

Ordinances and Sacraments

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Ordinances and Sacraments

And it shall be a testimony unto the Father, that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me, ye shall have my Spirit to be with you. ~ 3 Nephi 8:35-36

The greatest pursuit in the universe is not man's search for God, but God's search for man, as He seeks for a people upon whom He might lavish with His love; a people who will worship Him in light and in truth. For God's greatest desire is to bring together all things in one through Jesus Christ our Lord as He has confessed, "there is no end to my works, neither to my words; for this is my work and my glory, to bring to pass the immortality, and eternal life of man."¹ From the beginning of the creation of man, the Lord God has never ceased to share His marvelous light and truth as the very universe which surrounds mankind testifies within their soul of the love of God and ministers to their heart and mind according to the spirit of prophecy and the spirit of revelation.

The first revelation which God gives to man is "I am the Lord thy God. If ye will hearken unto the voice of my Spirit and believe in my Only Begotten Son who was slain from the foundation of the world for you, I will show you what I will do." The Heavenly Father has given the children of men His everything, even the life of His Son, that He might redeem us unto Himself for His own name's sake and that man might always *remember* the love and holiness of God through the offering of Jesus Christ. For how can man truly worship the Father without humility? And how can the selfishness of mankind be pierced and overcome except they do always retain the memory of the Redeemer? The Lord told Israel, "Thou hast not...honored me with thy sacrifices...but thou has made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance."²

The Remembrance of God

Through the revelation of Jesus Christ, God has shown what He will do for those who will obey the Gospel and exercise faith unto repentance. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God...and all our righteousness are as filthy rags."³ And yet, despite our disobedience, the Father has not withheld His Son, but has placed His Only Begotten on the altar with the hope that mankind will recognize God's sacrifice for them and respond in turn. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God is."⁴

The perfect will of God is for man to receive the Gospel of salvation as shown in the life of Christ, for "if Christ be in you, though the body shall die because of sin, yet the Spirit is life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from

¹ DC 22:23b

² Isaiah 43:23-26

³ Romans 3:23 and Isaiah 64:6

⁴ Romans 12:1-2

the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.⁵ There is nothing which God desires more than to spend eternity with His sons and daughters. However, the only way in which the children of men can receive eternal life is to respond to the love which God has first shown us by following our Savior down into the waters of baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost unto a remission of our sins, and enduring to the end. In so doing, mankind witnesses unto God the Eternal Father that they are willing to covenant with Him and that they do always *remember* Him, for they know that the Lord of Glory was crucified for their sins so that they might be redeemed. And if men will take upon them the name of Christ and keep His commandments, God has promised that they will always have His Spirit to be with them.

Nevertheless, how can mankind endure to the end save they remember their God and how can man remember the God in whom they do not know? Thus the Father sent the Son to be a light unto the world that through the testimony of Jesus Christ which comes by the Spirit and through the ordinances of the Church, the children of men would know both the Father and the Son and know that God has never ceased to remember man. “But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, *yet* will I not forget thee. Behold, I have *graven thee* upon the palms of my hands.⁶” It is the Father’s divine wish that the children of men will recognize His sacrifice and the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus and thereby remember Him by presenting our own souls as a living sacrifice unto God.

God however knows the weaknesses of the children of men and how they are slow to do good and quick to forget the Lord their God. Therefore the Father has given especial ordinances and sacraments to man that they might always keep Him in remembrance and walk uprightly before Him. God’s yearning for this remembrance does not stem from any form of selfishness, but instead from a desire that passes all understanding that mankind might know His wondrous love and understand that at the center of the heart of God is His concern for humanity and their eternal salvation. The laws of God are not meant to bind or to enslave man, but instead they are given so that man might have the power to receive eternal life. For through the laws of God man is given the power and the glorious liberty to be made and transformed into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God has therefore shown through the grace and mercy of the Holy Messiah that He does preserve within His memory every creature of His creating. For Alma the younger testified, “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*; and *unless* they do this, they can in no wise inherit the Kingdom of God. I say unto you, unless this be the case, they must be cast off; and this I know, because I was like to be cast off.⁷”

⁵ Romans 8:10-11

⁶ Isaiah 49:14-15

⁷ Mosiah 11:186-189

“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*; my soul hath been redeemed from the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. I was in the darkest abyss; but now I behold the marvelous light of God. My soul was wrecked with eternal torment; but I am snatched, and my soul is pained no more. I rejected my Redeemer, and denied that which had been spoken of by our fathers; but now that they may foresee that *He will come*, and that He remembereth every creature of His creating; He will make Himself manifest unto all; yea, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess before Him. Yea, even at the last day, when all men shall stand to be judged of Him, then shall they confess that He is God.⁸” Through the testimony of the Holy Messiah, Alma not only witnessed the remembrance of God which the Lord has for His creation, but he was also born of God which is the *fruit of the ordinances*.

