

Gift of the Holy Ghost Baptism of Fire

Beacon Hill Ward, June 2000, Mike Baird

- ◆ A Father's greatest desires?
- ◆ My own greatest desire for my children, wife, parents to be with me for eternity.
- ◆ Father in Heaven the same
 - ◆ Wants us to come back to him
 - ◆ How – do we do that?
 - ◆ John 3:5 Except a man be born of the water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God
 - ◆ Born of water is Baptism
 - ◆ What does it mean to be born of the Spirit, Baptism of Fire

Focus my talk on born of the spirit or this Baptism of Fire

- ◆ **Alma 5:14 (read it)**
- ◆ I think we should all ask ourselves
 - ◆ Have I been born again?
 - ◆ Have I made this change?
 - ◆ Have I felt this baptism of fire?

- ◆ I'd like to discuss this further. I will use the story of Peter's conversion to illustrate and for us to learn. As we discuss this I'd like you to imagine the scenes if you can.

- ◆ We will begin Peter's story in the outer court of the high priests abode the night before Jesus is to be taken away and crucified. Picture yourself there.
- ◆ The Lord said to Peter: "Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But [Jesus says] I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou are **converted, strengthen thy brethren**. And he [that is, Peter] said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me." (Luke 22:31-34.)
 - ◆ We are familiar with what followed
 - ◆ This is the occasion that Peter denies Christ
 - ◆ This occurred near the end of Christ's ministry – **yet** Christ speaks of some future time of conversion.

- ◆ We could ask ourselves: How is Peter not converted?
 - ◆ He has been with Jesus for some 3.5 years
 - ◆ He has eaten, slept, lived, traveled with the Lord.
 - ◆ He is an Apostle, undoubtedly an Elder
 - ◆ He worked miracles
 - ◆ Stout defender, preacher and teacher.
 - ◆ Yet – Christ said “When thou art converted.....”
 - ◆ He was converted in the sense of joining the church
 - ◆ Yet, not in the full and total sense that we all must be converted.

Lets look at this deeper to understand.

Let’s move our setting and look back at Peter’s time with Christ

- ◆ Peter heard of Christ from his brother Andrew
 - ◆ Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist
 - ◆ Andrew left John the Baptist to follow Christ at John’s direction.
 - ◆ Like us Andrew wanted family and friends to hear “good news” so he told Peter
- ◆ Peter came to Christ
 - ◆ Was taught, undoubtedly baptized and begun to follow Christ
 - ◆ “Joined the Church” as it were
- ◆ Peter was with Christ virtually all the time during Christ’s ministry (3.5 yrs)
 - ◆ Spent some time initially, with James and John in their fishing enterprise
- ◆ When time came for the call of the 12 Apostles, Jesus met him and his two partners on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and said: "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men" (Mark 1:17).
 - ◆ Peter was ordained an Apostle at this time.
- ◆ As we move through Christ’s ministry we see that Peter had many experiences with Jesus of a spiritual nature
 - ◆ Picture the scene: He was there (very possibly his house) when when they lowered the man with palsy down through the tile on the roof, because they could not otherwise get him into Christ’s presence.
 - ◆ This was the occasion when Jesus said to the man, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."
 - ◆ Then when the disbelieving Jews began to reason in their hearts that such an act was blasphemous, Jesus said:
 - ◆ "Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or 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 saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house." (Mark 2:5-11)
 - ◆ Jesus used the occasion to prove his divinity

- ◆ Peter was in the room when Jesus raised the young maiden from the dead
- ◆ He was with the Lord at the tomb of Lazarus who had been dead for four days, who had started to decay, and then had been called forth by Jesus.
- ◆ He had borne testimony of Jesus
 - ◆ On one occasion Jesus asked:
 - ◆ "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?"
 - ◆ After he had received the various answers, it was Peter who answered the query:
 - ◆ "But whom say ye that I am?" with the declaration, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."
 - ◆ Jesus then said: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 16:13, 15-17.)
- ◆ How was he blessed?
 - ◆ He had a testimony of Christ. He had received revelation from the Holy Ghost
 - ◆ Testimony is to know by revelation that Jesus is the Son of God
 - ◆ Peter knew by revelation
 - ◆ Not by argument
 - ◆ Not by reason
 - ◆ But by the whisperings of the Spirit
 - ◆ Peter affirmed it later after Jesus fed the 5000
 - ◆ Bread for audience and to preach about spiritual food – Bread of Life
 - ◆ Was harsh doctrine and many fell away.
 - ◆ Jesus said to his disciples:
 - ◆ "Will ye also go away?" and Peter, speaking for the group, said: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." (John 6:67-69.)
- ◆ Peter knew, yet Christ had said "when thou art converted"
 - ◆ Can you project yourself into that situation?
 - ◆ Think -
 - ◆ I have borne testimony
 - ◆ I follow Christ
 - ◆ Christ was in effect telling Peter:
 - ◆ You have borne testimony
 - ◆ I have confirmed your testimony is of the Spirit
 - ◆ BUT you are not converted.

