; for there could have been no creation of things, neither to act nor to be acted upon; wherefore, all things must have vanished away.

If there were no laws, there would be no God. There are natural consequences to these laws. When a law is followed there is growth and blessings. When a law is broken there is regression and consequence or sin. The natural order to the law is that the price for the action always has to be paid. Without that payment, the law would be incomplete thus destroying the law and again, God would cease to be God. Because our nature is fallen and we have our free agency, we are rebellious and act in opposition to the Lord. Christ was and will be the ONLY person who was born in a fallen world who lived a sinless life. He then paid the price or rather made up for every short coming, sin, and rebellion that the rest of us will commit. Do we even slightly begin to grasp what that really means? I honestly don't feel like I really do? If Christ had not in it's fullness completed His mission, the baptism of fire by the gift of the Holy ghost would not exist. There would be no redemption. The best we could hope for

is to be born by the light of Christ and have his influence in our lives. But even then, we would all, everyone of us be literally destroyed having been claimed by the laws of justice. By being baptized and covenanting to take upon us His name, always remember Him, and keep His commandments, we are making the choice and conscious effort daily to allow the effects of the blood of the lamb to purify us by the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Without covenant making and keeping is this process possible? What covenants are required?

This process is completely impossible without covenant making. The laws that govern heaven are absolute and complete. Covenants are an extension of those eternal laws. God has established His side of the law or the covenant. We will receive eternal life and a fullness of joy. So that means that we have to complete with our side of the law or covenant. Remember, were there is no law, there is no God. If God only gave us promises without requiring something from us, there would be no way for us to actually obtain them and he would cease to be God. The first covenant required is baptism, to take upon us His name, always remember Him, and keep His Commandments. The second is to be Endowed in the temple. This endowment, endows a person with power from on high in which we make additional promises and covenants with God. The third is to be sealed in the holy temple to our spouse making further covenants to our spouse and Heavenly Father.

The Lord, through this process, changes our very nature, how? Without covenant making and keeping is this process possible? What covenants are required? Conversion is a life long process, not an event. I talked about this same concept last month of how reading the scriptures feeds our spirit and how we are in need of daily nourishing, so it is with our need for daily cleansing. You might be able to go a day or two without a shower but after a few days you gonna smell. The Lord knows this and has set up a process for us to be cleansed ALWAYS. We renew and remember our covenants weekly, but when we actually keep them, we promise to keep his commandments and always remember him that we may have his spirit, that which does the inner cleaning, ALWAYS.

- I. If you no longer have a desire to sin, does that mean you no longer sin?
- II. If you no longer have a desire to sin what would that make your mistakes/sins?

6. When did Christ become our ‘Father’? When do we become Christ’s ‘sons and daughters’? In what sense do we all become begotten of Christ in the flesh?

Christ became our Father when he completed His mission on earth to live a perfect life, atoned for all the children of God, died an innocent lamb, and broke the bands of death resurrecting three days later. He saved us from both spiritual and physical death. By completing His mission he literally paid the price the law would demand on us that would literally destroy us. He has paid for our literal salvation from complete destruction and we are therefore His. We are reborn through his blood giving us the ability to once again literally live both in body and in spirit. Through this rebirth Christ has born our infirmities, our sins, our weaknesses and has born us making us his children and Him our Father having literally ransomed us from the grave. This birth changes our very nature, body, and spirit from one who is imprisoned by the law to one who is justified by the law. Not only will we come to act, talk, think, believe, and behave in accordance with the law of God but our very appearance will begin to change. We will be filled with light and will become even as He is. We will become His sons and daughters.

D&C 76:51 -70; 79; 93- 95; - They are they who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in the water in his name, and this according to the commandment which he has given—That by keeping the commandments they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power; And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the

Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true. They are they who are the church of the Firstborn. They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things— They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fullness, and of his glory; And are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son. Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God— Wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's. And they shall overcome all things. They glory in God. These shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever. These are they whom he shall bring with him, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven to reign on the earth over his people. These are they who shall have part in the first resurrection. These are they who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just. These are they who are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all. These are they who have come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn. These are they whose names are written in heaven, where God and Christ are the judge of all. These are they who are just men made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood. These are they whose bodies are celestial, whose glory is that of the sun, even the glory of God, the highest of all, whose glory the sun of the firmament is written of as being typical. These are they who are valiant in the testimony of Jesus; wherefore, they obtain the crown over the kingdom of our God. They bow before His throne in humble reverence, and give him glory forever and ever. They who dwell in his presence are the church of the Firstborn; and they see as they are seen, and know as they are known, having received of his fullness and of his grace; They are made equal in power, and in might, and in dominion.

This is who God is. These are the characteristics of our Father in Heaven. As the literal father of our spirits this is what our divine nature is but because we have been given our free agency, we fight against God, the lamb, and our divine nature. I think one of the biggest lies satan has ever told us is the lie of "Human Nature". Human nature says that we are no better than the animals; unable to fight against our natural instincts. We are able to fight against our natural instincts because of our free agency. Our natural instincts are to be as our Father in Heaven but we choose to fight against our natural instincts thus sinning. It is a truth that satan has twisted and told us that fighting against God and our divine nature is who we naturally are. But even the animals fulfill the measure of their creation to which they were formed. Are we fulfilling the full measure of our creation to which we were formed? Brothers and sisters, our futures are bright. There is literally nothing that our Heavenly Father will hold back from us or that He will even be able to hold back from us if we become a covenant keeping people who are reborn in the blood of the lamb through the gift of the Holy ghost. Let God Prevail and we will be joint heirs with Christ. I stand in awe at the magnitude of the atonement and the magnitude of the blessings that our Father in Heaven has promised to us, His children. This is who we are. To be as God is who we were born to be. It is our divine nature. I am so grateful to my Father in Heaven and to my Savior Jesus Christ who have literally given us the possibility of everything. And I say these things in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

When did Christ become our 'Father'? When do we become Christ's 'sons and daughters'? In what sense do we all become begotten of Christ in the flesh? "And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ," (did you call that? It is because of the covenants we make that we are) "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; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters." Mosiah 5:7. I add my witness to that found in the book of mormon that "whosoever doeth this shall be found at the right hand of God, for he shall know

the name by which he is called; for he shall be called by the name of Christ. And now it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall not take upon him the name of Christ must be called by some other name; therefore, he findeth himself on the left hand of God." In the name of Jesus Christ amen.