The Purpose of the Ordinances

In order for man to foresee the love of God and to perceive the light of Christ, the Father has given to man special ordinances or rites of worship so that they might bear witness to God and to the world that they do always remember Him. For as the Lord gave the children of Israel the feast of the passover as an ordinance for a memorial that God had delivered them, the Lord has given His sons and daughters certain ordinances to remember the love that He has demonstrated through Jesus Christ. For if they will remember, they might also desire to live in a state of righteousness which can only be accomplished through the reception of the Holy Ghost which is the fruit of obedience to the commandments and ordinances of God.

The primary purpose of the ordinances of God is for mankind to foresee and to express their remembrance of God’s sacrifice, as the sacrifice of Jesus Christ bears witness of God’s covenant to the children of men. “Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee; and I will preserve thee, and give thee [Jesus Christ] for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; that thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves.⁹” The fullness of God’s covenant to man is embodied in the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, who through obedience to the divine will took upon Himself the form of a servant that He might offer His life without spot to God through the eternal Spirit and thus answer the ends of the law of sin and death and institute the law of life. In response to God’s sacrifice and the promise of eternal life, the ordinances provide the means that the children of men might remember and worship the Heavenly Father without first being compelled, but rather that they would keep the ordinances with a *willing* heart.

The first ordinance which God gave to man, and each one since, was to point men to His everlasting covenant in Christ Jesus, so that *when* men would keep His commandments, embrace the truth, and look upward, then the Kingdom of Zion would manifest itself upon the earth in the souls of men. Could the beauty of Handel’s *Messiah* be made known without the instruments which bring it to life? Neither can the beauty and glory of God be made known on the earth without a people who will be obedient to

⁸ Mosiah 11:190-197

⁹ Isaiah 49:8-9

the Gospel of His Only Begotten. Wherefore the Kingdom of God must roll forth that the Kingdom of Heaven might come. Nevertheless, "Zionic conditions are no further away nor any closer than the spiritual condition of my people justifies.¹⁰" Thus it is incumbent upon men to obey the ordinances with a willing heart for with them comes the promise of the Holy Spirit. "Therefore, in the ordinances thereof the power of godliness is manifest; and without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh; for without this, no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.¹¹"

The purpose of the ordinances of God is fully expressed in the testimony of our first parents, who were commanded to worship God by offering the firstlings of their flocks unto the Lord. "And Adam was *obedient* unto the commandments of the Lord. And after many days, an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying, Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him, I know not, save the Lord commanded me. And then the angel spake, saying, This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth; wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou doest, in the name of the Son. And thou shalt repent, and call upon God, in the name of the Son for evermore. And in that day, the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying, I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever; that, as thou hast fallen, thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will...And thus the gospel began to be preached from the beginning, being declared by holy angels, sent forth from the presence of God; and by His own voice, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost. And thus *all things* were confirmed unto Adam by an holy ordinance; and the gospel preached; and a decree sent forth that it should be in the world until the end thereof.¹²"

The ordinance which the Lord God gave to Adam and Eve was in a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten Son of God who was slain from the foundation of the world so that as many as would believe in Him might receive everlasting life. Thus Adam and Eve understood through the holy ordinance that redemption only comes through the cleansing blood of Christ and that through obedience the Holy Ghost is received. The same is true of all the ordinances, for they demonstrate unto men that they must repent and humbly submit themselves to God's divine will and be born again into the Kingdom of God. In so doing, comes the reception of the Holy Spirit who testifies within the soul of man the truth of Jesus Christ and thereby the love of Father so that the inner man might be awakened unto God and become pure even as Jesus is pure. Only then can mankind worship God in light and truth as He deserves, for when their soul has been moved to sing the song of redeeming love because of the testimony of Christ, then they can truly remember God and His eternal sacrifice because of the Spirit which dwells within them.

