

# CHAPTER 25

*Alma 8–12*

## Introduction

Alma's ministry to the city of Ammonihah illustrates how God supports His servants who faithfully obey Him, even in times of great difficulty or personal sacrifice (see 1 Nephi 1:20). After an initial attempt to preach in a wicked city, Alma was blessed with a visit from an angel, who assured him of his standing before God and instructed him to return to Ammonihah. There, a man named Amulek had received instruction from an angel who told him to receive Alma. Later, both men were inspired to know how to contend with skilled lawyers who were intent upon creating discord for personal profit. Alma's and Amulek's experiences serve as a model for us today. Although you still have challenges to face, Heavenly Father will bless you with reassurance, inspiration, and assistance as you seek to obey Him.

In addition, these chapters illustrate the power of "bearing down in pure testimony" (Alma 4:19) against those opposed to the work of the Lord. Notice the impact the doctrines of the Resurrection and the Final Judgment had upon Zeezrom. Consider how these doctrines can affect your heart and testimony, as well as those around you.

## Commentary

### Alma 8:10. "Mighty Prayer"

- The phrase "mighty prayer" indicates powerful, faith-filled communication with God. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles suggested ways we can evaluate and seek to improve the strength of our prayers:



"May I ask you today to consider the effectiveness of your prayers? How close do you feel to your Heavenly Father? Do you feel that your prayers are answered? Do you feel that the time you spend in prayer enriches and uplifts your soul? Is there room for improvement?"

"There are many reasons our prayers lack power. Sometimes they become routine. Our prayers become hollow when we say similar words in similar ways over and over so often that the words become more of a recitation than a communication. This is what the Savior described as 'vain repetitions' (Matthew 6:7). Such prayers, He said, will not be heard. . . ."

"Do your prayers at times sound and feel the same? Have you ever said a prayer mechanically, the words pouring forth as though cut from a machine? Do you sometimes bore yourself as you pray?"

"Prayers that do not demand much of your thought will hardly merit much attention from our Heavenly Father. When you find yourself getting into a routine with your prayers, step back and think. Meditate for a while on the things for which you really are grateful" ("Improving Our Prayers," in *Brigham Young University 2002–2003 Speeches* [2003], 160).

### Alma 8:10–16. The Lord Will Help Us When We Are Faithful

- After having noteworthy success preaching the gospel in other cities, Alma was reviled, spit upon, and cast out of Ammonihah. Then came reassurance from the angel that Alma's efforts were acceptable to the Lord and that Alma should return and preach again to the people (see Alma 8:15–16). Commenting to those who sometimes feel that their best efforts are not enough or that they have failed, President Thomas S. Monson stated:

"Do your duty; that is best. Leave unto the Lord the rest" [*The Legend Beautiful* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow].

"Should there be anyone who feels he is too weak to change the onward and downward course of his life, or should there be those who fail to resolve to do better because of that greatest of fears—the fear of failure—there is no more comforting assurance to be had than these words of the Lord: 'My grace is

sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them' [Ether 12:27].

“Miracles are everywhere to be found when priesthood callings are magnified. When faith replaces doubt, when selfless service eliminates selfish striving, the power of God brings to pass His purposes” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1999, 64–65; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 50).

### Alma 8:18. Alma “Returned Speedily”

- After hearing the angel’s message, Alma “returned speedily” to Ammonihah. President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency taught that prompt obedience to the Lord is necessary to our spiritual well-being:

“However much faith to obey God we now have, we will need to strengthen it continually and keep it refreshed constantly. We can do that by deciding now to be more quick to obey and more determined to endure. Learning to start early and to be steady are the keys to spiritual preparation. . . .

“A loving Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son have given us all the help They can to pass the test of life set before us. But we must decide to obey and then do it. We build the faith to pass the tests of obedience over time and through our daily choices. We can decide now to do quickly whatever God asks of us” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2005, 39, 41; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 38, 40).

