

LESSON 22
“Have Ye Received His Image in Your Countenances?”
Alma 5-7

OVERVIEW:

Alma teaches the people how they can experience a mighty change of heart. Alma and the people establish the order of the Church in Zarahemla. Alma testifies of Jesus Christ. He encourages the people in Gideon to follow the Savior. These chapters and the rest of Alma show how to do missionary work. How to preach to other countries. How to prepare our missionaries. The success in missionary work in Alma is second only to the success when the Savior appears in 3 Nephi.

These three chapters correspond with chapters 3, 4 and 5 in the 1830 edition.

SCRIPTURES:

THE BOOK OF ALMA
THE SON OF ALMA

The words which Alma, the High Priest according to the holy order of God, delivered to the people in their cities and villages throughout the land. Comprising chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

To gain salvation, men must repent and keep the commandments, be born again, cleanse their garments through the blood of Christ, be humble and strip themselves from pride and envy, and do the works of righteousness—The Good Shepherd calleth his people—Those who do evil works are children of the devil—Alma testifies of the truth of his doctrine and commands men to repent—Names of the righteous shall be written in the book of life. [About 83 B.C.] (Alma asks about 40 questions to cause us to think about our relationship to God. According to Nibley, this talk seems to be covering all of the aspects of the rites of the Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippor. This chapter is about reactivating members of the Church.)

1 NOW it came to pass that * (about 83 BC) Alma began to ^adeliver the word of ^bGod unto the people, first in the land of Zarahemla, and from thence throughout all the land.

2 And these are the words which he spake to the people in the church which was established in the city of Zarahemla, according to his own record (Alma kept a journal.), saying: (Mormon is here telling us that he is going to quote directly from Alma’s talk.)

3 I, Alma, having been ^aconsecrated by my father, Alma, to be a ^bhigh priest over the church of God, he having power and ^cauthority (Power comes through ordination and authority comes through righteousness. Boyd K. Packer.) from God to do these things (Meaning that he had been properly called and set apart to his holy office according to the pattern of the priesthood, which is the same in all ages. He holds the office of high priest and is the presiding officer in the Church. “God’s chief representative on earth, the one who holds the highest spiritual position in his kingdom in any age, is called the high priest. This special designation of the chief spiritual officer of the church has reference to the administrative position which he holds rather than to the office to which he is ordained in the priesthood. MD, p. 355-56, DCBM, 3:26), behold, I say unto you that he began to establish a church in the ^dland which was in the borders of Nephi; yea, the land which was called the land of Mormon; yea, and he did baptize his brethren in the waters of Mormon.

4 And behold, I say unto you, they were ^adelivered out of the hands of the people of king Noah, by the mercy and power of God.

5 And behold, after that, they were brought into ^abondage by the hands of the Lamanites in the wilderness; yea, I say unto you, they were in captivity, and again the Lord did deliver them out of ^bbondage by the power of his word; and we were brought into this land, and here we began to establish the church of God throughout this land also. (Alma mentions their previous bondage to persuade them not to adhere to the religion of Nehor, which would again bring them into bondage.)

6 And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, you that belong to this church, have you sufficiently retained in ^aremembrance the captivity of your fathers? Yea, and have you sufficiently retained in remembrance his mercy and long-suffering towards them? And moreover, have ye sufficiently retained in remembrance that he has ^bdelivered their souls from hell?

7 Behold, he changed their hearts; (Ezra Taft Benson said: “Can human hearts be changed? Why of course! It happens every day in the great missionary work of the Church. It is one of the most widespread of Christ’s modern miracles. If it hasn’t happened to you - it should. The Lord works from the inside out. The world works from the outside in. The world would take people out of the slums. Christ takes the slums out of the people, and then they take themselves out of the slums. The world would mold men by changing their environment. Christ changes men, who then change their environment. The world would shape human behavior, but Christ can change human nature.” (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, pp. 77-78.) Howard W. Hunter said: “This is the purpose of teaching. This is the reason we labor so hard, seek the Spirit, and prepare our minds with good things as the Lord has commanded, that we might be an instrument in the hands of the Lord in changing the heart of an individual. Our aim is to plant in the hearts of the children the desire to be good, the desire to be righteous, the desire to keep the commandments of the Lord, the desire to walk in humility before him. If we can be an instrument in the hands of the Lord in bringing to pass this mighty change in the hearts of the youth of Zion, then we have accomplished the great miracle of a teacher. And truly it is a miracle. We do not understand how the Lord changes the hearts of men, but he does. Through a teacher, he can change the hearts of children almost overnight.” (*The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, p. 204)) yea, he awakened them out of a deep sleep, and they awoke unto God. Behold, they were in the midst of darkness; nevertheless, their souls were illuminated by the light of the everlasting word; (reading scriptures) yea, they were encircled about by the ^abands of death, and the ^bchains of hell, and an everlasting destruction did await them.

8 And now I ask of you, my brethren, were they destroyed? Behold, I say unto you, Nay, they were not.

9 And again I ask, were the bands of death broken, and the ^achains of hell which encircled them about, were they loosed? I say unto you, Yea, they were loosed, and their souls did expand, and they did ^bsing redeeming love. And I say unto you that they are saved. (To be saved is to be freed from the effects of Adam’s fall, to overcome death and hell, to know a fullness of joy; it is to inherit eternal life. DCBM, 3:27)

10 And now I ask of you on what conditions are they ^asaved? Yea, what grounds had they to hope for salvation? What is the cause of their being loosed from the bands of death, yea, and also the chains of hell?

11 Behold, I can tell you—did not my father Alma believe in the words which were delivered by the ^amouth of Abinadi? And was he not a holy prophet? Did he not speak the words of God, and my father Alma believe them?

12 And according to his faith there was a mighty ^achange wrought in his heart. Behold I say unto you that this is all true.

13 And behold, he ^apreached the word unto your fathers, and a mighty change was also wrought in their hearts (Neal A. Maxwell said: “Disciples are to make for themselves ‘a new heart’ by undergoing a ‘mighty change’ of heart (Ezekiel 18:31; Alma 5:12–14). Yet we cannot make such ‘a new heart’ while nursing old grievances. Just as civil wars lend themselves to the passionate preservation of ancient grievances, so civil wars within the individual soul-between the natural and the potential man-keep alive old slights and perceived injustices, except in the meek.” (*Meek and Lowly*, p. 55)), and they humbled

themselves and put their^b trust in the true and^c living God. And behold, they were faithful until the^d end; therefore they were saved.

14 And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren of the church, have ye^a spiritually been^b born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? (Mere compliance with the formality of the ordinance of baptism does not mean that a person has been born again. No one can be born again without baptism but the immersion in water and the laying on of hands to confer the Holy Ghost do not of themselves guarantee that a person has been or will be born again. The new birth takes place only for those who actually enjoy the gift or companionship of the Holy Ghost, only for those who are fully converted, who have given themselves without restraint to the Lord. Bruce R. McConkie, MD, p. 101. “One measure of the new birth is the appearance of the new man. Paul described the process of salvation as obtaining ‘the mind of Christ’ (1 Corinthians 2:16); that is, learning to think as Christ thinks, believe as he believes, feel as he feels, and do as he would do. Peter described the same thing as partaking of ‘the divine nature’ (2 Peter 1:4), meaning that we must acquire the attributes of godliness. Joseph Smith explained: ‘The Savior most clearly show[ed] unto us the nature of salvation, and what he proposed unto the human family when he proposed to save them- that he proposed to make them like unto himself, and he was like the Father, the great prototype of all saved beings; and for any portion of the human family to be assimilated into their likeness is to be saved; and to be unlike them is to be destroyed; and on this hinge turns the door of salvation’ (Lectures on Faith 7:16). As a child learns by imitating and emulating parents and those older than himself, so we learn godliness by imitating others who have set an example in righteousness, especially Jesus Christ. Alma appropriately describes this process of becoming Christlike as receiving the image of Christ in our countenances.” (McConkie and Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, p. 30) An image is not just an outward visual impression but also a vivid representation, a graphic display, or a total likeness of something. It is a person or thing very much like another, a copy or counterpart. Likewise, *countenance* does not simply mean a facial expression or visual appearance. The word comes from an old French term originally denoting “behavior,” “demeanor,” or “conduct.” In earlier times the word countenance was used with these meanings in mind. Therefore, to receive Christ’s image in one’s countenance means to acquire the Savior’s likeness in behavior, to be a copy or reflection of the Master’s life. This is not possible without a mighty change in one’s pattern of living. It requires, too, a change in feelings, attitudes, desires, and spiritual commitment. This involves the heart. Andrew Skinner, *Studies in Scriptures*, 7:301.) Have ye experienced this mighty^c change in your hearts? (Be Christlike)

15 Do ye exercise faith in the redemption of him who^a created you? (This question to counter the teachings of the Nehors.) Do you look forward with an eye of faith, and view this mortal body raised in immortality, and this corruption^b raised in incorruption, to stand before God to be^c judged according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal body?

