

## Introduction

Alma yielded up the judgment seat so that he might go forth “among the people of Nephi . . . to stir them up in remembrance of their duty, . . . bearing down in pure testimony against them” (Alma 4:19). The record of his labors among the people of Zarahemla and the people of Gideon allows us to reflect upon our own spiritual standing before the Lord. As you study these chapters, consider how Alma’s questions, counsel, and testimony can help you remember your duty toward God and your fellowman. Look for what brings about spiritual rebirth and for what will help you emulate the attributes of the Savior.

## Commentary

### Alma 5:7. “The Chains of Hell”

• Alma defined the “chains of hell” as being brought into subjection to the adversary and placing ourselves at risk for everlasting destruction (see Alma 12:6, 11).



### Alma 5:12–14. A “Mighty Change in Your Hearts”

• President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988) of the First Presidency described conversion—experiencing a mighty change of heart—as a transformation process involving and affecting every aspect of one’s life: “The verb *convert* means ‘to turn from one belief or course to another;’ [and] *conversion* is ‘a spiritual and moral *change* attending a *change* of belief with conviction.’ As used in the scriptures, *converted* generally implies not merely mental acceptance of Jesus and his teachings, but also a motivating faith in him and in his gospel, a faith which works a transformation, an actual *change* in one’s understanding of life’s meaning and in one’s allegiance to God—in interest, in thought, and in conduct. While *conversion* may be accomplished in stages, one is not really converted in the full sense of the term unless and until he is at heart a new person” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1975, 107–8; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, 71).

• President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) shared some characteristics of those who have experienced a mighty change of heart:

“When you choose to follow Christ, you choose to be changed. . . .

“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 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. . . .

“Yes, Christ changes men, and changed men can change the world.

“Men changed for Christ will be captained by Christ. Like Paul they will be asking, ‘Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?’ (Acts 9:6). Peter stated, they will ‘follow his steps’ (1 Peter 2:21). John said they will ‘walk, even as he walked’ (1 John 2:6).

“Finally, men captained by Christ will be consumed in Christ. To paraphrase President Harold B. Lee, they set fire in others because they are on fire. (See *Stand Ye in Holy Places* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974], p. 192.)

“Their will is swallowed up in His will. (See John 5:30.)

“They do always those things that please the Lord. (See John 8:29.)

“Not only would they die for the Lord, but more important they want to live for Him.

“Enter their homes, and the pictures on their walls, the books on their shelves, the music in the air, their words and acts reveal them as Christians.

“They stand as witnesses of God at all times, and in all things, and in all places. (See Mosiah 18:9.)

“They have Christ on their minds, as they look unto Him in every thought. (See D&C 6:36.)

“They have Christ in their hearts as their affections are placed on Him forever. (See Alma 37:36.)

“Almost every week they partake of the sacrament and witness anew to their Eternal Father that they are willing to take upon them the name of His Son, always remember Him, and keep His commandments.

(See Moroni 4:3.)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1985, 4–6; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 5–7).

### Alma 5:14. “Born of God”

- Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described how conversion leads to being born again:

“Conversion means ‘to turn with.’ Conversion is a turning *from* the ways of the world *to*, and staying *with*, the ways of the Lord. Conversion includes repentance and obedience. Conversion brings a mighty change of heart [see Mosiah 5:2; Alma 5:12–14]. Thus, a true convert is ‘born again,’ [see John 3:3–7; Mosiah 27:24–26] walking with a newness of life [see Romans 6:3–4].

“As true converts, we are motivated to do what the Lord wants us to do [see Mosiah 5:2–5] and to be who He wants us to be [see 3 Nephi 27:21, 27]” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2005, 90; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 86).

- The Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44) stated that “being born again, comes by the Spirit of God through ordinances” (*History of the Church*, 3:392).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described what a true miracle it is to be born again: “Perhaps the greatest miracle . . . is the healing of sin-sick souls so that those who are spiritually blind and deaf and diseased become again pure and clean and heirs of salvation. Perhaps the greatest miracle of all is that which happens in the life of each person who is born again; who receives the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit of God in his life; who has sin and evil burned out of his soul as though by fire; who lives again spiritually” (*The Mortal Messiah, Book 4* [1981], 3:269).

- For additional insights on being born of God, see the commentary for Mosiah 5:2 (p. 144) and for Mosiah 27:25 (p. 166).