### Alma 8:26. Fasting

- Alma fasted to prepare his mind and soul to preach to the inhabitants of Ammonihah. Fasting often indicates to the Lord the seriousness of our request. President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency taught: “At times fasting is appropriate as a strong evidence of our sincerity. . . . When we fast we humble our souls, which brings us more in tune with God and His holy purposes” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2002, 68; or *Ensign*, May 2002, 60).

- Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin enumerated some of the blessings that flow into our lives when we add prayer to an appropriate fast:

“Fasting, coupled with mighty prayer, is powerful. It can fill our minds with the revelations of the Spirit. It can strengthen us against times of temptation.

“Fasting and prayer can help develop within us courage and confidence. They can strengthen our character and build self-restraint and discipline. Often when we fast, our righteous prayers and petitions have greater power. Testimonies grow. We mature spiritually and emotionally and sanctify our souls. Each time we fast, we gain a little more control over our worldly appetites and passions. . . .

“Fasting in the proper spirit and in the Lord’s way will energize us spiritually. It will strengthen our self-discipline, fill our homes with peace, lighten our hearts with joy, fortify us against temptation, prepare us for times of adversity, and open the windows of heaven” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 95, 97–98; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 73, 75).



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### Alma 9:14–23. Great Blessings Bring Great Responsibilities

- Alma warned that although the Lamanites were a wicked people at that time, the Lord would look more favorably upon them than upon the people of Ammonihah on the day of judgment (see Alma 9:14). The Lamanites were following incorrect traditions that had been handed down to them, while the Nephites in general and the people of Ammonihah in particular had been “a highly favored people of the Lord; . . . above every other nation, kindred, tongue, or people” (Alma 9:20). With great blessings come great responsibilities.

Sister Sheri L. Dew, then a counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, taught: “‘Unto whom much is given much is required’ (D&C 82:3), and at times the demands of discipleship are heavy. But shouldn’t we expect the journey towards eternal glory to stretch us? We sometimes rationalize our preoccupation with this world and our casual attempts to grow spiritually

by trying to console each other with the notion that living the gospel really shouldn't require all that much of us. The Lord's standard of behavior will always be more demanding than the world's, but then the Lord's rewards are infinitely more glorious—including true joy, peace, and salvation" ("We Are Women of God," *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 98).

**Alma 10:2–3. Lehi—"a Descendent of Manasseh"**

- Lehi's lineage as a descendant of Manasseh is partial fulfillment of a promise to Joseph of old. Shortly before his death, Joseph of Egypt related assurances that the Lord made unto him concerning his posterity:

"I have obtained a promise of the Lord, that . . . the Lord God will raise up a righteous branch out of my loins. . . .

"And it shall come to pass that they shall be scattered again; and a branch shall be broken off, and shall be carried into a far country; nevertheless they shall be remembered in the covenants of the Lord, when the Messiah cometh. . . .

"Thus saith the Lord God of my fathers unto me. . . .

"Wherefore the fruit of thy loins shall write, and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write; and that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together unto the confounding of false doctrines, and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, and bringing them to a knowledge of their fathers in the latter days; and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord" (JST, Genesis 50:24–25, 27, 31; see also 2 Nephi 3:5, 12).



- Prior to their flight into the wilderness, Lehi and Ishmael, both descendants of Joseph, lived with their families in Jerusalem, which was part of the kingdom of Judah. One writer suggested an explanation for why Lehi's ancestry, though descended from Joseph, lived in Jerusalem, which for the most part was made up of

descendants of Judah: "Some students of the Book of Mormon have wondered how descendants of Joseph were still living in Jerusalem in 600 B.C. when most members of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh were taken into captivity by the Assyrians about 721 B.C. A scripture in 2 Chronicles may provide a clue to this problem. This account mentions that in about 941 B.C. Asa, the king of the land, gathered together at Jerusalem all of Judah and Benjamin 'and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh.' (2 Chronicles 15:9.) These 'strangers . . . out of Ephraim and Manasseh' who were gathered to Jerusalem in approximately 941 B.C. may have included the forefathers of Lehi and Ishmael" (Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon* [1976], 199).