16 I say unto you, can you imagine to yourselves that ye hear the voice of the Lord, saying unto you, in that day: Come unto me ye^a blessed, for behold, your works have been the works of righteousness upon the face of the earth?

17 Or do ye^a imagine to yourselves that ye can lie unto the Lord in that day, and^b say—Lord, our works have been righteous works upon the face of the earth—and that he will save you?

18 Or otherwise, can ye imagine yourselves brought before the tribunal of God with your souls filled with guilt and remorse, having a remembrance of all your guilt, yea, a perfect^a remembrance of all your wickedness, yea, a remembrance that ye have set at defiance the commandments of God? (Sterling W. Sill said: “That calls for an important ability (to imagine Judgment Day), and the best way to avoid possible tragedy is to focus our imagination upon [Judgment] Day before we actually get there. We can be absolutely certain that we will all want to be a faithful, devoted, hard-working, enthusiastic full tithe-paying member of God's kingdom when we stand before the judgment bar. But we must get the impulse to faithfulness ahead of time; as someone has said that hell is ‘truth seen too late.’” (*Conference Report*, Apr. 1964, p. 16) Neal A. Maxwell said: “At the judgment we will not only have the Book of Mormon's

prophesied 'bright recollection' and 'perfect remembrance' of our misdeeds (see Alma 5:18; 11:43). The joyous things will be preserved too—we shall know 'even as we know now' (Alma 11:43; see also D&C 93:33). Among the 'all things [that] shall be restored' (Alma 40:23) will be memory, including eventually the memory of premortal events and conditions. What a flood of feeling and fact will come to us when, at a time a loving God deems wise, this faculty is restored! Surely it will increase our gratefulness for God's long-suffering and for Jesus' atonement! Hence one of the great blessings of immortality and eternal life will be the joy of our being connected again with the memories of both the first and the second estates." (*Men and Women of Christ*, p. 132) Repentance alone has the power to edit from the book of life the account of unworthy deeds. DCBM, 3:31.)

19 I say unto you, can ye look up to God at that day with a pure heart and clean hands? ("If we do righteous acts and refrain from evil acts, we have clean hands. If we act for the right motives and if we refrain from forbidden desires and attitudes, we have pure hearts. Dallin H. Oaks, *Pure in Heart*, p. 1) I say unto you, can you look up, having the ^aimage of God engraven upon your countenances?

20 I say unto you, can ye think of being saved when you have yielded yourselves to become ^asubjects to the devil? (Neal A. Maxwell said: "The Lord has given us all the vital answers we need in order to be saved and to become men and women of Christ; in fact, 'enough and to spare.' But His questions are also revealing, as are the questions emanating from His prophets.... Why not, therefore, take full advantage of the answers contained in the tutoring questions and their emerging and instructive one-liners from the Lord? Though asked of others, these questions are full of generic insights and needed directions for us as well as for the actual addressees. "The questions asked by the Lord also tell us much about the questioner and His substance and style, which we are to emulate. Thus these interrogatories are placed in the holy scriptures to inspire us, to encourage us, and to be pondered by us." (*Men and Women of Christ*, pp. 110-12))

21 I say unto you, ye will know at that day that ye cannot be ^asaved; for there can no man be saved except his ^bgarments are washed white; yea, his garments must be ^cpurified until they are cleansed from all stain, through the blood of him of whom it has been spoken by our fathers, who should come to redeem his people from their sins.

22 And now I ask of you, my brethren, how will any of you feel, if ye shall stand before the bar of God, having your garments stained with ^ablood and all manner of ^bfilthiness? Behold, what will these things testify against you?

23 Behold will they not ^atestify that ye are murderers, (Reference is not being made to the taking of life but rather to the destruction of souls, the killing of spiritual sensitivities. DCBM, 3:31) yea, and also that ye are ^bguilty of all manner of wickedness?

24 Behold, my brethren, do ye suppose that such an one can have a place to sit down in the kingdom of God, with ^aAbraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, and also all the holy prophets, whose garments are cleansed and are spotless, pure and white? ("This endowment and its blessings of power, authority, and protection were, we are told, also enjoyed by 'Seth, Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham [they being representatives of the principle], and all to whom the Priesthood was [has been] revealed' (Abraham, Facsimile 2, figure 3). As the gospel is everlasting, so are its ordinances, and as we have previously seen, those who stand in the presence of the Lord (symbolically the temple) must be properly clothed, and hence have put upon them the garment of the priesthood and the robes of righteousness. This is as much a part of the endowment and temple ritual today as it ever was in ages past. Alma testified that none could enter the kingdom of heaven except they be so clothed and their garments be washed white through the blood of Christ. Of the wicked whose garments would be stained with sin he asked, 'Do ye 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?' (Alma 5:21-24.)" (Joseph Fielding McConkie, *Gospel Symbolism*, pp. 202-3) Salvation is the result of living in such a manner that our garments [i.e., our souls] are cleansed and are spotless, pure and white. All who do this are entitled to sit down with people such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and to

obtain the same eternal blessings and rewards as they receive. DCBM, 3:32)

25 I say unto you, Nay; except ye make our Creator a liar from the beginning, or suppose that he is a liar from the beginning, ye cannot suppose that such can have place in the kingdom of heaven; but they shall be cast out for they are the ^achildren of the kingdom of the devil.

26 And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a ^achange of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the ^bsong of redeeming love, I would ask, **'can ye feel so now?'** (This is a call to keep our witness and our experience with the Spirit current and up to date. Though it is important to develop and maintain reservoirs of faith – repositories of memories and experiences and encounters with the divine which have built and strengthened testimony – we must be ever on guard against spiritual lethargy, against coasting upon our memories, against living only in the past. We cannot afford to pause and homestead on spiritual plateaus. Our task is to move on, to progress. DCBM, 3:32. Elder Marion G. Romney, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, made this important observation regarding spiritual man: “Man is a dual being. He is composed of a spirit and a body. His body came into being with his entrance into this world of mortality. His spirit as an individual person was begotten unto God in the spirit world. Through a long period of growth and development, each person's spirit came to know God and spiritual things, including the gospel, obedience to which is a prerequisite to attaining eternal life.” He then asserted: “Men, however, enter mortality spiritually blind. Never in this life do they recover memory of pre-mortal spiritual things. What they here learn of them must be revealed anew.” With the spirit's innate propensity to do and be good and the natural man's desire for evil, the condition of man in mortality is dangerous and precarious. In such a state, man will be constantly at conflict within himself while in mortality. President Brigham Young spoke of this in these words: “As I have told you, your spirit is continually warring with the flesh; your spirit dictates one way, your flesh suggests another, and this brings on the combat.” One of the purposes of mortality is for the spirit to learn to control the natural man. Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained: “As we understand the plan of salvation, we came into this sphere of existence for two purposes. First: We came to gain this natural body, this tangible body, this body which here in this life is a temporary house for the eternal spirit, but which body we will receive back again in immortality through the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Second: We came here to see if we would have the spiritual integrity, the devotion to righteousness, to overcome the world, to put off the natural man, to bridle our passions, to curb and control the appetites that are natural in this type of existence.” How is this accomplished? The Apostle John answered, “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world” (1 John 5:4). Overcoming the world is accomplished by putting off the natural man. And the natural man is first conquered through process of spiritual rebirth (see Mosiah 3:19). However, though one has initially put off the natural man through spiritual rebirth, the contest between the natural and spiritual man is *not* over! In one sense, the war has just begun. “When we receive the Gospel,” Brigham Young stated, “a warfare commences immediately ... We have to fight continually, as it were, sword in hand to make the spirit master of the tabernacle, or the flesh subject to the law of the spirit.” The “natural man,” Elder Maxwell remarked, “will not go quietly or easily. And even when he is put off, he has a way of hanging around, hoping to throw his saddle on us once again.” He further noted, “Time and again, the new self is pitted against the stubborn old self. Sometimes, just when at last we think the job is done, the old self reminds us that he or she has not fully departed yet.” Consequently, Brigham Young warned, “If this warfare is not diligently prosecuted, then the law of sin prevails, and in consequence of this some apostatize from the truth.” Understanding this truth is basic in any study of the Book of Alma. Though many of the Nephites in the days of Alma had been spiritually born again, they soon began to give in to the natural man desires. Thus many were losing the effect of their spiritual rebirth and were in danger of apostatizing from the truth. Bruce Satterfield, Meridian Magazine, Lesson 22. Discussions regarding the natural man are not always easy to accept but they are important. Of this, Elder Neal A. Maxwell wrote: “There are those who, reading certain scriptural descriptions about the nature of man (such as that man is “carnal, sensual, and devilish,” Alma 42:10) brush by these scriptures hurriedly, even nervously, because they feel so

uncomfortable upon reading them. Such readers may feel, wrongly, that these scriptures sound much like a Calvinistic denigration of man. Such offended readers may even say those adjectives do not sound like most of the people they know. The same brush-by occurs regarding the numerous scriptures concerning 'darkness' and 'light.' There is a danger, however, in ignoring these scriptures and the profound message they contain. Calvinism focused unnaturally on the natural man and lacked the lifting dimension contained in the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, with its exalting perspectives and sweeping promises. Though these scriptural insights concerning the natural man may seem to put us sternly in our place, when they are combined with the fullness of the gospel, we are shown our immense possibilities and what we have the power to become. Are we not wiser to understand our fallen nature and then, with equal attention, to be taught about how we can be lifted up? Indeed, for one to ask 'Where do we go from here?' he must know where 'here' is! (*Notwithstanding My Weakness* (1981), p.70))

27 Have ye walked, keeping yourselves ^ablameless before God? Could ye say, if ye were called to die at this time, within yourselves, that ye have been sufficiently ^bhumble? (If we were humble, nothing would change us – neither praise nor discouragement. If someone were to criticize us, we would not feel discouraged. If someone were to praise us, we also would not feel proud. Jose Luis Gonzalez-Balado, *Mother Teresa – In My Own Words*, 53) That your garments have been ^ccleansed and made white through the blood of Christ, who will come to ^dredeem his people from their sins?