### Alma 5:14, 19. “The Image of God Engraven upon Your Countenances”

- While serving as an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Elder Theodore M. Burton (1907–89) observed that those who follow Heavenly Father appear more like Him: “If we truly accept God in our lives and

live in accordance with his commandments, God will work a mighty change in our appearance and we will begin to appear more like our Heavenly Father, in whose image we have been created. Could it be this appearance we recognize when we meet men and women who are trying to live close to the Lord?” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1973, 151; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 114).

- President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency recounted an experience in which an associate of the Church remarked concerning light in the countenance of Latter-day Saint students:

“I recently recalled a historic meeting in Jerusalem about 17 years ago. It was regarding the lease for the land on which the Brigham Young University’s Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies was later built. Before this lease could be signed, President Ezra Taft Benson and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, then president of Brigham Young University, agreed with the Israeli government on behalf of the Church and the university not to proselyte in Israel.



“You might wonder why we agreed not to proselyte. We were required to do so in order to get the building permit to build that magnificent building which stands in the historic city of Jerusalem. To our knowledge, the Church and BYU have scrupulously and honorably kept that nonproselyting commitment. After the lease had been signed, one of our friends insightfully remarked, ‘Oh, we know that you are not going to proselyte, but what are you going to do about the light that is in their eyes?’ He was referring to our students who were studying in Israel” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2005, 19; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 20).

### Alma 5:21–22. “Garments . . . Cleansed from All Stain”

- The reference to “garments” in Alma 5:22 represents our spiritual standing before the Lord. Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen of the Seventy identified the similarity between the cleansing we receive through the Atonement and the washing of soiled laundry: “There is a parallel between our garments being washed clean through the blood of the Lamb and how we wash our own dirty linen. It is through His atoning sacrifice that our garments will be cleansed. The scriptural reference to garments encompasses our whole being. The need for cleansing comes as we become soiled through sin. The judgment and forgiving are the Savior’s prerogative, for only He can forgive and wash away our sins [see Alma 5:21–27; D&C 64:10]” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 9; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 11).

### Alma 5:28. Being “Stripped of Pride”

- For insights on the topic of pride, see the commentary for Helaman 3:33–34, 36; 4:12 (p. 264) and for Helaman 12:5–6 (p. 278).

### Alma 5:29. Being “Stripped of Envy”

- Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that envy, born of worldly influences, stands in opposition to God’s perfect love:

“It has been said that envy is the one sin to which no one readily confesses, but just how widespread that tendency can be is suggested in the old Danish proverb, ‘If envy were a fever, all the world would be ill.’ . . . As others seem to grow larger in our sight, we think we must therefore be smaller. So, unfortunately, we occasionally act that way.

“How does this happen, especially when we wish so much that it would not? I think one of the reasons is that every day we see allurements of one kind or another that tell us what we have is not enough. Someone or something is forever telling us we need to be more handsome or more wealthy, more applauded or more admired than we see ourselves as being. We are told we haven’t collected enough possessions or gone to enough fun places. We are bombarded with the message that on the *world’s* scale of things we

have been weighed in the balance and found wanting [see Daniel 5:27]. . . .

“But God does not work this way. . . .

“. . . I testify that no one of us is less treasured or cherished of God than another. I testify that He loves each of us—insecurities, anxieties, self-image, and all. He doesn’t measure our talents or our looks; He doesn’t measure our professions or our possessions. He cheers on *every* runner, calling out that the race is against sin, *not* against each other. I know that if we will be faithful, there is a perfectly tailored robe of righteousness ready and waiting for *everyone* [see Isaiah 61:10; 2 Nephi 4:33; 9:14], ‘robes . . . made . . . white in the blood of the Lamb’ [Revelation 7:14]. May we encourage each other in our effort to win that prize” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2002, 72, 74; or *Ensign*, May 2002, 63–64).

### Alma 5:46–47. “The Spirit of Revelation”

- Alma had seen an angel, but he testified in Alma 5:46–47 that it was fasting and prayer that had allowed him to come to know, not seeing an angel. President Heber J. Grant (1856–1945) explained: “Many men say: ‘If I could only see an angel, if I could only hear an angel proclaim something, that would cause me to be faithful all the days of my life!’ It had no effect upon these men [Laman and Lemuel] that were not serving the Lord, and it would have no effect today” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1924, 159).