The ordinances of the Church therefore constitute the highest form of worship of our Heavenly Father as we *remember* Him and the Son through the emblems. Jesus said unto the Nephites when instituting the Lord's Supper, "it shall be a testimony unto the Father, that ye do always remember me. And if ye

¹⁰ DC 140:5c

¹¹ DC 83:3c

¹² Genesis 4:6-9 and Genesis 5:44-45

do always remember me, ye shall have my Spirit to be with you...Blessed are ye for this thing which ye have done, for this is fulfilling my commandments, and this doth witness unto the Father that ye are willing to do that which I have commanded you...And if ye shall always do these things, blessed are ye, for ye are built upon my rock. But whoso among you shall do *more or less* than these, are not built upon my rock, but are built upon a sandy foundation; and when the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon them, they shall fall, and the gates of hell are already open to receive them: therefore blessed are ye if ye shall keep my commandments, which the Father hath commanded me that I should give unto you.¹³

The ordinances which God has given to the Church of Christ are its chief means of remembering and worshipping Him. It is imperative that each ordinance be strictly followed for even the slightest change to the ordinances perverts the memory of God and the sacrifice which He made through the Lord Jesus Christ. The very nature and personality of God is contained within the ordinances as they demonstrate who God is and His never failing love for mankind. For if men will obey the ordinances, they will discover within their soul a newness of life which will spring forth unto everlasting salvation for those who *willfully* surrender their life unto Him who made all things. Any perversion of the ordinances diminishes the light of God and renders it impossible for the children of men to worship their Heavenly Father *in truth*.

“They shall therefore keep mine ordinance, lest they bear sin for it, and die; therefore, if they profane not mine ordinances, I the Lord will sanctify them.¹⁴” If the saints will not obey the rites of worship which God has established within His Church, then they have no promise. And when the sons and daughters of God treat lightly the sacred truths that have been placed within their hands, darkness and unbelief begin to creep up not only within their own hearts, but also within the hearts and minds of the world. Isaiah prophesized, “The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have *transgressed* the laws, *changed* the ordinance, *broken* the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.¹⁵”

Nevertheless, if men will hearken to the voice of the Spirit and will obey the ordinances of the Church, then the form of godliness will be made manifest in the flesh. For the ordinances bear witness of the love of God and His power to change the heart of a selfish and wicked man into a loving one. Thus mankind is born again through the ordinances and sinful flesh is changed after the likeness of the image of Jesus Christ our Lord. For the ordinances and sacraments teach men of the sacrifice that the Master has made so that through His ministry they might learn how to die so that they might finally discover what is required to live.

¹³ 3 Nephi 8:35-36, 39, and 43-46

¹⁴ Leviticus 22:9

¹⁵ Isaiah 24:5-6

The Sacraments

The Lord God has given particular ordinances to the Church of Jesus Christ which contain certain elements of worship for the purpose of not only remembering God or for sanctification by the Holy Ghost, but so that man might also gain insights into the personality of God. The Lord God established these ordinances, or sacraments, upon covenants between God and man and designed them to be administered through the authority and power of the priesthood. Within each sacrament, man recognizes the power of God and the eternal sacrifice which was offered for them through the Only Begotten Son and thus, in response, man covenants with God that they will put to death the old man of sin and become a new creature in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It is God's nature to make all things new as no unclean thing can enter into His holy presence. Thus the Father has given certain sacraments unto the Church so that the saints might remember the great goodness of God and recognize that they cannot transgress His commandments and expect to escape the penalty. The sacraments are also given for the Church to understand that it is the Lord God who sanctifies them, not man, nor an institution. Therefore the sons and daughters of God must present their life a living sacrifice by yielding their hearts unto God and surrendering themselves to the divine will. For it is only through submission that mankind is made free to live eternally with God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost.

There are eight especial ordinances or sacraments which the Lord has given unto His Church that they might worship Him and obtain the feel of righteousness through the Holy Spirit, namely the blessing of children, baptism of water, baptism of fire, the Lord's Supper, marriage, ordination, administration, and patriarchal blessings. Each sacrament is designed for the saints to remember their covenant and to consecrate their life unto the Father, which is not accomplished in the ordinance alone but within the broken heart and contrite spirit of the obedient and willing servant. Notwithstanding this truth there are certain elements that are required for an ordinance to constitute a sacrament.

Covenant and Sacrifice

As God revealed through the law of Moses and more importantly through the life of the Lord Jesus, a sacrament must first contain a covenant and a sacrifice. For in the law, the high priest was ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices in order to answer for the sins of the people, which was a similitude of the sacrifice that God offered in His Son so that Jesus might be the advocate and propitiation of the world. The sacrifices of the high priest however were to serve as an example and shadow of heavenly truths, for while Christ "was on the earth, He offered for a sacrifice His own life for the sins of the people¹⁶" in order to establish a new and better covenant.