28 Behold, are ye stripped of ^apride? (Dallin H. Oaks said: "One kind of pride condemned in the scriptures is synonymous with self-satisfaction. The pride of self-satisfaction is self-righteous. Self-righteousness is 'a condition of soul that assumes and creates an air-tight justification for everything you do simply because you do it' (Norman Podhoretz, "Candidates' Morality Is Not Private," *Insight*, June 8, 1987, p. 64). But what I call the pride of self-satisfaction goes deeper than mere self-justification. Self-satisfaction is the opposite of humility. A person who has the pride of self-satisfaction cannot repent, because he recognizes no shortcomings. He cannot be taught, because he recognizes no master. He cannot be helped, because he recognizes no resource greater than his own... The second type of pride that is condemned in the scriptures is what I have chosen to call the pride of comparison... Materialism is an attitude toward things. In contrast, the pride of comparison is an attitude toward people. ... C. S. Lewis described the pride of comparison when he said: Pride is essentially competitive. . . . Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man. . . . It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest. Lewis called pride 'the utmost evil' and 'the complete anti-God state of mind,' because this kind of comparison leads men to enmity and oppression and every other kind of evil. This insightful Christian saw that every person should look up to God as 'immeasurably superior' to him or her. He continued: Unless you know God as that--and, therefore, know yourself as nothing in comparison--you do not know God at all. As long as you are proud you cannot know God. A proud man is always looking down on things and people: and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you.' (*Mere Christianity* [New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1960], pp. 109-11.)" (*Pure In Heart*, pp. 95-6)) I say unto you, if ye are not ye are not prepared to meet God. Behold ye must prepare quickly; for the kingdom of heaven is soon at hand, (Each of us, as we face the time of death must reckon with ourselves in regard to the commandments of God. That is, we know not the day nor the hour in which our experience in mortality will end. DCBM, 3:33) and such an one hath not eternal life.

29 Behold, I say, is there one among you who is not stripped of ^aenvy? (Thomas S. Monson said: "Can we not appreciate that our very business in life is not to get ahead of others, but to get ahead of ourselves? To break our own records, to outstrip our yesterdays by our todays, to bear our trials more beautifully than we ever dreamed we could, to give as we have never given, to do our work with more force and a finer finish than ever—this is the true idea: to get ahead of ourselves." (*Pathways to Perfection*, p. 81) The antidote to virtually every spiritual ill is charity. When the people of the Lord's fold are filled with his pure love, they seek to build up one another, take joy in the accomplishments or

acquisitions of one another, and feel no desire to have more than they need. Some of the most serious sins known to mankind, such as murder and adultery, are generally due to pride and envy and covetousness. DCBM, 3:33.) I say unto you that such an one is not prepared; and I would that he should prepare ^bquickly, for the hour is close at hand, and he knoweth not when the time shall come; for such an one is not found guiltless.

30 And again I say unto you, is there one among you that doth make a ^amock of his brother, or that heapeth upon him persecutions? (Here Alma is encouraging us to get rid of three faults: Pride, envy, and mocking or persecuting others.)

31 Wo unto such an one, for he is not prepared, and the ^atime is at hand that he must repent or he cannot be saved!

32 Yea, even wo unto all ye ^aworkers of iniquity; repent, repent, for the Lord God hath spoken it!

33 Behold, he sendeth an invitation unto ^aall men, (From Adam to the last person to be born on this mortal earth, none will be left without the opportunity to hear the gospel of salvation. DCBM, 3:34) for the ^barms of mercy are extended towards them, and he saith: Repent, and I will receive you. (Look at the kind mercy of Christ. We repent, and he will receive us.)

34 Yea, he saith: ^aCome unto me and ye shall partake of the ^bfruit of the tree of life; (Christ is the tree of life. In the allegory of Eden, Christ is the tree of life, and to partake of that fruit is to partake of the cleansing powers of Christ and to receive the blessings of his Spirit. DCBM 3:35.) yea, ye shall eat and drink of the ^cbread and the waters of life ^dfreely; (Symbols of Christ.)

35 Yea, come unto me and bring forth works of righteousness, and ye shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire—

36 For behold, the time is at hand that whosoever ^abringeth forth not good fruit, or whosoever doeth not the works of righteousness, the same have cause to wail and mourn.

37 O ye workers of iniquity; ye that are ^apuffed up in the vain things of the world, (Neal A. Maxwell said: “This was all Brigham Young could preach in his last year: ‘fast into idolatry, drifting into the spirit of the world and into pride and vanity... We wish the wealth of things of the world; we think about them morning, noon and night; they are first in our minds when we awake in the morning, and the last thing before we go to sleep at night... We have gone just as far as we can be permitted to go in the road on which we are now traveling. One man has his eye on a gold mine, another is for a silver mine, another is for marketing his flour or his wheat, another for selling his cattle, another to raise cattle, another to get a farm, or building here and there, and trading and trafficking with each other, just like Babylon. . . . Babylon is here, and we are following in the footsteps of the inhabitants of the earth, who are in a perfect sea of confusion. Do you know this? You ought to, for there are none of you but what see it daily. . . . The Latter-day Saints [are] trying to take advantage of their brethren. There are Elders in this Church who would take the widow's last cow, for five dollars, and then kneel down and thank God for the fine bargain they had made.’ This is the great voice of the economy of Babylon. It does not renounce its religious pretensions for a minute. Many in it think they are identical with a pious life.” (Things As They Really Are, p. 334)) ye that have professed to have known the ways of righteousness nevertheless have gone ^bastray, as ^csheep having no ^dshepherd, notwithstanding a shepherd hath ^ecalled after you and is still calling after you, but ye will not ^fhearken unto his voice!

38 Behold, I say unto you, that the good ^ashepherd doth call you; yea, and in his own name he doth call you, which is the name of Christ; (Entrance into the kingdom of heaven requires that we take upon ourselves the name of Christ. Salvation is found in no other name. DCBM, 3:36) and if ye will not ^bhearken unto the voice of the ^cgood shepherd, to the ^dname by which ye are called, behold, ye are not the sheep of the good shepherd.

39 And now if ye are not the ^asheep of the good shepherd, of what fold are ye? Behold, I say unto you, that the ^bdevil is your shepherd, and ye are of his fold; and now, who can deny this? Behold, I say unto you, whosoever denieth this is a ^cliar and a ^dchild of the devil.

40 For I say unto you that whatsoever is ^agood cometh from God, and whatsoever is ^bevil cometh from

the devil.

41 Therefore, if a man bringeth forth ^agood works he hearkeneth unto the voice of the good shepherd, and he doth follow him; but whosoever bringeth forth evil works, the same becometh a ^bchild of the devil, for he hearkeneth unto his voice, and doth follow him.

42 And whosoever doeth this must receive his ^awages of him; therefore, for his ^bwages he receiveth ^cdeath, as to things pertaining unto righteousness, being dead unto all good works.

43 And now, my brethren, I would that ye should hear me, for I speak in the ^aenergy of my soul; for behold, I have spoken unto you plainly that ye cannot err, or have spoken according to the commandments of God.

44 For I am called to speak after this manner, according to the ^aholy order of God, (Melchizedek Priesthood) which is in Christ Jesus; yea, I am commanded to stand and testify unto this people the things which have been spoken by our fathers concerning the things which are to come.

45 And this is not all. Do ye not suppose that I ^aknow of these things myself? Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety?

46 Behold, I say unto you they are made ^aknown unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have ^bfasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. (Even though Alma had seen an angel, he needed to obtain a spiritual witness of the truth.) And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of ^crevelation which is in me. (Robert L. Simpson said: Testimonies built on miracles alone are at best shallow and can only be perpetuated by other miracles. Such is not the eternal process considered best for the acquisition of a testimony that can withstand ...troubles (New Era, March 1972, p. 4).)

