

### Old Testament Examples of Conversion

1. **Moses**—"The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire . . . put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Ex 3:2-5)
2. **Samuel**—"Samuel, Samuel . . . Samuel answered, 'Speak; for thy servant heareth'" (1 Sam 3:10)
3. **Naomi**—"I will go . . . thy God my God" (Ruth 1:16)

### New Testament Examples of Conversion

1. **Mary the Mother of the Lord**—"Behold the handmaiden of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:48)
2. **Apostles**—Jesus' call, "Come and See," "Become a fisher of men," "Come follow me."
3. **"God-fearing Jews"** is a term used specifically for converts who believed in the teachings of monotheism and the Law of Moses, but did not undergo circumcision as it was often a fatal operation for adult men (Acts 2:5).
4. **"Every nation under heaven"** Conversions were initially to Jews around the diaspora until Acts 10 when the Lord taught Peter, not to call believing people "unclean" (Acts 2:5; Acts 10).
5. **Saul / Paul**-Repent, "why kickest thou against the pricks" (Acts 9:4-9);
  - a. ". . . arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Ac 22:14-16)
  - b. "When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I . . . saw the Lord" (Ac 22:17-18, NIV)
  - c. "the Lord said to me, 'Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles'" (Ac 22:19-21)
  - d. "Prove their repentance by their deeds" (Acts 26:19-20, NIV)
  - e. Gifts of the Spirit are the "signs will follow them that believe" (Mark 16:17)
6. **King Agrippa**, do you believe the prophets? . . . "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" (Ac 26:27-28)
7. **Lydia seller of Purple**—"a certain woman . . . worshiped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken" (Ac 16:14)
8. **Jailer**—When Paul was whipped and imprisoned, the walls of the prison collapsed in an earthquake, culminating in the conversion of the jailer. Paul and his companions returned briefly to Lydia's house, "where they met with the brothers and sisters and encouraged them. Then they left" (Acts 16:40).
9. **The Philippian Saints**--"be of the same mind in the Lord" (Philippians 4:2).

### *New Testament Conversion vs. Apostasy*

When the Apostle John received and wrote the visions that became the book of Revelation, he was probably the only surviving original member of the Twelve, and yet he was in prison. Alonzo Gaskill notes that at that same time: "many, like the Gnostics, were cropping up claiming authority (and winning many converts)" (*Revelation*, up). In chapters 2 and 3, John the Revelator lists the weaknesses that had befallen early branches of the Church. The quality of their conversion was a major problem that contributed to the apostasy that was well underway. They do not sound that different than our problem with commitment to the gospel.

1. Succumbing to pagan influences (including materialism)
2. Denying Christianity because of social persecution
3. Following false teachings
4. Believing false doctrines
5. "A wishy-washy commitment to the Gospel" (ibid).
6. A loss of their initial conversion to the gospel or love of Jesus

### Book of Mormon Examples of Conversion

1. **Abish**—"converted unto the Lord for many years, on account of a remarkable vision of her father" (Alma 19:16)
2. **King Benjamin**—"Hearken unto me, and open your ears that ye may hear, and your hearts that ye may understand, and your minds that the mysteries of God may be unfolded to your view" (Mosiah 2:9)
3. **Alma the Elder's Conversion** (Mosiah 17:2-18:35 and 27)
  - a. The covenant of baptism (Mosiah 18:14)
  - b. People's Preparations

- i. People's Willingness
  - ii. Baptismal Covenants and blessings
  - iii. They believe Alma's words, understand repentance, redemption, and faith on the Lord.
  - iv. They will bear one another's burdens, mourn with those that mourn, comfort those in need of comfort, and stand as witnesses of God.
  - v. They covenant to serve God.  
They covenant to keep God's commandments.
  - vi. They come into the fold of God; they are called God's people.
  - vii. They have Christ's Spirit more abundantly, are redeemed of God, and are numbered in the first resurrection with Eternal Life.
- 4. Missionary Work (Alma 17)
  - 5. Remaining born again (Alma 5)
  - 6. Humility, planting the seed of faith (Alma 32)
  - 7. Following the Lord's guidance (Alma 37)

**Alma 5: 50 Questions on Conversion** (John Welch, *Charting the Book of Mormon*, FARMS: 1999)

Alma questions the backsliding church members in Zarahemla about the depth and quality of their conversion.

