

Moroni 6 — Numbered Among the People of Christ — Baptism, and the Order of the Church

Moroni 6: Moroni preserves the requirements for baptism and the pattern of church life among the Nephites. None were baptized save they came with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, truly repentant, taking upon them the name of Christ with a determination to serve him to the end. And the church that received them met often to fast, pray, and speak of the welfare of their souls, to partake of bread and wine in remembrance of the Lord, watching over one another, relying alone upon the merits of Christ, their meetings conducted after the workings of the Spirit. Nine verses that close Moroni's account of the ordinances with a portrait of a living church — how souls enter it, and how they are nourished and kept within it.

Moroni 6 completes Moroni's account of the ordinances and the church, moving from the individual ordinances (the gift of the Holy Ghost, ordination, the sacrament) to the entry into the church (baptism) and the life of the church itself. It is the fullest of these closing ordinance chapters, and it gives a precious portrait of what a healthy congregation of Christ looked like — how souls were received into it, and how they were nourished and watched over once inside. The chapter has two parts: the requirements for baptism (vv. 1–4), and the pattern of church life (vv. 5–9). Together they show that the church is not merely a set of ordinances but a living community — souls received with broken hearts, then numbered, named, nourished, watched over, corrected in love, and led by the Spirit. After the great destructions of the Book of Mormon, Moroni preserves the picture of a church functioning as Christ intended, so that a future people could build the same.

Hebrew Word Studies

lev-nishbar / saphar / shuv (לָבַשׁ / נִשְׁבַּר / שָׁפַר / שׁוּב) — **a broken heart / to count, to number, to record (and recount) / to turn, to return, to repent** v. 2, v. 4, v. 8. Three Hebrew ideas anchor the chapter. *Lev nishbar* — a broken heart — is the requirement for baptism: *a broken heart and a contrite spirit* (v. 2). The phrase is from Psalm 51:17 — *the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken (nishbar) and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise*. The risen Christ named this the new sacrifice that replaces the law of Moses (3 Ne. 9:20); baptism is for those who bring the *lev nishbar*, the heart broken open before God in true repentance. *Saphar* — to count, to number, to record — underlies *they were numbered... and their names were taken* (v. 4). *Saphar* is also to recount, to tell — the root of *sefer* (book) and *mispar* (number). The church *numbers* its members and *records* their names, each soul counted and known, *that they might be remembered*. This is the pastoral *saphar* — not a census of strangers but a recording of beloved souls, each named so none is forgotten or unnourished. *Shuv* — to turn, to return — governs both the entrance and the ongoing life of the church: the baptized have *truly repented* (turned, *shuv*), and the members are forgiven *as oft as they repented* (returned, *shuv*, v. 8). The whole life of the church runs on *shuv* — the turning of repentance at baptism, and the returning of repentance whenever a member falls. The door is open to the *shuv*-turning soul as often as it returns. The chapter gathers the three: baptism for the *lev nishbar* (broken heart), each soul *saphar*-numbered and nourished, and forgiveness for every *shuv*-returning penitent, as oft as they come.

From the Chapter's Architecture

``cross-references Ps. 51:17 (a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise — the requirement of v. 2); Isa. 57:15 (God dwells with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit — v. 2); Isa. 66:2 (to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit — v. 2); Mal. 3:16 (they that feared the Lord spake often one to another... and a book of remembrance was written — speaking of the welfare of souls and the names recorded, vv. 4–5); Matt. 3:8 (bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance — the fruit of v. 1); Matt. 18:15–17 (the order of church discipline, witnesses, and the unrepentant — vv. 7); Matt. 18:21–22 (forgiveness until seventy times seven — the as oft as of v. 8); Acts 2:42, 46–47 (the early church continuing in fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers, and members added — the church life of vv. 4–6); 1 Cor. 12:4–11 (the gifts of the Spirit in the church's worship — the Spirit-led meetings of v. 9); 1 Cor. 14:26 (each contributing a psalm, doctrine, or exhortation as the Spirit leads — v. 9); Heb. 12:2 (Jesus the author and finisher of our faith — verbatim at v. 4); Heb. 10:24–25 (exhorting one another and not forsaking the assembling — the meeting oft of v. 5); Mosiah 18:8–10 (the baptismal covenant: bear one another's burdens, stand as witnesses, that the Spirit may be poured out — the covenant of vv. 2–3); Mosiah 26:29–31 (the Lord forgives as often as my people repent — the as oft as of v. 8); Alma 6:6 (the church gathering for fasting and mighty prayer — v. 5); 3 Ne. 9:20 (a broken heart and a contrite spirit the sacrifice the risen Christ requires — v. 2); 3 Ne. 18:22–32 (Christ's instructions on church gatherings, the sacrament, and not casting out the unworthy but ministering to them — vv. 5–8); Moro. 2–5 (the ordinances of the Holy Ghost, ordination, and the sacrament — the cluster this chapter completes); D&C 20:37 (the requirements for baptism: broken heart, contrite spirit, true repentance, taking Christ's name — verbatim doctrine of vv. 2–3); D&C 20:68–69, 75–84 (church membership, the sacrament, watchcare, and discipline — the church order of vv. 4–9). ``