47 And moreover, I say unto you that it has thus been revealed unto me, that the words which have been spoken by our fathers are true, even so according to the spirit of prophecy which is in me, which is also by the manifestation of the Spirit of God.

48 I say unto you, that I know of myself that whatsoever I shall say unto you, concerning that which is to come, is true; and I say unto you, that I know that Jesus Christ shall come, yea, the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace, and mercy, and truth. And behold, it is he that cometh to take away the sins of the world, yea, the sins of every man who steadfastly believeth on his name.

49 And now I say unto you that this is the ^aorder after which I am called, yea, to preach unto my beloved brethren, yea, and every one that dwelleth in the land; yea, to preach unto all, both old and young, both bond and free; yea, I say unto you the aged, and also the middle aged, and the rising generation; yea, to cry unto them that they must repent and be ^bborn again.

50 Yea, thus saith the Spirit: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, for the kingdom of heaven is soon at hand; yea, the Son of God cometh in his ^aglory, in his might, majesty, power, and dominion. Yea, my beloved brethren, I say unto you, that the Spirit saith: Behold the glory of the ^bKing of all the earth; and also the King of heaven shall very soon shine forth among all the children of men.

51 And also the Spirit saith unto me, yea, crieth unto me with a mighty voice, saying: Go forth and say unto this people—Repent, for except ye repent ye can in nowise inherit the ^akingdom of ^bheaven.

52 And again I say unto you, the Spirit saith: Behold, the ^aax is laid at the root of the tree; therefore every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be ^bhewn down and cast into the fire, yea, a fire which cannot be consumed, even an unquenchable fire. Behold, and remember, the Holy One hath spoken it. (Alma's declaration was not just that the wicked shall be destroyed but that all who failed to bring forth works of righteousness will be as the tree hewn down and cast into the fire. As there is no neutrality where the kingdom of God is concerned, so no lack of commitment is acceptable where right and proper works are needed. The Apostle Paul, teaching this same principle, charged the meridian Saints to "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. Phillipians 2:12. DCBM, 3:43-44.)

53 And now my beloved brethren, I say unto you, can ye withstand these sayings; yea, can ye lay aside these things, and ^atrample the Holy One under your feet; yea, can ye be ^bpuffed up in the pride of your

hearts; yea, **will ye still persist** in the wearing of ^ccostly apparel (Hugh Nibley said: “I’ve always been taken up with costly apparel. It’s so much in the Book of Mormon, and I’ve read it since I was a little kid. I loathe the costly apparel. I get all my duds at Deseret—all this outfit comes from Deseret Industries—except that I have kids who make me wear other things occasionally. They’d sooner be found dead in a back lot than shopping at Deseret Industries. I don’t know why. The only thing wrong with these is the linings sometimes fall out, and the zippers misbehave. But why not, when you get this for four bucks and the pants for three? You can’t beat it. But you’re not supposed to wear ‘costly apparel and [set] your hearts upon the vain things of the world, upon your riches.’ It summarizes all that here. Here we are again on this theme.” (*Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, Lecture 47, p. 293)) **and setting your hearts upon the vain things of the world, upon your ^ariches?**

54 Yea, **will ye persist** in supposing that ye are better one than another; yea, **will ye 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 ^asanctified by the Holy Spirit, and they do bring forth works which are meet for repentance—

55 Yea, and **will you persist** in turning your backs upon the ^apoor, and the needy, and in withholding your substance from them?

56 And finally, all **ye that will persist** in your wickedness, I say unto you that these are they who shall be hewn down and cast into the fire except they speedily repent. (Ted Gibbons – LDS Living, lesson 22: The multitude of questions Alma asks are worth a careful, personal look. But it seems clear that there is one question in the sermon, what we might call the critical question, that must be answered correctly. That question is asked five different times toward the end of the sermon. The question is in verses 53-56 and it is this: if you are doing any of these things that are contrary to the teaching of the gospel, will ye persist? If you have found something in this sermon that needs your attention, or that needs repentance, will you repent? Or will you persist in rebelling against the commandments of God?)

57 **And now I say unto you, all you that are desirous to follow the voice of the ^agood shepherd, come ye out from the wicked, and be ye ^bseparate, and touch not their unclean things** (Sin is born in the touching stage. Of the tree of [the knowledge of good and evil] Adam and Eve were commanded, “Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.” As will our first parents, so with us – we cannot partake of forbidden fruits save we first touch them. To refuse to touch is the fence of safety. Many a bitter tear has been shed by those who thought it cute to flirt with sin or nibble at that which is forbidden. DCBM, 3:45.); and behold, their names shall be ^cblotted out, that the names of the wicked shall not be numbered among the names of the righteous, that the word of God may be fulfilled, which saith: The names of the wicked shall not be mingled with the names of my people;

58 **For the names of the righteous shall be written in the ^abook of life,** (The book of life, or Lamb’s book of life, is the record kept in heaven which contains the names of the faithful and an account of their righteous covenants and deeds. The book of life is the book containing the names of those who shall inherit eternal life; it is the book of eternal life. It is the book of the names of the sanctified, even them of the celestial world. Names of faithful saints are recorded in the book of life which they are yet in mortality. But those names are blotted out in the event of wickedness. DCBM, 3:45) **and unto them will I grant an inheritance at my right hand. And now, my brethren, what have ye to say against this? I say unto you, if ye speak against it, it matters not, for the word of God must be fulfilled.**

59 For what shepherd is there among you having many sheep doth not watch over them, that the wolves enter not and devour his flock? And behold, if a wolf enter his ^aflock doth he not drive him out? Yea, and at the last, if he can, he will destroy him.

60 And now I say unto you that the good shepherd doth call after you; and if you will hearken unto his voice he will bring you into his fold, and ye are his sheep; and he **commandeth you that ye suffer no ravenous wolf to enter among you, that ye may not be destroyed.**

61 **And now I, Alma, do command you in the language of ^ahim who hath commanded me, that ye observe to do the words which I have spoken unto you.**

62 I speak by way of command unto you that belong to the church; and unto those who do not belong to the church I speak by way of invitation, saying: Come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye also may be partakers of the fruit of the ^atree of life. (Christ is the tree of life. To be a partaker of the fruit of the tree of life is to feast upon the principles of salvation as taught and revealed by him. DCBM, 3:46)

* Verse 1 [About 83 B.C.].

CHAPTER 6

The Church in Zarahemla is cleansed and set in order—Alma goes to Gideon to preach. [About 83 B.C.]

1 AND now it came to pass that after Alma had made an end of speaking unto the people of the church, which was established in the city of Zarahemla, he ^aordained (By the laying on of hands. The hands laid upon the head of the recipient of the ordination are a symbolic representation of the hands of the Lord. DCBM, 3:47) ^bpriests (Bruce R. McConkie said: “Book of Mormon prophets gave the title priest to officers known in this dispensation as high priests. That is, they were priests of the Melchizedek Priesthood, or as Alma expressed it, ‘the Lord God ordained priests, after his holy order, which was after the order of his Son.’ (Alma 13:1-20.) Since there was no Aaronic Priesthood among the Nephites in Alma’s day (there being none of the lineage empowered in pre-meridian times to hold that priesthood), there was no need to distinguish between priests of the lesser and greater priesthoods.” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 599)) and ^belders, by laying on his ^chands according to the order of God, to preside and ^dwatch over the church. (Alma held priesthood keys to be able to give the priesthood to others.)

2 And it came to pass that whosoever did not belong to the church who ^arepented of their sins were baptized unto repentance, and were received into the church.

3 And it also came to pass that whosoever did belong to the church that did not ^arepent of their wickedness and humble themselves before God—I mean those who were lifted up in the ^bpride of their hearts—the same were rejected, and their names were ^cblotted out, that their names were not numbered among those of the righteous. (Alma is straightening things out in the Church. Those who repented were baptized. Those members who did not repent were excommunicated.)

4 And thus they began to establish the order of the church in the ^acity of Zarahemla.

5 Now I would that ye should understand that the word of God was liberal unto all, that none were deprived of the privilege of assembling themselves together to hear the word of God.

6 Nevertheless the children of God (Reference is to baptized members of the Church, those who by covenant have been born again and thereby received into the family of Jesus Christ. DCBM, 3:47) were commanded that they should gather themselves together oft, (LeGrand Richards said: “We do not want to neglect our prayers; we do not want to neglect attendance at our sacrament meetings. We do not want a spirit of darkness to come over us. I want to bear testimony to you Latter-day Saints, as a result of my own experience and training, and that of my children, that I know of no better way that we can keep the spirit of God burning in our souls and in their souls than by attending sacrament meetings.” (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1945, p. 38)) and join in ^afasting and mighty prayer in behalf of the welfare of the souls of those who knew not God.

