

Comments on Alma 7

The tone of this chapter is quite different from that of ch. 5. Here, Alma is addressing the church in Gideon, and they have not been having the problems the church in Zarahemla has. The result is his message is less one of repentance and more one of enduring to the end. The doctrinal content is also different. Here, Alma takes to preaching to them about Christ and his mortal ministry. We would therefore assume the church in Gideon is able to accept and perceive such a thing, where the church in Zarahemla was not.

Alma's comments generally follow what we would refer to as the First Principles and Ordinances of the Gospel: Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 7-13), Repentance, Baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost (v. 14-16), and enduring to the end (v. 22-25).

1 Behold my beloved brethren, seeing that I have been permitted to come unto you, therefore I attempt to address you in my language; yea, by my own 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 judgment-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 given to another, to reign in my stead; and the Lord in much mercy hath granted that I should come unto you.

v1-2 Alma addresses the church and explains to them he could not visit them previously because his time was entirely too consumed by his position as chief judge (v. 1). Had he not given up that position he would not be visiting them now. But, fortunately, he can now be with them (v. 2).

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 dilemma 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. 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; 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 idols, but that ye do worship the true and living God, and that ye look forward for the remission of your sins, with an everlasting faith, which is to come.

v3-6 Alma is much relieved that this congregation of the church (v. 3-4) is not in the same bad situation as the church in Zarahemla was (v. 5), overwhelmed with pride and worshipping their wealth (v. 6).

Note Alma uses a series of three deliberate contrasts between the two different congregations.

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 time is not far distant that the Redeemer liveth and cometh among his people. 8 Behold, I do not say that he will come among us at the time 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—Repent 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 cometh upon the face of the earth. 10 And behold, he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God. 11 And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. 12 And he will take upon him death, that he may loose 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 succor his people according to their infirmities.

13 Now the Spirit knoweth all things; nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take 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.

v7-13 Alma wants to tell them about things which will come, but the most important is that advent of the Savior (v. 7), which will be in the flesh but not among the Nephites (v. 8).

The Spirit impels Alma to preach that the kingdom of God is close at hand because the Son of God will soon be born (v. 9). He shall be born to a woman named Mary in the land of Jerusalem, and she will conceive by the Holy Spirit (v. 10). He will suffer all kinds of afflictions (v. 11) and take death upon himself so he may know how to relieve his people in their times of need (v. 12).

The Holy Spirit may know everything, but the Son will have the experience of taking the people's sins upon Himself in the flesh so that He may deliver them from sin (v. 13). This is an experience, and therefore firsthand knowledge, the Holy Spirit

lacks.

v12 "he will take upon him death", Christ is the only mortal to have authority and power over physical death as he never sinned. He did not have to die, having power from his Father to avoid it if he chose. Thus, he could have lived forever, and never died. But, he had to die in order to be resurrected. He was the first one resurrected because nobody else before him deserved to be resurrected. Since he never committed any sin while in his flesh, he was the first one to have earned and deserved a resurrected body. Then, as a result of his Atonement, others were forgiven for their sins and therefore deserved resurrection as well.

This makes Jesus the second Adam, cf. 1 Cor. 15:45. The first Adam was perfect in the flesh and enjoyed God's presence, but the Fall took him out of God's presence and brought about physical death. Jesus is the reverse of this. He started out not being in God's presence in a mortal condition, but he overcame this and obtained a perfect flesh body which took him back into God's presence. The first Adam corrupted his flesh and took the human race out of God's presence, the second Adam puts the human back into God's presence by giving them a perfect body of flesh.

14 Now I say unto you that ye must repent, 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, 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.

15 Yea, I say unto you come and fear not, and lay aside every sin, which easily doth beset you, 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. 16 And whosoever doeth this, and keepeth the commandments of God from thenceforth, the same will 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.

v14-16 All people must have faith in the Lamb of God, repent, be baptized, and be born anew to spiritual things or they cannot join the kingdom of heaven (v. 14).

Alma tells them to abandon all their sins which drag them down and show God they are willing to keep His commandments by being baptized (v. 15). However, does this and keeps the commandments from that point on will have eternal life (v. 16).

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 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 paths straight. 20 I perceive that it has been made known unto you, by the testimony of his word, that he cannot 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. 21 And he doth not dwell in 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 filthy shall remain in his filthiness.

v17-21 Alma perceives by the Spirit and is pleased that the church knows and believes that things he has just said in v. 7-16 (v. 17), because that means they are not in the bad situation the church at Zarahemla was in (v. 18).

He sees they are in the straight paths of righteousness which lead to the kingdom of God (v. 19). He sees they know God's ways are not crooked but straightforward and consistent (v. 20), and His kingdom is not filthy (v. 21).

v20 "one eternal round", this phrase is used five times in the Scriptures, cp. 1 Ne. 10:19, Alma 37:12, D&C 3:2, D&C 35:1. Nephi apparently coins the phrase in 1 Ne. 10:19, unless he got it from some other source presently unknown to us.

The spiritual concept is that the Lord is persistent and eternal where man is wavering and temporal.

We might assume the idea came from their knowledge of astronomy and the revolution of the sun, moon, and perhaps even planets, cf. Hela. 12:15. But, aside from any injection of astronomy, Semites see things in cycles from a religious standpoint from the Biblically endorsed religious and festival calendar.

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 humble, and be submissive 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. 24 And see that ye have faith,

hope, and charity, and then ye will always abound in good works.

25 And may the Lord bless you, and keep your garments spotless, that ye may at last be brought to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the holy prophets who have been ever since the world began, having your garments spotless even as their garments are spotless, in the kingdom of heaven to go no more out.

v22-25 Alma now exhorts the church to endure to the end by walking blamelessly before God (v. 22). He encourages them to be humble and submissive to God, keeping His commandments, and petitioning Him by prayer for all their needs (v. 23). He tells them to have faith, hope, and Christlike love, and if they do they will always do good works (v. 24).

Alma then blesses them that the Lord will keep them from sin so they may end up in the kingdom of Heaven as did their righteous fathers (v. 25).

Notice in these verses Alma is presenting the opposite case of some of things he railed on the church at Zarahemla about. Contrast v. 22 with 5:27 and contrast v. 25 with 5:21-24. What was a hostile question in ch. 5 becomes a positive blessing in ch. 7. Alma has the same concerns and doctrinal views, their application simply shifts based upon the audience.

v22 This verse, taken with the statements in v. 27, strongly suggest Alma is addressing a body of male Priesthood holders. The call to "awake...to a sense of your duty to God...that ye may walk after the holy order of God, after which you have been received" sounds very much like he is talking to people who hold the Priesthood, cp. v. 8, 4:20, 5:44, and 2 Ne. 6:2.

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, may the peace 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.

v26-27 Alma closes by once again expressing his happiness over their religious zeal (v. 26), and he gives them a blessing of peace and prosperity on their land and families which is contingent upon their good works (v. 27).

v27 The way Alma lists things off, especially "your women and your children", suggests he was addressing males.

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