"For if that first covenant [the law of Moses] had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second [the law of Christ]. For finding fault with them, He [God] saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt... For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel

¹⁶ Hebrews 8:4

after those days, saith the Lord; I will put *my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts*; and I will be *to them* a God, and they shall be *to me* a people; and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember *no more*. In that He saith, *A new covenant*, He hath made the first *old*. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.¹⁷”

Wherefore as the old covenant that was given in the law brought death, God instituted the new covenant, which covenant was given to Adam from the beginning, to bring forth life. Thus a sacrament requires the man to lay down his old self which brings death and become a new man in Jesus Christ which brings eternal life so that by means of death mankind might receive redemption from everlasting woe. “For where a covenant is, there must also of necessity be *the death* of the victim. For a covenant is of force after the victim is dead; otherwise it is of *no strength at all* while the victim liveth.¹⁸” Contained within the heart of each sacrament is the covenant that as God sacrificed His life for man, man ought to sacrifice his own life for God. In so doing, God and man might become one through Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost. For the children of men are cleansed by keeping the commandment, justified by the Spirit, and sanctified by the blood of the Lord Jesus.

In the blessing of little children, the parents covenant with God that they will sacrifice in order to raise their children in an environment that is conducive for spiritual growth into the Kingdom of God. The baptisms of water and of fire are designed to provide mankind with the experience of death and resurrection. Thus the man sacrifices his old self in order to put on Christ and as he partakes of the Lord’s Supper he remembers his covenant to serve God and to keep His commandments. In marriage, a man and woman enter into a covenant with God that they will die unto themselves and become one flesh before Him just as Jesus and the Church become one to bring forth the Kingdom. In administration, man recognizes the mercy, love, and power of God for the sacrament brings not only a temporal blessing but more importantly it brings a remission of sins, which deepens the responsibility and thereby the covenant between God and man. Whereas the patriarchal blessing comes with the understanding of God’s love for man and His desire to speak to man today which brings forth a richer covenant.

Authority

A sacrament also requires the authority of God. For as the Master was ordained to be a high priest in order to represent God and offer Himself for the sins of the world, the authority of priesthood must also be present in order to represent Christ and administer the sacraments to God’s people. “Now these ordinances were given after this manner, that thereby the people might *look forward* on the Son of God, it [the high priesthood] being a type of His order, or it being His order; and this, that they might *look forward* to Him for a remission of their sins, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord.¹⁹” Each

¹⁷ Hebrews 8:7-13 and Jeremiah 31:31-34

¹⁸ Hebrews 9:16-17

¹⁹ Alma 10:9-10

sacrament requires men who have been chosen and ordained by the hand of the Lord into His holy priesthood so that they might stand in the stead of Christ on the earth.

As men come unto God and worship Him in light and in truth through the sacraments, the Lord has promised to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost, which is the especial responsibility of the Melchisedec priesthood. Wherefore, every sacrament, save for baptism of water, the serving of the Lord's Supper, and marriage, is to be administered by the Melchisedec priesthood.

Symbols

A sacrament must also include the use of one or more symbols which often represent the power and the truth of God. All things were created to bear witness of God, both temporal and spiritual, and the Lord uses the images of things set up on the earth as a type and shadow of those things which are in heaven. Thus every sacrament bears record of the love of God through its symbols. Whether it is by the laying on hands or the oil which represents the bestowing of the Holy Ghost, or the bread and the wine which represent the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, each symbol testifies of the love that God has for humanity and His call for men to remember both Him and their covenant. It is therefore through the emblems that the soul of man is guided to worship the Father and to always remember Him. For if the sons and daughters of God will live their life in remembrance of the Son of God, they will always have His Spirit to be with them and will thereby have the power to overcome the natural man. Only through the true worship of God can mankind become free to live with one heart and one mind in Christ Jesus. For God hath made Jesus "to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."²⁰

Blessing of Children

God is first and foremost a personal God, and so it is His desire to share Himself with the children of men according to plainness of the truth. With Israel, God attempted to share Himself through His servants, the prophets, and commanded Moses to build the tabernacle of the congregation as a witness after the pattern of things in heaven. For the prophets bore witness of the nature of God through the promise of the Messiah, while "the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness"²¹ pointed to a better covenant with better promises which were founded upon the revelation of Jesus Christ. And with the Church of Christ in the latter days, God attempted to share Himself through His servants, through the voice of the Spirit and through the testimony of the Lord Jesus. However, God has also shared His personality through the sacraments of the Church, as each one speaks to the soul of man, testifying of who God is through the power of the Holy Ghost.

The sacrament of the blessing of children demonstrates the desire that God has to be in every part of man's life as well as the Lord's love for innocence and purity. While members of the Church are commanded to bring their children unto the elders in order to receive a blessing in the name of Christ, this sacrament is not restricted to the membership of the Church alone but instead all are welcomed to partake. The blessing of the children is primarily a covenant and symbol between God and the parents, for as the parents recognize that God sacrificed His Only Begotten Son for man, it is their reasonable

²⁰ 2 Corinthians 5:21

²¹ Acts 7:44

service to consecrate their children unto the Lord. In so doing, the parents covenant with God that they will be a steward over their children and raise them in an environment where the Savior and the Kingdom are both taught and exemplified. Likewise the congregation takes upon themselves the responsibility as witnesses of the covenant to support both the parents and the children by provoking them unto love and to good works.