**Alma 10:22–23. "Prayers of the Righteous"**

- Note the effect that the prayers of the righteous had upon a nation. The prayers of the righteous also kept the Nephites from being destroyed later during the days of Captain Moroni and Samuel the Lamanite (see Alma 62:40; Helaman 13:12–14).

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) said the following about prayers offered in our day: "There are many many upright and faithful who live all the commandments and whose lives and prayers keep the world from destruction" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, 7; or *Ensign*, June 1971, 16). Once the righteous were destroyed or removed from Ammonihah, the prayers of the righteous ceased to protect the city and "every living soul of the Ammonihahites was destroyed" (Alma 16:9).

**Alma 11:22. "Six Onties of Silver"**

- An *onti* was the greatest monetary value in Nephite society. One possible purpose for the inclusion of the Nephite coinage in Alma 11 is to demonstrate the extent of the bribe Zeezrom offered if Amulek would "deny the existence of a Supreme Being" (Alma 11:22). It appears that six onties of silver was the equivalent of 42 days wages for a judge in the society of the people of Ammonihah (see Alma 11:3, 11–13).

**ALMA 11:34–37**

*What is the difference between the Savior's declaration in 3 Nephi 9:21 and Amulek's response to Zeezrom in Alma 11:34–37?*

**Alma 11:40. Whom Does the Atonement Cover?**

- There is often a misunderstanding in Alma 11:40—some people have thought that Amulek was teaching that Christ suffered only for those who believe and repent. This is not correct. The scriptures tell us that the Savior “suffereth the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children” (2 Nephi 9:21; see also Mosiah 4:7). If mankind will not repent, however, the Savior indicates that “my blood shall not cleanse them” (D&C 29:17). Clearly, what Amulek was intending to convey is the fact that the Atonement in part may go unused when the wicked choose not to repent—not that the Savior only suffered for those who would repent.

**Alma 11:41–45. Resurrection**

- The Bible Dictionary defines the Resurrection as “the uniting of a spirit body with a body of flesh and bones, never again to be divided” (“Resurrection,” 761; see also Guide to the Scriptures, “Resurrection”). Knowledge of the Resurrection adds greater meaning to mortal life.



Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described the “lively hope” that comes to individuals who possess faith and trust in this sacred truth and the impact it can have on day to day living:

“The ‘lively hope’ we are given by the resurrection is our conviction that death is not the conclusion of our identity but merely a necessary step in the destined transition from mortality to immortality. This hope changes the whole perspective of mortal life. . . .

“The assurance of resurrection gives us the strength and perspective to endure the mortal challenges faced by each of us and by those we love, such things as the physical, mental, or emotional deficiencies we bring with us at birth or acquire during mortal life. Because of the resurrection, we know that these mortal deficiencies are only temporary!

“The assurance of resurrection also gives us a powerful incentive to keep the commandments of God during our mortal lives. . . .

“. . . Moreover, unless our mortal sins have been cleansed and blotted out by repentance and forgiveness (see Alma 5:21; 2 Nephi 9:45–46; D&C 58:42), we will be resurrected with a ‘bright recollection’ (Alma 11:43) and a ‘perfect knowledge of all our guilt, and our uncleanness’ (2 Nephi 9:14; see also Alma 5:18). The seriousness of that reality is emphasized by the many scriptures suggesting that the resurrection is followed immediately by the Final Judgment (see 2 Nephi 9:15, 22; Mosiah 26:25; Alma 11:43–44; 42:23; Mormon 7:6; 9:13–14). Truly, ‘this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God’ (Alma 34:32📖). . . .

“Our sure knowledge of a resurrection to immortality also gives us the courage to face our own death—even a death that we might call premature. . . .