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) explained why the Holy Ghost can be more powerful than a visitation of an angel: “Christ . . . declared that the manifestations we might have . . . from a visitation of an angel, a tangible resurrected being, would not leave the impression . . . which we receive through a manifestation of the Holy Ghost. Personal visitations might become dim as time goes on, but this guidance of the Holy Ghost is renewed and continued, day after day, year after year, if we live to be worthy of it” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 1:44).

- The spirit of revelation is communication from God to man by the power of the Holy Ghost to the mind and heart (see D&C 8:2). Elder Richard G. Scott of the

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described how to recognize communication from the Holy Ghost:

“An impression to the *mind* is very specific.

“Detailed words can be heard or felt and written as though the instruction were being dictated.



“A communication to the *heart* is a more general impression. The Lord often begins by giving impressions. Where there is a recognition of their importance and they are obeyed, one gains more capacity to receive more detailed instruction to the *mind*. An impression to the heart, if followed, is

fortified by a more specific instruction to the mind” (“Helping Others to Be Spiritually Led” [Church Educational System symposium on the Doctrine and Covenants, Aug. 11, 1998], 3–4; see LDS.org under gospel library/additional addresses/CES addresses).

#### Alma 5:53–54. “Vain Things of the World”

- *Vain* is defined as “empty; worthless; having no substance, value or importance. . . . Elated with a high opinion of one’s own accomplishments” (*Noah Webster’s First Edition of an American Dictionary of the English Language, 1828* [1967]).

- Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counseled Latter-day Saints to avoid becoming preoccupied with the vain things of the world: “Jesus taught that ‘a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth’ (Luke 12:15). Consequently, we should not lay up for ourselves ‘treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal’ (Matthew 6:19). In other words, the treasures of our hearts—our priorities—should not be what the scriptures call ‘riches [and] the vain things of this world’ (Alma 39:14). The ‘vain things of [the] world’ include every combination of that worldly quartet of property, pride, prominence, and power. As to all of these, the scriptures remind us that ‘you cannot carry

them with you’ (Alma 39:14). We should be seeking the kind of treasures the scriptures promise the faithful: ‘great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures’ (D&C 89:19)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 109; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 84).

- Elder Jeffrey R. Holland also noted that vanity of physical appearance is spiritually dangerous: “In terms of preoccupation with self and a fixation on the physical, this is more than social insanity; it is spiritually destructive and it accounts for much of the unhappiness . . . in the modern world. And if adults are preoccupied with appearance—tucking and nipping and implanting and remodeling everything that can be remodeled—those pressures and anxieties will certainly seep through to children. At some point the problem becomes what the Book of Mormon called ‘vain imaginations’ [1 Nephi 12:18]. And in secular society both vanity *and* imagination run wild. One would truly need a great and spacious makeup kit to compete with beauty as portrayed in media all around us” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2005, 30–31; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 30).

#### Alma 5:57. “Come Ye Out from the Wicked . . . and Be Ye Separate”

- Elder David R. Stone of the Seventy discussed how techniques used in the construction of the Manhattan New York Temple provide an example of how to remove oneself from the influence of the world:

“Too many of the people of the world have come to resemble the Babylon of old by walking in their own ways and following a god ‘whose image is in the likeness of the world’ [D&C 1:16].

“One of the greatest challenges we will face is to be able to live in that world but somehow not be of that world. We have to create Zion in the midst of Babylon. . . .

“My involvement with the building of the Manhattan Temple gave me the opportunity to be in the temple quite often prior to the dedication. It was wonderful to sit in the celestial room and be there in perfect silence, without a single sound to be heard coming from the busy New York streets outside. How was it possible that the temple could be so reverently silent when



the hustle and bustle of the metropolis was just a few yards away?

“The answer was in the construction of the temple. The temple was built within the walls of an existing building, and the inner walls of the temple were connected to the outer walls at only a very few junction points. That is how the temple (Zion) limited the effects of Babylon, or the world outside.

“There may be a lesson here for us. We can create the real Zion among us by limiting the extent to which Babylon will influence our lives. . . .

“Wherever we are, whatever city we may live in, we can build our own Zion by the principles of the celestial kingdom and ever seek to become the pure in heart. . . .