The symbol of the sacrament is in the presenting of the child before the elders for the laying on of hands and is to be kept with an obedient heart as the parent's covenant with the Father that they are willing to consecrate their life to teach the Gospel of Christ and the principles of the Kingdom of God to their children. Thus the blessing of children is not fulfilled merely by presenting the child before the elders, but it continues throughout his or her life as they learn line upon line and precept upon precept. The Lord God has promised in return that whatsoever men ask in the name of the Son which is right and expedient and with faith believing, He will give. As such, the blessing of the children is to be administered by the Melchisedec priesthood who have the responsibility to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost. The fruit of the ordinance is in the Lord's promise to bless the child both spiritually and temporally as well as an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the parent's that they might have the strength and the wisdom to raise their children in manner designed of God.

Baptism of Water

The universe bears witness that within the personality of God is the desire to make all things new. And as no man sows a new piece of cloth upon an old garment, the Lord God cannot bring about a newness of life until the former things have passed away. For the earth must first die before it can be quickened unto Celestial glory just as a seed must die before it can be quickened and bring forth fruit. Thus in order for mankind to be changed from their fallen state into a state of righteousness and be made in the likeness of Jesus Christ our Lord, they must first lay aside every weight of sin and die unto themselves through obedience. For God has not called us unto uncleanness but unto holiness, for no unclean thing can enter into His presence. God therefore has expressed His love and desire through the sacrament of the baptism of water for all men to come unto Him and to believe in Jesus Christ for "His arm is extended to all people who will repent and believe on His name."²²

True belief however demands an inner and outer expression which testifies of the earnestness of the whole man. Thus the Lord Jesus was baptized in order to fulfill all righteousness and to testify unto the Father that He was willing to lay down His life so that He might take it up again by the power of the Spirit and therefore bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, and this because He believed in the Father. "Wherefore, He is the first fruits unto God, inasmuch as He shall make intercession for all the children of men; and they that believe in Him, *shall be saved*. And because of the intercession for all, all men come unto God; wherefore, they stand in the presence of Him, to be judged of Him, according to the truth and holiness which is in Him."²³

Through His baptism of the water, the Master witnessed unto the children of men that a man cannot be born into the Kingdom unless he first believes in God, which belief cannot be expressed save he keeps

²² Alma 12:180

²³ 2 Nephi 1:76-79

the commandments of the Lord with a willing soul. Once the testimony of God has been made alive within the heart and mind of man through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, he must respond in sacrifice in a manner designed of God, and this so that he might better see the innermost desires of God's heart. For God yearns to reconcile mankind to Himself by Jesus Christ, which cannot be accomplished save our old man of sin is buried with Christ and we are made new creatures in Him, so that whomsoever will might be gathered in one. It is in baptism that the covenants of God are better understood, "for where a covenant is, there must also of necessity be the death of the victim. For a covenant is of force after the victim is dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the victim liveth."

In the symbol of baptism, old things are passed away and all things are become new if mankind will follow their Savior with full purpose of heart down into the water and enter into a covenant with God that as Christ so died, so shall they live. In so doing, mankind sacrifices or surrenders his will to the Father and is planted in the likeness of Christ's death so that they might also be raised in the likeness of His resurrection. Through this sacrament and the testimony of the Son, mankind learns how to die unto sin and become alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Through the baptism of water, God speaks into the soul of man concerning the joy of obedience, of cleanliness, and of holiness, as well as the promise of eternal life. The sacrament of baptism is the first fruits of repentance and brings forth a new heart and a clean spirit and thereby can be administered by both an Aaronic priest, whose duty it is to preach the preparatory Gospel of repentance, and the Melchizedek priesthood. Nevertheless, the promises which are contained within the covenant of baptism are dependent upon man's continual obedience to the testimony of Christ, for no sacrament is *completely* fulfilled during this life.

Baptism of Fire

In order to fulfill and satisfy God's desire to make all things new, the old man of sin must first be mortified and changed into the likeness of Jesus, the Son of God. For mankind cannot receive the image of the Lord Jesus save the Spirit of Christ dwells within them, and the Spirit can only abide in the souls of the obedient as God does not dwell in unholy temples. God has therefore promised the gift of the Holy Ghost to abide in the hearts of all those who will surrender to the Father in the name of the Son by fulfilling the commandments through the baptism of the water and fire. Through the willful obedience to the commandments of God, mankind receives a remission of sins which brings a meekness and lowliness of heart and thereby the visitation of the Holy Ghost who bears record of the Savior.

