

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 22

With this revelation the Lord indicates the outward ecclesiastical act alone is not sufficient. The appropriate Priesthood authority must be invoked as well.

1 Behold, I say unto you that all old covenants have I caused to be done away in this thing; and this is a new and an everlasting covenant, even that which was from the beginning. 2 wherefore, although a man should be baptized an hundred times it availeth him nothing, for you cannot enter in at the strait gate by the law of Moses, neither by your dead works. 3 For it is because of your dead works that I have caused this last covenant and this church to be built up unto me, even as in days of old. 4 wherefore, enter ye in at the gate, as I have commanded, and seek not to counsel your God. Amen.

v1 The Lord speaks of the new covenant of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The old works of the Law have been done away, and the new covenant was ushered in with Christ, cf. 3 Ne. 15:2-10.

v2 "the law of Moses", one of the "old covenants" referenced in v. 1. Even though it was previously legitimate (cf. Mosiah 13:27-28), it is now not sufficient (cf. 3 Ne. 15:1-5).

The reference to the Law of Moses is interesting as their was, and still is, a ritual ablution by immersion called "tevillah" had among the Jews.

By referencing the Law of Moses, the Lord is indicating that seemingly pious works have no merit with Him unless they are performed according to His dictates. People who perform outward acts according to their own dictates are not submitting to the will of the Lord.

"your dead works", in 1:30 the Lord indicates that the only true and living Church is this Church. No others have legitimate ecclesiastical authority as far as He is concerned, cf. 3 Ne. 27:8. Regarding works that seem pious, but that the Lord will reject, see Matt. 7:21-23.

It is interesting to note that 3 Ne. 27:8 also references both the "church" of Moses and the "church" of men as does this verse.

v3 "It is because of your dead works", the ancient Christian Church founded by Jesus was corrupted early on and ultimately

subverted by Judaizers, those who would not let go of the Law of Moses. This is evidence in the conflict between Paul and the various Judaizing Christians detailed throughout the book of Acts, and the subsequent Pauline epistles. The apostasy of the Priesthood among ancient Christians necessitated a restoration.

The implicit connection to the book of Acts may be intentional to suggest the context of Acts 19:1-6.

v4 The Lord is irritated with those who are spurning His commands. They claim that He is their God, yet they fail to follow His council. The core underlying issue is whether or not they accept Smith as the Lord's mouthpiece. They profess belief in Christ, but are unwilling to really submit to His prophet and therefore Him.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 22

Smith makes no comments on this revelation. The single source of contemporary comment on the matter is from Orson Pratt, as quoted below.

The text was first published in the Evening and Morning Star, volume 1, number 1, pages 1-2. It was published in the Book of Commandments, 1833, page 47, and the Doctrine and Covenants, 1835, page 178. It was published in Times and Seasons, volume 4, number 1, page 12, dated November 15, 1842, and Millennial Star, volume 4, number 8, page 116, dated December, 1843.

Excerpt from The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith

Initially considered part of the "Articles and Covenants" of the Church [i.e., D&C 20], section 22 was given to Joseph Smith in answer to the question of whether believers who had received baptism in other churches, should again be baptized. In 1873 Orson Pratt recalled the historical setting of this revelation,

In the early days of this Church there were certain persons, belonging to the Baptist denomination, very moral and no doubt as good people as you could find anywhere, who came, saying they believed in the Book of Mormon, and that they had been baptized into the Baptist Church, and they wished to come into our Church. The Prophet Joseph had not, at that time, particularly inquired in relation to this matter, but he did inquire, and received a revelation from the Lord [section 22].... These Baptists had to be re-baptized: there was no other way to get into this Church. [quoted from Journal of Discourses, Volume 16, pages 293-294]

(Lyndon W. Cook, The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith, page 33)

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