“We do not need to become as puppets in the hands of the culture of the place and time. We can be courageous and can walk in the Lord’s paths and follow His footsteps” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2006, 94–97; or *Ensign*, May 2006, 90–93).

**Alma 5:57–58; 6:3. “Names Were Blotted Out”**

- For a discussion of names being blotted out, refer to the commentary for Mosiah 26:32–36 (p. 164) and for Moroni 6:7 (p. 387).

**ALMA 6:8**  
Which principles guided Alma as he declared the word of God to the city of Gideon?

**Alma 7:10. Jesus Born at Jerusalem**

- President Joseph Fielding Smith explained the location of the Savior’s birth as declared by Alma:

“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”” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., 5 vols. [1957–66], 1:174).

- Both Jerusalem and Bethlehem have been called the city of David, which has caused some confusion. Luke 2:11 refers to Bethlehem as the city of David. Yet 2 Samuel 5:6–8; 2 Kings 14:20; 1 Chronicles 11:4–8 all refer to Jerusalem as the city of David.

**ALMA 7:6, 19–20**  
What did Alma discern about the spiritual state of the people of Gideon?

**Alma 7:11–12. Our Pains, Afflictions, Temptations, Sicknesses, and Infirmities**

- Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles wrote of the Savior’s familiarity with the afflictions of mortality and with our individual transgressions: “He knows by actual, personal experience, because not only did He suffer pains, afflictions, and temptations of every kind during His second estate, but He took upon Himself our sins as well as our pains, sicknesses, and infirmities. (See Alma 7:11–12.) Thus He knew, not in abstraction but in actuality, ‘according to the flesh,’ the whole of human

suffering. He bore our infirmities before we bore them. He knows perfectly well how to succor us. We can tell Him nothing of pain, temptation, or affliction; He learned ‘according to the flesh,’ and His triumph was complete!” (*We Will Prove Them Herewith* [1982], 46).

### Alma 7:12. “Succor His People”

- Teaching about the word *succor*; Elder Jeffrey R. Holland stated: “[Succor] is used often in the scriptures to describe Christ’s care for and attention to us. It means literally ‘to run to.’ What a magnificent way to describe the Savior’s urgent effort in our behalf. Even as he calls us to come to him and follow him, he is unfailingly running to help us” (“Come unto Me” [CES fireside for young adults, Mar. 2, 1997], 7, [www.ldsces.org](http://www.ldsces.org)).

#### ALMA 7:15–16

*What was Alma’s counsel and promise to the people of Gideon?*

### Alma 7:22–24. Responsibilities of the Melchizedek Priesthood

- Alma 7:22–24 includes instruction to priesthood holders and a list of qualities they should possess to appropriately officiate in the priesthood. This instruction is similar to instruction given to priesthood holders in Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42. These verses in Alma 7 and Doctrine and Covenants 121 help those who hold the priesthood know how to act to increase their power in the priesthood.

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, explained the importance of living righteously as a priesthood holder:

“The priesthood is very, very precious to the Lord. He is very careful about how it is conferred, and by whom. It is never done in secret.

“I have told you how the *authority* is given to you. The *power* you receive will depend on what you do with this sacred, unseen gift.

“Your authority comes through your ordination; your power comes through obedience and worthiness” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1981, 47; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 32).

### Alma 7:23. “Temperate in All Things”

- Elder Russell M. Nelson remarked on the safety temperance brings:

“Temperance suggests sobriety and self-restraint in action. It reminds one of covenants made. . . .

“Repeatedly, scriptures teach that we be ‘temperate in all things’ (1 Corinthians 9:25; Alma 7:23; 38:10; D&C 12:8). Temperance can protect each of us from the aftermath of excess” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 81; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 60).

## Points to Ponder

- Even after seeing an angel, Alma still had to repent, exercise faith in Jesus Christ, and put forth great effort to obtain his testimony. How does Alma 5:45–48 describe the process by which Alma obtained knowledge of “the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father”?
- What similarities and differences do you see in Alma’s ministering among the people of Zarahemla and the people of Gideon?
- How has your understanding and appreciation of the Atonement deepened as you studied Alma 7:11–13?

## Suggested Assignments

- Alma asked over 40 questions in chapter 5. Read the questions Alma asked, and choose one of them to answer by writing a paragraph that includes your understanding, feelings, or insights about the subject of the question.
- Research and discover the meaning of any attribute listed in Alma 7:23 that you may not be familiar with.