It is through the revelation of the Son of God which comes by the Spirit, that the children of men start to receive the image of Christ in their countenance and thus discover that Jesus is their own better self, growing up in their midst. It is through this testimony which is shed abroad in the hearts of all those who will believe, that mankind is given the power to become the sons and daughters of God. Thus men see through the baptism of fire that while Satan desires to steal men's power and bring them into captivity, it is the nature of God to give power and set men free, which freedom they will receive if they will chose to be born again, not into a temporal world, but into a spiritual kingdom after the image of Christ. The first man is born temporally after the image of the earth, but the last man is quickened by the Spirit after the image of heaven. "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the

Kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.²⁴ Wherefore God requires all nations, peoples, and tongues to repent and to be baptized by the water and the Spirit and to be born into His Kingdom.

In the sacrament of the baptism of fire, man witnesses unto the Father that they believe in Jesus Christ as well as in God and in His covenants, that as they are planted in the likeness of Christ's death they are also made alive in the likeness of His resurrection. And as God sacrificed His own life for man, man ought to sacrifice their life for God and His Kingdom by surrendering their will unto the Father as Jesus did. For Christ "thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."²⁵ And thus the Lord was able to take up His life again by the power of the Spirit. God has therefore promised man through the sacrament of the baptism of fire to cleanse and to purify the souls of all those who will humble themselves before Him and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost in the name of Christ.

It is through the gift of the Spirit that men are spiritually begotten of the Father and if they will endure unto the end they will certainly be called a child of Christ and receive eternal life. The baptism of fire represents God's hope for man and His desire to make them new after the image of the Only Begotten Son, which likeness can only be received by the Spirit. Hence only the Melchisedec priesthood, whose responsibility is to give the Holy Ghost, is allowed to participate in the baptism of fire. The symbol of which is not only the laying on of hands but also the willful submission of the individual entering into the covenant to present themselves before God. The Lord God has covenanted through this sacrament that if mankind will recognize the grace of Jesus Christ by choosing to repent and surrender themselves in humility, He will give them the power to become His children and be raised anew in the resurrection of the just.

The Lord's Supper

It is through the Spirit of God that the children of men begin to understand that they do not have life in and of themselves, but instead realize it is a gift from God. For the Holy Spirit enlightens the souls of men to see that there exists within the center of the universe, a perpetual sacrifice, without which there could be no life. For as the heavens are filled with cinders of burnt out suns so too do we see that our own Sun is burning itself up and this so that the earth might sustain life which is after a similitude of the Only Begotten Son of God. For without the eternal sacrifice of the Lamb there could be no life.

God has established the ordinance of the Lord's Supper that men might remember the sacrifice which God has given for them, as the symbols of the bread and wine represent the broken body and spilt blood of the Master who willingly laid down His life in order to fulfill the will of the Father. And this so that the work and glory of God, which is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man, might be made manifest unto the children of men, and so that they might believe the love that God has toward them. There is nothing outside the love of God that can change the heart of a selfish man into a loving one and thereby create a right Spirit within him. Nevertheless, this change of heart cannot be

²⁴ 1 Corinthians 15:50

²⁵ Philippians 2:6-8

accomplished by man alone, but it requires faith and repentance which is exercised through obedience. Thus the first fruits of repentance are baptism of the water and the Spirit as it is in these two ordinances that man first accepts the sacrifice of our Redeemer and covenants with the Father in return that they will seek first the Kingdom of God and to establish His righteousness. In response, the Lord God promises that His children will always have His Spirit to be with them.

The promise of the Holy Ghost, and thereby eternal life, is conditioned on mans' obedience to the commandments of God for they have not come thus far save it were their reliance upon the merits and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men.²⁶" And yet, how can the children of men press forward without the remembrance of God and Jesus always written in their hearts? It is the nature of God to remember His covenants for His word is eternal and it cannot pass away until all is fulfilled. "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."²⁷

In order for the children of God to remember the Lord Jesus and their covenant, and to endure to the end, the Father established the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the similitude of His Son that thereby they might understand that all men must perish without the atoning blood of the Holy Messiah. Once the knowledge and testimony of the Redeemer becomes alive within the souls of men there are only two responses, they can either "choose liberty and eternal life through the great mediation of all men, or to choose captivity and death according to the captivity and power of the devil."²⁸ To choose eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord means to enter into a covenant with Him and to always remember Him. Thus through the Lord's Supper, mankind does witness unto the Father that they do always remember the blood that was shed for them that they might have everlasting life. As this sacrament includes both the Gospel of repentance and the gift of the Holy Ghost, it can be administered by an Aaronic priest and the Melchisedec priesthood.