***Remember God's Acts for His People***

- 1. Have you sufficiently retained in remembrance the captivity of your fathers? (vs. 6)
- 2. Have you sufficiently retained in remembrance God's mercy and long-suffering towards your fathers?
- 3. Have you sufficiently retained in remembrance that he has delivered their souls from hell?
- 4. Were your fathers destroyed? (vs. 8)
- 5. Were the bands of death broken, and the chains of hell, which encircled your fathers about, were they loosed? (vs.9)

***Knowing the Essential Logic of the Gospel***

- 6. On what conditions were your fathers saved? (vs. 10)
- 7. On what grounds had they to hope for salvation?
- 8. What is the cause of your fathers' being loosed from the bands of death, yea, and also the chains of hell?
- 9. Did not my father Alma believe in the words which were delivered by the mouth of Abinadi? (vs. 11)
- 10. Was Abinadi not a holy prophet?
- 11. Did Abinadi not speak the words of God?
- 12. Did my father Alma believe them?

***Being Personally Converted***

- 13. Have you spiritually been born of God? (vs. 14)
- 14. Have you received his image in your countenance?
- 15. Have you experienced this mighty change in your heart?
- 16. Do you exercise faith in the redemption of him who created you? (vs. 15)
- 17. Do you look forward with an eye of faith?

***Imagining the Judgment Day***

- 18. Do you view this mortal body raised in immortality, and this corruption raised in incorruption, to stand before God to be judged according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal body? (vs. 15)
- 19. Can you imagine to yourself that you hear the voice of the Lord, saying unto you, in that day: Come unto me you blessed, for behold your works have been works of righteousness upon the face of the earth? (vs. 16)
- 20. Or do you imagine to yourself that you can lie unto the Lord in that day, and say—Lord, my works have been righteous works upon the face of the earth—and that he will save you? (vs. 17)

21. Or otherwise, can you imagine yourself brought before the tribunal of God with your soul filled with guilt and remorse, having a remembrance of all your guilt, yea, a perfect remembrance of all your wickedness, yea, a remembrance that you have set at defiance the commandments of God? (vs. 18)
22. Can you look up to God at that day with a pure heart and clean hands? (vs. 19)
23. Can you look up, having the image of God engraven upon your countenance?
24. Can you think of being saved when you have yielded yourself to become subject to the devil? (vs. 20)
25. How will you feel if you shall stand before the bar of God, having your garments stained with blood and all manner of filthiness? (vs. 22)
26. What will these things testify against you?
27. Will they not testify that you are a murderer? (vs. 23)
28. Will they not also testify that you are guilty of all manner of wickedness?
29. Do you suppose that such an one can have a place to sit down in the kingdom of God, with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, and also all the holy prophets, whose garments are cleansed and are spotless, pure and white? (vs. 24)

### ***Assessing One's Spiritual Condition***

30. If you have experienced a change of heart, and if you have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, can you feel so now? (vs. 26)
31. Have you walked, keeping yourself blameless before God?
32. Could you say, if you were called to die at this time, within yourself, that you have been sufficiently humble?
33. Could you say that your garments have been cleansed and made white through the blood of Christ?
34. Are you stripped of pride?
35. Is there one among you who is not stripped of envy?
36. Is there one among you that doth make a mock of his brother, or that heapeth upon him persecutions?

### ***Identifying with the Fold***

37. If you are not the sheep of the good shepherd, of what fold are you? (vs. 39)
38. The devil is your shepherd, and you are of his fold; and now who can deny this?

### ***Obtaining Spiritual Knowledge***

39. Do you suppose that I know of these things myself? (vs. 45)
40. How do you suppose that I know of their surety? (vs. 45)

### ***Refusing to Repent***

41. Can you withstand these sayings? (vs. 53)
42. Can you lay aside these things and trample the Holy One under your feet?
43. Can you be puffed up in the pride of your heart?
44. Will you still persist in the wearing of costly apparel and setting your heart upon the vain things of the world, upon your riches?
45. Will you persist in supposing that you are better than another? (vs. 54)
46. Will you persist in the persecution of your brethren, who humble themselves and do walk after the holy order of God, wherewith they have been brought into this church having been sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and they do bring forth works which are meet for repentance?
47. Will you persist in turning your back upon the poor and the needy, (vs.55) and in withholding your substance from them?
48. The names of the righteous shall be written in the book of life, (vs. 58) and unto them will I grant an inheritance at my right hand. What have you to say against this?
49. What shepherd is there having many sheep doth not watch over them, (vs. 59) that the wolves enter not and devour his flock?
50. If a wolf enter his flock doth the shepherd not drive him out?