7 And now it came to pass that when Alma had made these regulations he departed from them, yea, from the church which was in the city of Zarahemla, and went over upon the east of the ^ariver Sidon, into the ^bvalley of Gideon, there having been a city built, which was called the city of Gideon, which was in the valley that was called Gideon, being called after the man who was ^cslain by the hand of Nehor with the sword.

8 And Alma went and began to declare the word of God unto the church which was established in the valley of Gideon, according to the revelation of the truth of the word which had been spoken by his fathers, and according to the spirit of prophecy which was in him, according to the ^atestimony of Jesus

Christ, the Son of God, who should come to redeem his people from their sins, and the holy order by which he was called. And thus it is written. Amen. (Joseph Smith said: “Many of the sects cry out, ‘Oh, I have the testimony of Jesus; I have the spirit of God: but away with Joe Smith; he says he is a prophet; but there are to be no prophets or revelators in the last days.’ Stop, sir! The Revelator says that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy; so by your own mouth you are condemned.” (*The Teachings of Joseph Smith*, by Dahl and Cannon, p. 662) “If any person should ask me if I were a prophet, I should not deny it, as that would give me the lie; for, according to John, the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy; therefore, if I profess to be a witness or teacher, and have not the spirit of prophecy, which is the testimony of Jesus, I must be a false witness; but if I be a true teacher and witness, I must possess the spirit of prophecy, and that constitutes a prophet; and any man who says he is a teacher or a preacher of righteousness, and denies the spirit of prophecy, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; and by this key false teachers and imposters may be detected.” (*History of The Church*, 5:215-16) Joseph Fielding Smith said: “The Prophet Joseph Smith has said that every member of the Church should be a prophet, meaning, of course, that he should have that testimony of Jesus and keep himself in perfect accord with the Spirit of the Lord so that he could recognize truth and the Lord could reveal the truth to him, so that he might comprehend it. Every man in the Church has the right to receive revelation for his own guidance, but not for the guidance of the Church.” (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1943, p. 97) This chapter is in between two sermons and links the two together.)

The words of Alma which he delivered to the people in Gideon, according to his own record. Comprising chapter 7.

CHAPTER 7

Christ shall be born of Mary—He shall loose the bands of death and bear the sins of his people—Those who repent, are baptized, and keep the commandments shall have eternal life—Filthiness cannot inherit the kingdom of God—Humility, faith, hope, and charity are required. [About 83 B.C.]

1 BEHOLD my beloved brethren, seeing that I have been permitted to come unto you, therefore I attempt to address you in my language (Hugh Nibley indicates that this means there were different dialects among the different villages.); yea, by my ^aown mouth, seeing that it is the first time that I have spoken unto you by the words of my mouth, I having been wholly confined to the ^bjudgment-seat, having had much business that I could not come unto you.

2 And even I could not have come now at this time were it not that the judgment-seat hath been ^agiven to another, to reign in my stead; and the Lord in much mercy hath granted that I should come unto you.

3 And behold, I have come having great hopes and much desire that I should find that ye had humbled yourselves before God, and that ye had continued in the supplicating of his grace, that I should find that ye were blameless before him, that I should find that ye were not in the awful ^adilemma that our brethren were in at Zarahemla.

4 But blessed be the name of God, that he hath given me to know, yea, hath given unto me the exceedingly great joy of knowing that they are established again in the way of his righteousness. (The Spirit told Alma that the people of Zarahemla had heeded his words.)

5 And I trust, according to the Spirit of God which is in me, that I shall also have joy over you; nevertheless I do not desire that my joy over you should come by the cause of so much afflictions and sorrow which I have had for the brethren at Zarahemla, for behold, my joy cometh over them after wading through much affliction and sorrow.

6 But behold, I trust that ye are not in a state of so much unbelief as were your brethren; (The following were probably the areas where the people of Zarahemla had had problems.) I trust that ye are not lifted up in the pride of your hearts; yea, I trust that ye have not set your hearts upon riches and the vain things

of the world; yea, I trust that you do not worship ^aidols, but that ye do worship the true and the ^bliving God, and that ye look forward for the remission of your sins, with an everlasting faith, which is to come. (The usage of the phrase “I trust” is evidence of Alma’s faith in a future reality. The use of the negative qualities were what was being done in Zarahemla.)

7 For behold, I say unto you there be many things to come; and behold, there is one thing which is of more importance than they all—for behold, the ^atime is not far distant that the Redeemer liveth and cometh among his people. (Joseph Smith taught that the fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it. TPJS, p. 121. Truth, glorious truth, proclaims there is a Mediator. Through Him mercy can be fully extended to each of us without offending the eternal law of justice. This truth is the very root of Christian doctrine. You may know much about the gospel as it branches out from there, but if you only know the branches and those branches do not touch that root, if they have been cut free from the truth, there will be no life nor substance nor redemption in them. Boyd K. Packer, CR, April 1977, p.80.)

8 Behold, I do not say that he will come among us at the ^atime of his dwelling in his mortal tabernacle; for behold, the Spirit hath not said unto me that this should be the case. Now as to this thing I do not know; but this much I do know, that the Lord God hath power to do all things which are according to his word.

9 But behold, the Spirit hath said this much unto me, saying: Cry unto this people, saying—^aRepent ye, and prepare the way of the Lord, and walk in his paths, which are straight; for behold, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and the Son of God ^bcometh upon the face of the earth. (This sounds like a New Testament prophecy, even that of John the Baptist.)

10 And behold, he shall be ^aborn of Mary, **at** ^bJerusalem (Not in Jerusalem but **at** Jerusalem. Bethlehem is just outside of Jerusalem, about 6 miles to the south, and is considered **at** Jerusalem. Joseph Fielding Smith said: “This question has in recent weeks come from several sources. It is from the promptings of enemies of the Church who spend their time in a futile endeavor to discredit the Book of Mormon, attempting to make it the product of the mind of Joseph Smith the Prophet or some other person in collusion with him. These religious persons who sponsor this question may well be compared to the scribes and Pharisees of old, and the Savior’s description of them, as recorded in Matthew, Chapter 23, fits these modern Pharisees and scribes admirably. They attempt to show that the Book of Mormon is of modern authorship, and this attempt has been going on for one hundred and twenty-five years and is farther away from effectiveness than in the beginning. It has utterly failed. Joseph Smith and those associated with him when the Book of Mormon was translated knew perfectly well that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. If the Book of Mormon had been the production of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, or anyone else connected with this restoration, it would have stated plainly that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, for they were well aware of this fact. There has been an effort to make it appear that the Prophet was a very ignorant man who did not know where Jesus was born. In this they display their bitterness and hate and add to their confusion, for an ignorant man unacquainted with the fact of the birth of Jesus Christ could not have written the Book of Mormon. The fact that it is written in Alma as it is, indicates plainly that it is an expression coming from the Hebrew; for this is purely a Hebrew expression, in full accord with their manner of speech. . . . There is no conflict or contradiction in the Book of Mormon with any truth recorded in the Bible. A careful reading of what Alma said will show that he had no intention of declaring that Jesus would be born in Jerusalem. Alma knew better. So did Joseph Smith and those who were associated with him in the bringing forth of the Book of Mormon. Had Alma said, ‘born in Jerusalem, the city of our fathers,’ it would have made all the difference in the world. Then we would have said he made an error. Alma made no mistake, and what he said is true. Dr. Hugh Nibley, in his course of study for the priesthood for 1957, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, in Lesson 8, page 85, has this to say on this point: ‘. . . One of the favorite points of attack on the Book

of Mormon has been the statement in Alma 7:10 that the Savior would be born 'at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers.' Here Jerusalem is not the city 'in the land of our forefathers,' it is the land. Christ was born in a village some six miles from the city of Jerusalem; it was not in the city, but it was in what we now know the ancients themselves designated as 'the land of Jerusalem.' Such a neat test of authenticity is not often found in ancient documents." (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, vol. 1, pp. 173-5) Hugh Nibley said: "When we speak of Jerusalem, it is important to notice Nephi's preference for a non-Biblical expression, 'the land of Jerusalem' (1 Nephi 3:10), in designating his homeland. While he and his brothers always regard 'the land of Jerusalem' as their home, it is perfectly clear from a number of passages that 'the land of our father's inheritance' (1 Nephi 3:16) cannot possibly be within, or even very near, the city, even though Lehi had 'dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days' (1 Nephi 1:4). The terms seem confused, but they correctly reflect actual conditions, for in the Amarna letters we read of 'the land of Jerusalem' as an area larger than the city itself, and even learn in one instance that 'a city of the land of Jerusalem, Bet-Ninib, has been captured.' It was the rule in Palestine and Syria, as the same letters show, for a large area around a city and all the inhabitants of that area to bear the name of the city. This was a holdover from the times when the city and the land were a single political unit, comprising a city-state; when this was absorbed into a larger empire, the original identity was preserved, though it had lost its original political significance... This arrangement deserves mention because many have pointed to the statement of Alma 7:10 that the Savior would be born 'at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers,' as sure proof of fraud. It is rather the opposite, faithfully preserving the ancient terminology to describe a system which has only been recently rediscovered." (*Lehi in the Desert, And the World of the Jaredites*, pp. 6-7)) which is the ^cland of our forefathers, she being a ^dvirgin, a precious and chosen vessel, (Bruce R. McConkie said: "We cannot but think that the Father would choose the greatest female spirit to be the mother of his Son, even as he chose the male spirit like unto him to be the Savior." (D. Ludlow, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, p. 863)) who shall be overshadowed and ^cconceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God. (The Holy Ghost shall be the enabling power and Jesus shall be the literal Son of Heavenly Father.)