Marriage

It is the will of God that all things might be gathered in one in Christ. For if mankind is not one they are not His. Unity however is not an ideal but a state of righteousness which is only accomplished through the power of the Holy Ghost. God therefore has given unto man the feel of unity through the sacrament of marriage, thus a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife and they shall become one flesh. In other words, both the man and the woman are called to die unto themselves in the sacrament of marriage and surrender their life one to another in the presence of Almighty God after the similitude of Jesus Christ and the Church, which holy union brings forth the Kingdom. Thus the Father has demonstrated through the marriage sacrament that both men and women have unique responsibilities and that all are needed to establish the cause of Zion.

²⁶ 2 Nephi 13:29

²⁷ Isaiah 55:10-11

²⁸ 2 Nephi 1:120

Nevertheless, the oneness which God desires cannot be achieved through any private will of man but only through the means which God has provided. It is only through the covenant of marriage that a man and a woman are able to unite and build a family in righteousness both spiritually and temporally. The same is true of Zion, which is the tangible expression of the Kingdom of God. Mankind cannot become one simply because they desire it, but true unity requires men to first unite their hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord, which is only accomplished through humility and willful obedience to the commandments of God.

A marriage demonstrates a sacramental relationship where two people willfully and purposely surrender themselves to one another under the power and authority of God. Such a relationship is free of guilt and fear, but instead nourishes, strengthens, and uplifts the souls of men. Marriage shows that the path to unity is only to be found through sacrifice, as two individuals covenant with God to keep their lives wholly for each other. If the saints of God were willing to do the same, they too might discover the holy union that is required in Zion.

The symbol of the marriage sacrament is the solemnization between the man and the woman before the Church, which is a witness before God and man of the couple's covenant with each other. This holy covenant is only to be fulfilled upon death, at which time those who faithfully keep their covenant of marriage will receive the blessings that await all those who walk uprightly before the Lord. Marriage visibly shows the divine truth that man is not meant to be alone, but that we are in need of companionship so that we might walk in paths of righteousness and establish the Kingdom of God. And as the sacrament of marriage does not include bestowing the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, it can be administered by the Aaronic priest and the Melchisedec priesthood.

Ordination

There is nothing within God's universe that does not have a purpose, from the smallest molecule to the largest star, all things have been created and chosen to perform a particular task that benefits the whole. Thus all are called to serve, but because of man's agency, not all men choose to do so. "For many are called, but few chosen."²⁹ And this because God is not a respecter of persons, if He does not call all men, He cannot choose any man. And it is the nature of God to choose those who will represent Him as He first chose His Son. "But behold, my Beloved Son, which was my beloved and *chosen* from the beginning."³⁰

While all men are called to serve in the Kingdom of God, whether young or old, male or female, priesthood or member, the divine principle of authority is important to our Heavenly Father. For how could mankind know and recognize the truth of God save the Father ordained His Only Begotten to bear witness of it? For truth cannot be created or made, but exists "independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also, otherwise there is no existence. Behold, here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man, because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the light."³¹ In order then for the brightness of the

²⁹ Matthew 22:14

³⁰ Genesis 3:3

³¹ DC 90:5b-c

glory of God to be witnessed in all the earth, the light of our Saviour had to first shine within the world. Thus Jesus humbled Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant, not to confess that He was the Son of God, but to testify of His Father by the power of the Holy Ghost.

And yet how could Jesus witness of God, and His love for humanity, unless the Father had ordained Him to this purpose? “So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made a high priest; but He [God] that said unto Him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee.³²” Not only was Jesus Christ the Only Begotten Son of the Father from the beginning, but God acknowledged this eternal truth before all men when He spoke from heaven, saying, “Behold, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name. Hear ye Him.³³”

Through the authority which God had given Jesus, the Master called and ordained twelve apostles as especial witnesses in order to testify of the light of Christ and the glory of God. The principle and pattern of authority was established in the beginning with Christ and has continued unto the present day even from the time of Adam, and this so man could recognize the Word of God, the Church of God, and the Kingdom of God. For how could men know of a surety the truth of God save the Father and the Son especially called and ordained men to this purpose? As the Lord chose the sons of Aaron and Levi to minister for Him and to keep charge of the congregation, God has chosen men in His Church to stand in the stead of Christ as Christ bore record of the Father. Thereby the sacrament of ordination is a covenant between God and men, and before the Church, that he who is called will sacrifice his old way of life and will instead labor diligently in the vineyards of the Lord for the edifying of the body of Christ until all come unto the fullness of the knowledge of the Son of God, even unto a perfect man.