## ***Religious Conversion***

### **Etymology of “conversion”:**

From the Latin *conversionem* – a noun of action, "a turning round, revolving; alteration, change"

### ***Formal Conversion Processes of Various Non-Christian Faiths***

#### **Islam:**

*All that is required to convert (or revert, as is said) is a simple, formal declaration of faith*

- “Revert” - belief that everyone is Muslim at birth – i.e., innocent and pure - but parents’ or society’s teaching cause them to deviate
- Does not need to be witnessed
- This is not to be done lightly, and you are expected to practice Islam for the rest of your life
- Sins are forgiven at the time of the declaration
- Continued study and learning are required
- Beliefs that need to be accepted (partial):
  - the Holy Quran is the literal word of God, revealed by Him.
  - the Judgment Day (Resurrection Day) is true and will come.
  - One must believe in the prophets that God sent and the books He revealed, and in His angels
  - No worship of anything nor anyone except God.
  - Mohammed is the Seal of the Prophets (last prophet); no prophets after Mohammed.
- Belief in and practice of the “five pillars of Islam”:
  - Profession of faith
  - Prayer
  - Almsgiving
  - Fasting (especially during Ramadan)
  - Pilgrimage
- Apostasy from Islam (including conversion to another religion) is punishable by death

#### **Judaism:**

The procedure and requirements for conversion depend on the sponsoring denomination.

Conservative and Orthodox Jews require:

- a determination to convert even after efforts to deter conversion (non-Jews don’t need to become Jews to inherit the World to Come as long as they obey the seven Noachide Laws)
- the potential convert be instructed about how to live as a Jew (this is significant study)
- undergo kabbalat ol mitzvot (agreement to do the commandments)
- mila (circumcision for men – actual or symbolic)
- tevilah (immersion in a ritual bath)
- that the procedure be supervised by a Beit Din [court] of three people.

The Reform movement requires:

- that the potential convert learn and agree to observe the commandments (Reform standards)
- participate publicly in the community
- they do **not** require circumcision or the ritual bath

People who leave Judaism and convert to another faith are shunned by Orthodox communities (including their own families).

## *Conversion in Christianity*

### **Definition (adapted from Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Bible Dictionary):**

- It denotes changing one's views, in a conscious acceptance of the will of God
  - Acts 3:19 – *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out....*
  - 2 Cor. 5:17 – we become new creatures in Christ
- Baptism is often, but not always, required to join a denomination. Receipt of the gift of (or baptism with) the Holy Spirit is a part of conversion, but the process of receiving the Holy Spirit varies by denomination.
- The restored Church of Jesus Christ adds that if followed by continued faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, and keeping commandments, conversion will become complete and will change a natural man into a sanctified, born again, purified person.

Jesus Christ implied that conversion is not something immediately achieved as a follower of Christ: In Luke 22:32, He told Peter, "*When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*"

### ***Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints:***

Prospective members must receive lessons from missionaries and are interviewed to ensure they are prepared for baptism. Details can be found in the church [General Handbook](#). The process need not take a significant amount of time.

### ***Protestant Christianity:***

In general, what is required for baptism is affirmation of the Apostles' Creed - which is basically a summary of core Christian doctrine.

To Protestants, conversion means "coming to faith." This is usually accompanied by the "born again" or "change of heart" experience – a person is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The general belief is that once you have been saved, you remain saved. Salvation is based on God's righteousness, not our own. **There is nothing we can do to qualify for it; therefore, there is nothing we can do to disqualify ourselves from it.** The natural man is dead once you're saved – there is no more natural man to "put off."

What Latter-day Saints think of as on-going conversion, sanctification, or "becoming," Protestants call discipleship or spiritual formation. This is the process by which one is conformed to the image of the Son and is transformed by the renewal of one's mind. This definitely is important and is a natural outcome of the born-again change of heart. The Brad Wilcox concept of "learning heaven" is very much in line with this thinking on discipleship.

The Protestant view of the process is:

Faith → Saved → Works/Perseverance  
or sometimes

Saved → Faith → Works/Perseverance

The Protestant view of the Catholic and Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints doctrine as typically: Faith → Works → Saved → Enduring to the end/Perseverance

### ***Catholicism:***

Those wishing to become Catholic enter a process that is known as RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) to receive the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Communion. Typically, but not always, it requires a course of study of at least 6-8 months, and new converts are usually baptized at the Easter Vigil service. Most converts to Catholicism from other Christian faiths are not rebaptized; exceptions include denominations (such as LDS) whose baptisms are considered theologically invalid by Catholicism.