11 And he shall go forth, **suffering pains and ^aafflictions and ^btemptations of every kind**; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith **he will ^ctake upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people**. ("Think of it! When his body was taken from the cross and hastily placed in a borrowed tomb, he, the sinless Son of God, had already taken upon him not only the sins and temptations of every human soul who will repent, but all of our sickness and grief and pain of every kind. He suffered these afflictions as we suffer them, according to the flesh. He suffered them all. He did this to perfect his mercy and his ability to lift us above every earthly trial." (*Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, pp. 6-7) John Taylor said: "There came upon Him the weight and agony of ages.... Hence His profound grief, His indescribable anguish, His overpowering torture, all experienced in the submission to the eternal fiat of Jehovah and the requirements of an inexorable law.... Groaning beneath this concentrated load, this intense, incomprehensible pressure, this terrible exaction of Divine justice, from which feeble humanity shrank, and through the agony thus experienced sweating great drops of blood, He was led to exclaim, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' (Matt 26:39)" (Tad Callister, *Infinite Atonement*, p. 124))

12 **And he will take upon him ^adeath, that he may ^bloose the bands of death** which bind his people; **and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy**, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to ^csuccor his people according to their **infirmities**. ("Elder Neal A. Maxwell gave this insight into the relationship between the Atonement and the Savior's succoring powers: 'His empathy and capacity to succor us—in our own sickness, temptations, or sins—were demonstrated and perfected in the process of the great atonement.' He also said, 'The marvelous atonement brought about not only immortality but also the final perfection of Jesus' empathetic and helping capacity.'... No mortal can cry out, 'he does not understand my plight for my trials are unique.' There is nothing outside the scope of the Savior's experience. As Elder Maxwell

observed, 'None of us can tell Christ anything about depression.' As a result of his mortal experience, culminating in the Atonement, the Savior knows, understands, and feels every human condition, every human woe, and every human loss. He can comfort as no other. He can lift burdens as no other. He can listen as no other." (Tad Callister, *Infinite Atonement*, pp. 207-9) **For many years I thought of the Savior's experience in the garden and on the cross as places where a large mass of sin was heaped upon Him. Through the words of Alma, Abinadi, Isaiah, and other prophets, however, my view has changed. Instead of an impersonal mass of sin, there was a long line of people, as Jesus felt "our infirmities" Hebrews 4:15). "[bore] our griefs... carried our sorrows... [and] was bruised for our iniquities" "Isaiah 53:4-5). The Atonement was an intimate, personal experience in which Jesus came to know how to help each of us. The Pearl of Great Price teaches that Moses was shown all the inhabitants of the earth, which were "numberless as the sand upon the sea shore" (Moses 1:28). If Moses beheld every soul, then it seems reasonable that the Creator of the universe has the power to become intimately acquainted with each of us. He learned about your weaknesses and mine. He experienced your pains and sufferings. He experienced mine. I testify that He knows us. He understands the way in which we deal with temptations. He knows our weaknesses. But more than that, more than just knowing us, He knows how to help us if we come to Him in faith.** Merrill J. Bateman, *Ensign*, Nov 2005, 75-76. It seems that Elder Bateman is saying that for the time Jesus was in the Garden and on the Cross, somehow incomprehensible to us, time stood still to Him while every single person, an infinite number of people, was seen in vision by Jesus, so He could know personally every person's sins, weaknesses, pains, sorrows, etc., so that He could take those upon Himself in the atoning, sacrificial act. So when we think that Jesus suffered for us, he truly suffered for us individually and personally.)

13 Now the Spirit ^aknoweth all things (Since the Spirit knows all things, Christ could have "known" what it was like to suffer or to feel the guilt of sin. But he had to actually experience it in order to take our suffering upon him.); nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the ^bflesh that **he might ^ctake upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance;** and now behold, this is the testimony which is in me. (Alma has broached a topic which some of his listener's might question. He has stated that this coming Atoning Messiah will actually *learn* something. Alma understands that there will be those who might not understand what he means, so he clarifies. Alma confirms that "the Spirit knoweth all things." In other words, this experience of pain, afflictions, and death, is not teaching the Messiah anything that he would not have understood on some level. Nevertheless, the entire experience is what allows the Messiah to be merciful and "blot out their transgressions." Alma testifies that this process is essential to the mission of the Atoning Messiah. Brant Gardner. Jesus Christ, in taking upon him the effects of the sins of all mankind, was thus exposed to the awful (and to Jesus, unusual) withdrawal of that Spirit which had been his constant companion from the beginning. President Brigham Young explained: "The Father withdrew His Spirit from His Son, at the time he was to be crucified... At the very moment, at the hour when the crisis came for him to offer up his life, the Father withdrew Himself, withdrew His Spirit... That is what made him sweat blood. If he had had the power of God upon him, he would not have sweat blood. JD, 3:206, DCBM, 3:53.)

14 Now I say unto you that ye must ^arepent, and be born again; for the Spirit saith if ye are not born again ye cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven; therefore come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye may be washed from your sins (Sins are remitted, not in the waters of baptism, as we say casually, but rather as we receive the cleansing and sanctifying influence of the Spirit in our lives. DCBM, 3:53.), that ye may have faith on the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, who is mighty to save and to cleanse from all unrighteousness. (Bruce R. McConkie said: "Sometimes someone will say: 'Well, I have been baptized into the Church; I am a member of the Church; I am a member of the Church; I'll just go along and live an ordinary sort of life; I won't commit any great crimes; I'll live a reasonably good Christian life; and eventually I will gain the kingdom of God.' I don't understand it that

way. I think that baptism is a gate. It is a gate which puts us on a path; and the name of the path is the straight and narrow path. The straight and narrow path leads upward from the gate of baptism to the celestial kingdom of heaven. After a person has entered the gate of baptism, he has to press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, as Nephi expresses it, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men; and if he endures to the end, then he gains the promised reward.” (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1950, p. 16 as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p.34))

15 Yea, I say unto you come and fear not, and lay aside every sin, which easily doth^a beset you, (Alma is not counseling the people to put away their sins one at a time, a bit here and a bit there. This is the world’s approach. It may sound commendable, but it is terrestrial at best. To be born again is to have our natures changed, not always immediately but certainly in process of time. To lay aside every sin is to rid oneself of all sin and the desire for it; to put off all sinfulness; to confess and forsake sin; and to rely on the merits and mercies of the Holy Messiah. DCBM, 3:54) which doth bind you down to destruction, yea, come and go forth, and show unto your God that ye are **willing** to repent of your sins and enter into a covenant with him to keep his commandments, and witness it unto him this day by going into the waters of baptism. (Of course, they witness after that that they are willing to take upon them the name of the Son and keep his commandments which he has given them. When we partake of the sacrament, we witness the same thing we witness at baptism. When we partake of it we renew it each time. You enter into a covenant and witness it and refresh it that way. They use almost the same words here: Witnessing unto him by water but here it’s by the sacrament. Hugh Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, 2:298.)

16 And whosoever doeth this, and keepeth the commandments of God from thenceforth, the same will^a remember that I say unto him, yea, he will remember that I have said unto him, he shall have eternal life, according to the testimony of the Holy Spirit, which testifieth in me.

17 And now my beloved brethren, do you believe these things? Behold, I say unto you, yea, I know that ye believe them; and the way that I know that ye believe them is by the manifestation of the Spirit which is in me. And now because your faith is strong concerning that, yea, concerning the things which I have spoken, great is my joy.

18 For as I said unto you from the beginning, that I had much desire that ye were not in the state of^a dilemma like your brethren, even so I have found that my desires have been gratified.

19 For I perceive that ye are in the paths of righteousness; I perceive that ye are in the path which leads to the kingdom of God; yea, I perceive that ye are making his^a paths straight (**strict**).

