



## BOOK OF MORMON CENTRAL

<http://bookofmormoncentral.org/>

---

### Becoming as Little Children

Author(s): John A. Tvedtnes

Source: *The Most Correct Book: Insights from a Book of Mormon Scholar*

Published: Salt Lake City; Cornerstone Publishing, 1999 (1st Edition)

Page(s): 278–281

---

Chapter 41

## BECOMING AS LITTLE CHILDREN

---

*Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God. (3 Nephi 9:22)*

The message of the resurrected Christ to the Nephites was a rephrasing of what he had declared among the Jews during his mortal ministry: “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3 (see verses 1-14); cf. Luke 9:48 and see 1 Peter 2:1-2).

King Benjamin explained that little children “are blessed; for . . . the blood of Christ atoneth for their sins,” while adults must “humble themselves and become as little children . . . none shall be found blameless before God, except it be little children, only through repentance and faith on the name of the Lord God Omnipotent” (Mosiah 3:16, 18, 21; cf. 15:22-25).

He also explained how we can become as little children:

For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father. (Mosiah 3:19)

When his listeners covenanted to obey God, Benjamin declared that they should now “be called the children of Christ, his

## BECOMING AS LITTLE CHILDREN

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). From this, we learn that, to become as little children, we must be born again through a process that involves faith, repentance, and baptism.

When Christ first appeared to the Nephites in the city of Bountiful after his resurrection, he placed particular stress on the importance of becoming as little children, and tied it to repentance and baptism:

And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things.  
And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.  
(3 Nephi 11:37-38)

The Savior noted that the twelve disciples he had just chosen would have power to baptize, and promised the Nephites that “after that ye are baptized with water, behold, I will baptize you with fire and the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 12:1-2). He then recited the beatitudes (verses 3-12), which discuss the child-like qualities referred to in Mosiah 3:19, cited above. One of the beatitudes speaks of receiving the Holy Ghost and another of becoming children of God (3 Nephi 12:6, 9).

The promise to the twelve was fulfilled the following day, before Jesus’ second visit. The disciples knelt and “did pray for that which they most desired; and they desired that the Holy Ghost should be given unto them” (3 Nephi 19:9). Nephi, the chief disciple, “went down into the water and was baptized...[then] he baptized all those whom Jesus had chosen” (3 Nephi 19:11-12).

When they were all baptized and had come up out of the water, the Holy Ghost did fall upon

## BECOMING AS LITTLE CHILDREN

them, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost and with fire. And behold, they were encircled about as if it were by fire; and it came down from heaven . . . and angels did come down out of heaven and did minister unto them. And it came to pass that while the angels were ministering unto the disciples, behold, Jesus came and stood in the midst and ministered unto them. (3 Nephi 19:13-15)

The scene is reminiscent of what had happened during Jesus' first visit to the Nephites, when he called for their little children and blessed them (3 Nephi 17:11-12, 21). Following this, angels descended "out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them" (3 Nephi 17:24; see 3 Nephi 26:14). It seems more than coincidental that this event took place the day before the baptism of the Nephite twelve. The juxtaposition of the two events seems to be teaching us that what the adults obtained through faith, repentance, and baptism was given to the children without prior conditions.

This was also Mormon's message to his son Moroni when he wrote against the abominable practice of child baptism. His message retains its value despite the passage of many centuries:

Behold I say unto you that this thing shall ye teach—repentance and baptism unto those who are accountable and capable of committing sin; yea, teach parents that they must repent and be baptized, and humble themselves as their little children, and they shall all be saved with their little children. (Moroni 8:10)

In our day, the Lord has reiterated that adults "must repent and be baptized," and explained that this included "children

## BECOMING AS LITTLE CHILDREN

who have arrived at the years of accountability” (D&C 18:42). In another modern revelation, the minimum age of baptism is established as eight years (D&C 68:25, 27). The status of young children is stressed in the story of king Benjamin. All of his people, “except it were little children,” “entered into a covenant with God to keep his commandments” (Mosiah 6:1-2).

### *CONCLUSION*

The message remains today as it was when Christ spoke to the Nephites:

Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God. Behold, for such I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again; therefore repent, and come unto me ye ends of the earth, and be saved. (3 Nephi 9:22)