After baptism, as a general rule, active participation includes attendance at Mass each Sunday and holy day of obligation; personal prayer; confession of serious sins at least once a year; assent to Catholic doctrine, moral and social teaching; a continuing effort to grow in one's understanding and practice of the faith; and a contribution of time, talent and financial support to the parish and to those in need. ([Source](#))

### **Apostles' Creed:**

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.  
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to hell.  
The third day he rose again from the dead.  
He ascended to heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.  
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic\* church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

\*that is, the true Christian church of all times and all places

### **Additional selected Bible Scriptures on Conversion:**

- Hosea 12:6 – *turn thou to thy God*
- Joel 2:12 – *turn ye even to me with all your heart*
- Matt 18:3, Jesus to his disciples – *Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*
- Acts 2:37 – [upon hearing Peter's preaching] *they were pricked in their heart*
- Acts 15:3 – joy at hearing of the conversion of the Gentiles

- Romans 6:4 *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*
- 2 Peter 1:4 - *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature....*

### ***Selected Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Scriptures on Conversion:***

- Mosiah 5:2 - *the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent...has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.*
- Alma 5:26, implying that a conversion must be maintained: *if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?*
- Mos 27:25: *all...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;*
- Alma 22:16 - *If thou desirest this [great joy,] if thou wilt bow down before God, yea, if thou wilt repent of all thy sins, and will bow down before God, and call on his name in faith, believing that ye shall receive, then shalt thou receive the hope which thou desirest.*
- 2 Ne 31:19:20 – baptism and receiving the Holy Ghost are not enough to ensure salvation: *after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay... 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. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.*
- Hel 15:7 - *faith and repentance bringeth a change of heart unto them*
- Mor 10:32 - *come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness;*
- D&C 44:4 - *many shall be converted [by the preaching of the gospel]*
- D&C 112:13 – speaking of the 12 apostles: *after their temptations, and much tribulation...they shall be converted, and I will heal them.*
- D&C 18:15-16 - There is joy in participating in the conversion process: *And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!*
- D&C 88:67-68 – the process of conversion is on-going: *And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things. Therefore, **sanctify** yourselves that your minds become single to God....*
- D&C 22 – converts must be baptized by authority, even if previously baptized in another Christian denomination

### ***General Authority Thought from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints***

- Elder David A. Bednar discussed the difference between *testimony* and *conversion*:  
 “Conversion is an enlarging, a deepening, and a broadening of the undergirding base of testimony. It is the result of revelation from God, accompanied by individual repentance, obedience, and diligence... Conversion is an offering of self, of love, and of loyalty we give to God in gratitude for the gift of testimony.”

- Elder Bednar also taught that continual immersion in gospel study and practice are required for true conversion: "...you and I are born again as we are absorbed by and in the gospel of Jesus Christ."
- Elder Marion G. Romney on testimony and conversion: "It would appear that membership in the Church and conversion are not necessarily synonymous. Being converted, as we are here using the term, and having a testimony are not necessarily the same either. A testimony comes when the Holy Ghost gives the earnest seeker a witness of truth. A moving testimony vitalizes faith; that is, it induces repentance and obedience to the commandments. Conversion, on the other hand, is the fruit of, or the reward for, repentance and obedience."
- Dallin H. Oaks on conversion being a process: "Jesus' challenge shows that the conversion He required for those who would enter the kingdom of heaven (see Matt. 18:3) was far more than just being converted to testify to the truthfulness of the gospel. To testify is to know and to declare. The gospel challenges us to be "converted," which requires us to do and to become... This spotless and perfected state will result from a steady succession of covenants, ordinances, and actions, an accumulation of right choices, and from continuing repentance."
- Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught that true conversion takes time: *...an individual "heareth the word" with "joy," "understandeth it," "beareth fruit," and "endureth," and finally learns what it is to "hunger and thirst after righteousness". It is "a mighty change". Conversion basically represents the transformation from the "natural man" to becoming the "man of Christ". It is a labor which takes more than an afternoon.*
- Elder Michael T. Ringwood: "The good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that the desires of our hearts can be transformed and our motives can be educated and refined. When we are baptized into the true fold of God, we begin the process of becoming new creatures..."
- Elder Russell M. Nelson: "Repentance is conversion! A repentant soul is a converted soul, and a converted soul is a repentant soul."