20 I perceive that it has been made known unto you, by the testimony of his word, that he cannot^a walk in crooked paths; neither doth he vary from that which he hath said; neither hath he a shadow of turning from the right to the left, or from that which is right to that which is wrong; therefore, his course is one eternal round. (Elder Rudger Clawson said: ‘...God’s work is everlasting, and with Him it is one eternal round. He uses the words ‘firstly’ and ‘lastly,’ in order that we by our finite minds may be able to understand: but to Him there is no beginning of his works; there is no end to them. It is a beautiful thought, isn’t it? It gives you the idea at once of eternal life, something that continues and never ends. It is a tremendous thought, and quite beyond our comprehension. There is no man in this room, there is no woman in this assembly, that can comprehend, can begin to grasp the idea of eternal life. We can feel it. We just feel it in our very bones. We feel that we are destined to live forever. We feel that, but we cannot explain it.” (*Conference Report*, p. 54))

21 And he doth not dwell in^a unholy temples; neither can filthiness or anything which is unclean be received into the kingdom of God; therefore I say unto you the time shall come, yea, and it shall be at the last day, that he who is^b filthy shall remain in his filthiness (**Sons of Perdition**).

22 And now my beloved brethren, I have said these things unto you that I might awaken you to a sense of your duty to God, that ye may walk blameless before him, that ye may walk after the holy order of God, after which ye have been received.

23 And now I would that ye should be ^ahumble, and be ^bsubmissive and gentle; easy to be entreated; full of patience and long-suffering; being temperate in all things; being diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times; asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal; always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive. (These aren't acts, but states of mind. TBM, 2:299. I don't see in this list of virtues hard work, thrift, drive, ambition, prudence, smarts. I don't see any of that at all. You find the same thing in Isaiah. The sins Isaiah lists are the things we consider virtues. The virtues Isaiah lists are the things we consider weaknesses and wimpishness. Only a wimp would have all these things – being diligent and asking for whatever you want. Notice you're always submissive. You do the asking of what you stand in need – always returning thanks, temperate. Diligent in keeping the commandments, patient, gentle, etc. and so forth. This is what God demands of us, and what we won't give. This is a very important theme in the Book of Mormon, always having faith and charity. TBM, 2:300.)

24 And see that ye have ^afaith, hope, and charity, and then ye will always abound in good works. (Neal A. Maxwell said: "Being perfect is not a vague, generalized condition, but the acquiring of key attributes. Our Father is described not only as omnipotent and omniscient, but also as having ultimate capacity in justice and mercy. These qualities, therefore, are those we are either to acquire or to develop much more deeply. C.S. Lewis observed that we must realize that God 'wants a people of a particular sort,' not just obedience to a set of rules." (*We Will Prove Them Herewith*, p. 62) Joseph B. Wirthlin said: "Consider President McKay's comments regarding the many little things that build our spirituality: 'Every noble impulse, every unselfish expression of love, every brave suffering for the right; every surrender of self to something higher than self; every loyalty to an ideal; every unselfish devotion to principle; every helpfulness to humanity; every act of self control; every fine courage of the soul, undefeated by pretence or policy, but by being, doing, and living of good for the very good's sake—that is spirituality.' President McKay also taught us that 'spirituality is the consciousness of victory over self, and of communion with the Infinite. Spirituality impels one to conquer difficulties and acquire more and more strength. To feel one's faculties unfolding and truth expanding the soul is one of life's sublimest experiences.' These little things—which, in reality, become such big things—bring perspective to our lives as we learn to conquer them one by one in our effort to gain strength. And this we do in a spirit of humility and gratitude to our Heavenly Father. Alma expressed it best when he said: (quotes Alma 7:23.)" (*Finding Peace in Our Lives*, p. 70))

25 And may the Lord bless you, and keep your garments spotless, that ye may at last be brought to sit down with ^aAbraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the holy prophets who have been ever since the world began, having your garments ^bspotless even as their garments are spotless, in the kingdom of heaven to go no more out. (Bruce R. McConkie said: "Our Lord's Church is the kingdom of God on earth. Faithful members of that Church, those who adhere to the standards of the kingdom, are the children of the kingdom. (Matt. 13:38.) They are followers or disciples of the Master because they believe the gospel of the kingdom. Special blessings are reserved for them (D. & C. 41:6), and they are commanded to bring forth fruit mete for the Father's kingdom. (D. & C. 84:58-59.) Children of the kingdom eventually 'shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.' (Matt. 8:11-12.)" (*Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 126-7))

26 And now my beloved brethren, I have spoken these words unto you according to the Spirit which testifieth in me; and my soul doth exceedingly rejoice, because of the exceeding diligence and heed which ye have given unto my word.

27 And now, (An Apostolic blessing follows) may the ^apeace of God rest upon you, and upon your houses and lands, and upon your flocks and herds, and all that you possess, your women and your children, according to your faith and good works, from this time forth and forever. And thus I have spoken. Amen. (The city of Gideon remained righteous for several years. They found Korihor preaching false doctrine and made him leave Gideon. However, when Samuel the Lamanite preached, he

specifically named the city of Gideon to experience a “wo” because of their wickedness. Next Alma is off to the city of Melek.)

Additional Reading:

Saturday Morning Session 1 April 1989

Beware of Pride

President Ezra Taft Benson

Ezra Taft Benson, “Beware of Pride,” *Ensign*, May 1989, 4

My beloved brethren and sisters, I rejoice to be with you in another glorious general conference of the Church. How grateful I am for the love, prayers, and service of the devoted members of the Church throughout the world.

May I commend you faithful Saints who are striving to flood the earth and your lives with the Book of Mormon. Not only must we move forward in a monumental manner more copies of the Book of Mormon, but we must move boldly forward into our own lives and throughout the earth more of its marvelous messages.

This sacred volume was written for us—for our day. Its scriptures are to be likened unto ourselves. (See 1 Ne. 19:23.)

The Doctrine and Covenants tells us that the Book of Mormon is the “record of a fallen people.” (D&C 20:9.) Why did they fall? This is one of the major messages of the Book of Mormon. Mormon gives the answer in the closing chapters of the book in these words: “Behold, the pride of this nation, or the people of the Nephites, hath proven their destruction.” (Moro. 8:27.) And then, lest we miss that momentous Book of Mormon message from that fallen people, the Lord warns us in the Doctrine and Covenants, “Beware of pride, lest ye become as the Nephites of old.” (D&C 38:39.)

I earnestly seek an interest in your faith and prayers as I strive to bring forth light on this Book of Mormon message—the sin of pride. This message has been weighing heavily on my soul for some time. I know the Lord wants this message delivered now.

In the premortal council, it was pride that felled Lucifer, “a son of the morning.” (2 Ne. 24:12-15; see also D&C 76:25-27; Moses 4:3.) At the end of this world, when God cleanses the earth by fire, the proud will be burned as stubble and the meek shall inherit the earth. (See 3 Ne. 12:5, 3 Ne. 25:1; D&C 29:9; JS—H 1:37; Mal. 4:1.)

Three times in the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord uses the phrase “beware of pride,” including a warning to the second elder of the Church, Oliver Cowdery, and to Emma Smith, the wife of the Prophet. (D&C 23:1; see also D&C 25:14; D&C 38:39.)

Pride is a very misunderstood sin, and many are sinning in ignorance. (See Mosiah 3:11; 3 Ne. 6:18.) In the scriptures there is no such thing as righteous pride—it is always considered a sin. Therefore, no matter how the world uses the term, we must understand how God uses the term so we can understand the language of holy writ and profit thereby. (See 2 Ne. 4:15; Mosiah 1:3-7; Alma 5:61.)

Most of us think of pride as self-centeredness, conceit, boastfulness, arrogance, or haughtiness. All of these are elements of the sin, but the heart, or core, is still missing.

The central feature of pride is enmity—enmity toward God and enmity toward our fellowmen. *Enmity* means “hatred toward, hostility to, or a state of opposition.” It is the power by which Satan wishes to reign over us.

Pride is essentially competitive in nature. We pit our will against God’s. When we direct our pride toward God, it is in the spirit of “my will and not thine be done.” As Paul said, they “seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.” (Philip. 2:21.)

Our will in competition to God’s will allows desires, appetites, and passions to go unbridled. (See Alma 38:12; 3 Ne. 12:30.)

The proud cannot accept the authority of God giving direction to their lives. (See Hel. 12:6.) They pit their perceptions of truth against God’s great knowledge, their abilities versus God’s priesthood power, their accomplishments against His mighty works.

Our enmity toward God takes on many labels, such as rebellion, hard-heartedness, stiff-neckedness, unrepentant, puffed up, easily offended, and sign seekers. The proud wish God would agree with them. They aren’t interested in changing their opinions to agree with God’s.

Another major portion of this very prevalent sin of pride is enmity toward our fellowmen. We are tempted daily to elevate ourselves above others and diminish them. (See Hel. 6:17; D&C 58:41.)

The proud make every man their adversary by pitting their intellects, opinions, works, wealth, talents, or any other worldly measuring device against others. In the words of C. S. Lewis: “Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man. . . . It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest. Once the element of competition has gone, pride has gone.” (*Mere Christianity*, New York: Macmillan, 1952, pp. 109-10.)

In the pre-earthly council, Lucifer placed his proposal in competition with the Father’s plan as advocated by Jesus Christ. (See Moses 4:1-3.) He wished to be honored above all others. (See 2 Ne. 24:13.) In short, his prideful desire was to dethrone God. (See D&C 29:36; D&C 76:28.)