The emblem within the ordination comes through the laying on of hands which is a symbol that the man has been set aside to minister for God. The Lord has promised in response that those who receive this priesthood, receive Him, and those who are faithful unto the obtaining of the priesthood, “and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.³⁴” For how can a man shepherd a people unto the fullness of the measure of the stature of Christ if he does not know the Lord himself? Those men called and ordained to either the Aaronic or Melchisedec priesthoods are thereby ordained according to the gifts and callings of God unto men through the power of the Holy Ghost. In so doing, the Lord separates to Himself servants to minister to the people and to bear record of the straightness of the way and the narrowness of the gate which leads to eternal life.

Administration

To those who acknowledge God’s hand in all things, they begin to learn that God is a never failing source of blessings, both spiritually and temporally. It is only through the great and eternal sacrifice of Jesus Christ that the universe has life, and yet despite the grace which God has already bestowed upon mankind, He continually yearns to bless His creation. In so doing, God hopes that the children of men will awaken to the reality of His love, to their nothingness and to His great goodness. This truth is made abundantly manifest in the healing power of administration. For the Master said, “Is it *not easier* to say

³² Hebrews 5:5

³³ Matthew 3:46 and 3 Nephi 5:8

³⁴ DC 83:6

to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; than to say, Arise, and take up thy bed and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he said to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thy house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all.³⁵

The greatest gift, and therefore the greatest blessing, which God can give to man is that of eternal life. The Lord Jesus witnessed while in His ministry on the earth that the true miracle was not the healing of the body or mind, but the healing of the soul. Wherefore, the sacrament of administration is firstly a spiritual blessing which brings a remission of sins for all those who will recognize God's benediction with a change of life. It is through such blessings that the pure love of God grows brighter and brighter within the souls of men until the image and character of the Lord Jesus is quickened in the inner man.

However, because greater light brings greater condemnation, the sacrament of administration demands a covenant that the individual will be a just steward over the spiritual and temporal blessings bestowed upon them. Those desiring an administration must then yield their hearts unto God by sacrifice, that as they present their soul before God for a blessing, they acknowledge the great and tender mercies of the Father and covenant to be a living sacrifice which is their reasonable service. In response, God has promised to give an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which comes through the laying of hands by those having authority, as well as a forgiveness of sins. As such, this sacrament can only be performed by the Melchisedec priesthood.

Patriarchal Blessing

Almighty God is both Lord and Father over all as there is nothing that can exist outside of Him. And because He is a loving, merciful, and just God, He has found it expedient than man might know the things appointed unto them and the things whereby they might receive eternal life. Therefore, God has never ceased to reveal Himself to the children of men so that they might know the great plan of redemption, prepared from the foundation of the world through Christ. God is a personal God and it is His personality to speak to man concerning these things.

One method in which the Father has chosen to speak to mankind is through patriarchal blessings, which demonstrate His parental and guiding nature. The Lord God, because He does not desire for His creation to remain in ignorance, has given man this sacrament as a means to counsel and shepherd His people, as well as to reveal His will for them in their life. An individual wishing to obtain such a blessing must come prepared to receive the word of God and be willing to keep it. Thus, as the patriarch places his hands upon them, the individual covenants with God that they will put away their rebel will and walk uprightly before the Lord. For men to receive the Father's blessing, they must come unto God with a broken heart and a contrite spirit and be willing to submit to all things which the Lord does see fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to their father. In return, God has covenanted to be our God and our Heavenly Father.

³⁵ Mark 2:7-9

The Invitation of God

The sacraments of the Church of Christ are God's invitation for man to know and worship Him as they testify of His never failing love and unyielding desire for all men to come and obtain eternal life. The Father has expressed His willingness for the children of men to live with Him in glory through the sacraments as they bear record of the sacrifice which He has offered in His Only Begotten Son. Through Jesus Christ our Heavenly Father has stretched out His holy arm to ask men if they are willing to live eternally with Him, which we may if we will choose to repent and to believe the Gospel of the Kingdom. Yet how can man express their love for God save there was a way prepared to come unto the Lord with a broken heart and a contrite spirit? God has therefore established His ordinances so that man might know who and what they worship, so that as the pure love of Christ is shed abroad in their hearts the image of God might be engraven in their countenances. And this so that man might experience true joy, which is not the reception of the love of God, but is expressing it through sacrifice.

Without the sacraments and the authority to administer them, godliness and true holiness cannot be made manifest while in the flesh. And yet men cannot enter into the presence of God and the Lamb in the Kingdom of Glory without first being purified "through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, while in the flesh."³⁶ To receive such an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, men must be elevated above the beggarly elements of this life which can only be accomplished through worship. The sacraments are man's chief means of worshiping our Heavenly Father so that we might learn to choose Him. It is not a question of the invitation of God through Christ, it is rather Christ in you, the hope of Glory.

³⁶ DC 76:8c