- ◆ So what does it mean and how does conversion differ from a testimony?
 - ◆ Peter’s story illustrates that there is a difference.
 - ◆ Essential to the story of Peter that the Holy Spirit was not yet poured out on the people.
 - ◆ Spirit had been with them time to time
 - ◆ But they did not have the constant companionship
 - ◆ Full sanctifying power had not come into their lives
 - ◆ Bruce R McConkie’s analogy relative to the Gift of the Holy Ghost before and after:
 - ◆ Before: walking in darkness with flashes of lightning
 - ◆ Gift of the Holy Ghost like walking in the full light of the sun all the time
 - ◆ In the future for the Apostles
 - ◆ Gift of the Holy Ghost
 - ◆ Right to constant companionship based on faithfulness
 - ◆ Peter didn’t have that gift yet.
- ◆ Lets move forward to after the Crucifixion
 - ◆ The disciples, **that is the sheep**, were scattered.
 - ◆ Picture this scene:
 - ◆ **John 21:4 – 17 (Read/Tell)**
 - ◆ -----**Two statements for us** -----
 - ◆ “When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren”
 - ◆ After this Peter denied him 3 times
 - ◆ "I do not know the man" (Matt. 26:72), he said to the maid who accused him of having been with Him.
 - ◆ Now we hear: “Feed my sheep”
 - ◆ These are two measures for degree of conversion
 - ◆ Are we strengthening our brethren and sisters?
 - ◆ Are we feeding the Lord’s sheep?
 - ◆ Or are we seeking the “fish” of the world?
 - Recount setting apart for High Council “where you spend your time is where your heart is”
 - What is our answer to “lovest thou me more than the things of the world?”
 - ◆ Example of prophet
 - ◆ Example of Stake President
 - ◆ Example of Bishop
 - ◆ Don’t need to be in High office
 - ◆ Dallin H Oaks: “Spirituality is not a function of occupation or calling. Spirituality is determined by personal outlook and priorities.
 - ◆ Expand as relates to strengthening and feeding sheep

- ◆ Now lets move forward in time to the day of Pentecost
 - ◆ Peter and others were teaching
 - ◆ Holy Ghost as promised came
 - ◆ Fell upon them
 - ◆ Gift of tongues
 - ◆ Cloven tongues of Fire rested upon them
 - ◆ Bruce R McConkie: "(this) is the language that is used to describe the miraculous things that transpired in their hearts. There really is no language that it is possible to use to tell what happened in the hearts of the disciples on that occasion, which is the one when they became fully converted. And so they did the best they could to get some language, and they said "cloven tongues like as of fire" rested upon them."
 - ◆ This is the day of conversion.
 - ◆ After this day total and complete change in Peter
- ◆ **Illustrate change with Acts 3:1-7 (Read)**
 - ◆ "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6).
- ◆ Peter and John were thrown into prison as a result.
- ◆ In his interrogation later he said"
 - ◆ "If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. Neither is there salvation in any other... name." (Acts 4:9-10, 12.)
- ◆ What a difference!
- ◆ Peter's conversion was a gradual one:
 - ◆ He heard the gospel from his brother Andrew
 - ◆ He came to Christ and joined the church
 - ◆ He had experience in the church and grew line upon line
 - ◆ He received the Priesthood and was called as an Apostle
 - ◆ He worked miracles
 - ◆ He received a witness from the Spirit
 - ◆ Then came the companionship of the Holy Ghost
 - ◆ That was the day of his conversion
 - ◆ When he had a testimony he said: " I do not know the man"
 - ◆ When he was converted: Faced down those who thirsted after his own blood.
- ◆ What is Conversion?
 - ◆ Means simply to change
 - ◆ Alma 5:14 "Have you experiences this mighty change of heart?"
 - ◆ We must be born again
 - ◆ Apostle Paul describes it by saying that we crucify the old man (Rom. 6:6).