The scriptures abound with evidences of the severe consequences of the sin of pride to individuals, groups, cities, and nations. “Pride goeth before destruction.” (Prov. 16:18.) It destroyed the Nephite nation and the city of Sodom. (See Moro. 8:27; Ezek. 16:49-50.)

It was through pride that Christ was crucified. The Pharisees were wrath because Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, which was a threat to their position, and so they plotted His death. (See John 11:53.)

Saul became an enemy to David through pride. He was jealous because the crowds of Israelite women were singing that “Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.” (1 Sam. 18:6-8.)

The proud stand more in fear of men’s judgment than of God’s judgment. (See D&C 3:6-7; D&C 30:1-2; D&C 60:2.) “What will men think of me?” weighs heavier than “What will God think of me?”

King Noah was about to free the prophet Abinadi, but an appeal to his pride by his wicked priests sent Abinadi to the flames. (See Mosiah 17:11-12.) Herod sorrowed at the request of his wife to behead John the Baptist. But his prideful desire to look good to “them which sat with him at meat” caused him to kill John. (Matt. 14:9; see also Mark 6:26.)

Fear of men’s judgment manifests itself in competition for men’s approval. The proud love “the praise of men more than the praise of God.” (John 12:42-43.) Our motives for the things we do are where the sin is manifest. Jesus said He did “always those things” that pleased God. (John 8:29.) Would we not do well to have the pleasing of God as our motive rather than to try to elevate ourselves above our brother and outdo another?

Some prideful people are not so concerned as to whether their wages meet their needs as they are that their wages are more than someone else’s. Their reward is being a cut above the rest. This is the enmity of pride.

When pride has a hold on our hearts, we lose our independence of the world and deliver our freedoms to the bondage of men’s judgment. The world shouts louder than the whisperings of the Holy Ghost. The reasoning of men overrides the revelations of God, and the proud let go of the iron rod. (See 1 Ne. 8:19-28; 1 Ne. 11:25; 1 Ne. 15:23-24.)

Pride is a sin that can readily be seen in others but is rarely admitted in ourselves. Most of us consider pride to be a sin of those on the top, such as the rich and the learned, looking down at the rest of us. (See 2 Ne. 9:42.) There is, however, a far more common ailment among us—and that is pride from the bottom looking up. It is manifest in so many ways, such as faultfinding, gossiping, backbiting, murmuring, living beyond our means, envying, coveting, withholding gratitude and praise that might lift another, and being unforgiving and jealous.

Disobedience is essentially a prideful power struggle against someone in authority over us. It can be a parent, a priesthood leader, a teacher, or ultimately God. A proud person hates the fact that someone is above him. He thinks this lowers his position.

Selfishness is one of the more common faces of pride. “How everything affects me” is the center of all that matters—self-conceit, self-pity, worldly self-fulfillment, self-gratification, and self-seeking.

Pride results in secret combinations which are built up to get power, gain, and glory of the world. (See Hel. 7:5; Ether 8:9, 16, 22-23; Moses 5:31.) This fruit of the sin of pride, namely secret combinations, brought down both the Jaredite and the Nephite civilizations and has been and will yet be the cause of the fall of many nations. (See Ether 8:18-25.)

Another face of pride is contention. Arguments, fights, unrighteous dominion, generation gaps, divorces, spouse abuse, riots, and disturbances all fall into this category of pride.

Contention in our families drives the Spirit of the Lord away. It also drives many of our family members away. Contention ranges from a hostile spoken word to worldwide conflicts. The scriptures tell us that “only by pride cometh contention.” (Prov. 13:10; see also Prov. 28:25.)

The scriptures testify that the proud are easily offended and hold grudges. (See 1 Ne. 16:1-3.) They withhold forgiveness to keep another in their debt and to justify their injured feelings.

The proud do not receive counsel or correction easily. (See Prov. 15:10; Amos 5:10.) Defensiveness is used by them to justify and rationalize their frailties and failures. (See Matt. 3:9; John 6:30-59.)

The proud depend upon the world to tell them whether they have value or not. Their self-esteem is determined by where they are judged to be on the ladders of worldly success. They feel worthwhile as individuals if the numbers beneath them in achievement, talent, beauty, or intellect are large enough. Pride is ugly. It says, "If you succeed, I am a failure."

If we love God, do His will, and fear His judgment more than men's, we will have self-esteem.

Pride is a damning sin in the true sense of that word. It limits or stops progression. (See Alma 12:10-11.) The proud are not easily taught. (See 1 Ne. 15:3, 7-11.) They won't change their minds to accept truths, because to do so implies they have been wrong.

Pride adversely affects all our relationships—our relationship with God and His servants, between husband and wife, parent and child, employer and employee, teacher and student, and all mankind. Our degree of pride determines how we treat our God and our brothers and sisters. Christ wants to lift us to where He is. Do we desire to do the same for others?

Pride fades our feelings of sonship to God and brotherhood to man. It separates and divides us by "ranks," according to our "riches" and our "chances for learning." (3 Ne. 6:12.) Unity is impossible for a proud people, and unless we are one we are not the Lord's. (See Mosiah 18:21; D&C 38:27; D&C 105:2-4; Moses 7:18.)

Think of what pride has cost us in the past and what it is now costing us in our own lives, our families, and the Church.

Think of the repentance that could take place with lives changed, marriages preserved, and homes strengthened, if pride did not keep us from confessing our sins and forsaking them. (See D&C 58:43.)

Think of the many who are less active members of the Church because they were offended and their pride will not allow them to forgive or fully sup at the Lord's table.

Think of the tens of thousands of additional young men and couples who could be on missions except for the pride that keeps them from yielding their hearts unto God. (See Alma 10:6; Hel. 3:34-35.)

Think how temple work would increase if the time spent in this godly service were more important than the many prideful pursuits that compete for our time.

Pride affects all of us at various times and in various degrees. Now you can see why the building in Lehi's dream that represents the pride of the world was large and spacious and great was the multitude that did enter into it. (See 1 Ne. 8:26, 33; 1 Ne. 11:35-36.)

Pride is the universal sin, the great vice. Yes, pride *is* the universal sin, the great vice.

The antidote for pride is humility—meekness, submissiveness. (See Alma 7:23.) It is the broken heart and contrite spirit. (See 3 Ne. 9:20; 3 Ne. 12:19; D&C 20:37; D&C 59:8; Ps. 34:18; Isa. 57:15; Isa. 66:2.) As Rudyard Kipling put it so well:

*The tumult and the shouting dies;
The captains and the kings depart.
Still stands thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget, lest we forget.
(Hymns, 1985, no. 80.)*

God will have a humble people. Either we can choose to be humble or we can be compelled to be humble. Alma said, “Blessed are they who humble themselves without being compelled to be humble.” (Alma 32:16.)

Let us choose to be humble.

We can choose to humble ourselves by conquering enmity toward our brothers and sisters, esteeming them as ourselves, and lifting them as high or higher than we are. (See D&C 38:24; D&C 81:5; D&C 84:106.)

We can choose to humble ourselves by receiving counsel and chastisement. (See Jacob 4:10; Hel. 15:3; D&C 63:55; D&C 101:4-5; D&C 108:1; D&C 124:61, 84; D&C 136:31; Prov. 9:8.)

We can choose to humble ourselves by forgiving those who have offended us. (See 3 Ne. 13:11, 14; D&C 64:10.)

We can choose to humble ourselves by rendering selfless service. (See Mosiah 2:16-17.)

We can choose to humble ourselves by going on missions and preaching the word that can humble others. (See Alma 4:19; Alma 31:5; Alma 48:20.)

We can choose to humble ourselves by getting to the temple more frequently.

We can choose to humble ourselves by confessing and forsaking our sins and being born of God. (See D&C 58:43; Mosiah 27:25-26; Alma 5:7-14, 49.)

We can choose to humble ourselves by loving God, submitting our will to His, and putting Him first in our lives. (See 3 Ne. 11:11; 3 Ne. 13:33; Moro. 10:32.)

Let us choose to be humble. We can do it. I know we can.

My dear brethren and sisters, we must prepare to redeem Zion. It was essentially the sin of pride that kept us from establishing Zion in the days of the Prophet Joseph Smith. It was the same sin of pride that brought consecration to an end among the Nephites. (See 4 Ne. 1:24-25.)

Pride is the great stumbling block to Zion. I repeat: *Pride is* the great stumbling block to Zion.

We must cleanse the inner vessel by conquering pride. (See Alma 6:2-4; Matt. 23:25-26.)

We must yield “to the enticings of the Holy Spirit,” put off the prideful “natural man,” become “a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord,” and become “as a child, submissive, meek, humble.” (Mosiah 3:19; see also Alma 13:28.)

That we may do so and go on to fulfill our divine destiny is my fervent prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.