- ◆ Only happens when we get the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost in our lives
- ◆ Bruce R McConkie: The Holy Ghost does two things in particular. On the one hand he is a witness to truth, and so he bears the testimony of the truth, and that is how we get a testimony, by revelation from the Holy Ghost. But on the other hand the Holy Spirit is a sanctifier, and he has the power to cleanse and perfect the human soul, to wash evil and iniquity out, and to replace it with righteousness. And that is the occasion when we are converted.
- ◆ We are cleansed from sin and are born again and become converted to the truth when:
 - ◆ We get the constant companionship of that member of the Godhead, that is, get the right to the constant companionship.
 - ◆ Nobody actually has companionship all the time
 - ◆ Nobody is perfect
 - ◆ We do best we can
 - ◆ We get enough of companionship of the Holy Ghost
 - ◆ Sins burned out by fire
 - ◆ Meaning of Baptism by fire
 - ◆ Symbolizes the burning or purification process
 - ◆ Creation of a new creature in Christ
 - ◆ This is change, this is conversion
 - ◆ Marion G Romney: “Conversion .. is the fruit of, or the reward for, repentance and obedience. Conversion is effected by divine forgiveness, which remits sins.”(Conference Report, Oct 1963, pg 23-26)
- ◆ Sudden Conversion – Alma the Younger
 - ◆ He was undoubtedly baptized as a youth and promised the Holy Ghost
 - ◆ He never received it
 - ◆ He went off to destroy the church
 - ◆ He was in this state when his conversion occurred
 - ◆ NOTE: He thought of the words of his father
 - ◆ Most people it is step by step – that is OK!
 - ◆ Loren C Dunn: “The witness, the change, the cleansing that comes gradually is no less powerful to the person with the right heart, and he or she is impelled to action whether the experience was a sudden, miraculous manifestation or the quite workings of the Spirit.” (Ensign, June 95, pg 24)
 - ◆ President Kimball: “The gift of the Holy Ghost grows with worthiness. If you are baptized when you are eight years old, of course you are a child, and there is much you would not be expected to know. But the Holy Ghost comes to you as you grow and learn and make yourselves worthy. It comes a little at a time as you merit it. And as your life is in harmony, you gradually receive the Holy Ghost in great measure.” (Ensign, May 82, pp 4-5)

- ◆ We are striving to be converted
 - ◆ It is not enough to have a testimony
 - ◆ D&C 76:71-80
 - ◆ Describes those who are not valiant in their testimony – receive Telesstial glory
 - ◆ These are members of the church who are lukewarm
 - ◆ Know in heart are true, but are not valiant
 - ◆ It takes work:
 - ◆ President Hunter: “Developing spirituality... will not happen by chance, but is accomplished only through deliberate effort and by calling upon God and keeping his commandments.” (Ensign, May 79, pg 25)

- ◆ Alma 5:14, 26 “Have you been spiritually born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts...” **“Can ye feel so know?”**
- ◆ How does a person know when he or she is truly converted?
 - ◆ Know by how we feel.
 - ◆ The spirit touches us and we are no longer passive but become a witness.
 - ◆ Alma chapter 5 is wonderful in helping us understand this conversion – Baptism of fire.
 - ◆ Marion G Romney: “No person whose soul is illuminated by the burning Spirit of god can ... remain passive. He is driven by an irresistible urge to fit himself to be an active agent of God in furthering righteousness and in freeing the lives and minds of men from the bondage of Sin” (Ensign, Nov 79, pg 16)
 - ◆ Loren C Dunn: “there is .. a sense of unity that comes with the outpouring of the Spirit. As one becomes united with the Spirit, he or she also becomes united with fellow members and leaders.” (Ensign, June 95, pg 26)

- ◆ As a loving Father, our Father in Heaven wishes to bless us with his spirit.
 - ◆ The baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost is from his presence
 - ◆ It has the power to testify of the Father and his son
 - ◆ It can cleanse us from sin
 - ◆ It can make us a new person at heart
 - ◆ It can be a guide in our personal lives
 - ◆ It is the only thing that can truly change our hearts
 - ◆ It is a gift from God – and it brings inward peace
 - ◆ It is offered to all who will humble themselves, accept his truths and live by them.

- ◆ We honor our Father in Heaven by inviting his Spirit into our lives.
- ◆ I can think of no greater honor to me as a father to have my children gain a testimony, be converted and serve our Heavenly Father’s children