“The assurance of immortality also helps us bear the mortal separations involved in the death of our loved ones. . . . We should all praise God for the assured resurrection that makes our mortal separations temporary and gives us the hope and strength to carry on” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2000, 17–18; or *Ensign*, May 2000, 15–16).

- While serving as a member of the Seventy, Elder Sterling W. Sill (1903–94) described some of the blessings of the Resurrection when he taught that a resurrected body “is beautiful beyond all comprehension, with quickened senses, amplified powers of perception, and vastly increased capacity for love, understanding, and happiness” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1976, 67; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 48).

- President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) also explained what the Resurrection would do to our physical bodies: “There is no reason for any person to



be concerned as to the appearance of individuals in the resurrection. Death is a purifying process as far as the body is concerned. We have reason to believe that the appearance of old age will disappear and the body will be restored with the full vigor of manhood and womanhood. Children will arise as children, for there is no growth in the grave. Children will continue to grow until they reach the full stature of their spirits” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., 5 vols. [1957–66], 4:185).

**ALMA 12:9**

*What does this verse teach us about acquiring more knowledge from God?*

**Alma 12:9. What Are the “Mysteries of God”?**

- President Joseph Fielding Smith explained that the mysteries of God are simply those divine principles of the gospel necessary for our salvation that are not understood by the world: “The Lord has promised to reveal his mysteries to those who serve him in faithfulness. . . . The Gospel is very simple, so that even children at the age of accountability may understand it. Without question, there are principles which in this life we cannot understand, but when the fulness comes we will see that all is plain and reasonable and within



our comprehension. The ‘simple’ principles of the Gospel, such as baptism, the atonement, are mysteries to those who do not have the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord” (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 2 vols. [1953], 1:43).

The mysteries of God should not be confused with the unworthy pursuit of “mysteries,” or things that God has not revealed. Speaking of this latter use of the word *mysteries*, Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained: “There is also a restricted and limited usage of the expression

*mysteries*; it is more of a colloquial than a scriptural usage, and it has reference to that body of teachings in the speculative field, those things which the Lord has not revealed in plainness in this day. It is to these things that reference is made when the elders are counseled to leave the mysteries alone” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 524).

**Alma 12:10–12. We Receive “the Lesser Portion of the Word” When We Harden Our Heart**

- Elder Dallin H. Oaks explained that if we reject revelation through the Holy Ghost, we limit how much we can learn: “We teach and learn the mysteries of God by revelation from his Holy Spirit. If we harden our hearts to revelation and limit our understanding to what we can obtain by study and reason, we are limited to what Alma called ‘the lesser portion of the word’” (*The Lord’s Way* [1991], 42).

**Alma 12:12–14. Judged According to our Words, Works, and Thoughts**

- Elder Dallin H. Oaks taught that the Judgment is not merely a review of actions taken in mortality, but is instead an assessment of who and what we have become as a result of our actions:

“The prophet Nephi describes the Final Judgment in terms of what we *have become*: ‘And if their works have been filthiness they must needs *be* filthy; and if they *be* filthy it must needs be that they cannot dwell in the kingdom of God’ (1 Nephi 15:33; italics added). Moroni declares, ‘He that *is* filthy shall be filthy still; and he that *is* righteous shall be righteous still’ (Mormon 9:14; italics added; see also Revelation 22:11–12; 2 Nephi 9:16; D&C 88:35). The same would be true of ‘selfish’ or ‘disobedient’ or any other personal attribute inconsistent with the requirements of God. Referring to the ‘state’ of the wicked in the Final Judgment, Alma explains that if we are condemned by our words, our works, and our thoughts, ‘we shall not be found spotless; . . . and in this awful state we shall not dare to look up to our God’ (Alma 12:14).

“From such teachings we conclude that the Final Judgment is not just an evaluation of a sum total of good and evil acts—what we have *done*. It is an acknowledgment of the final effect of our acts and

thoughts—what we have *become*. It is not enough for anyone just to go through the motions. The commandments, ordinances, and covenants of the gospel are not a list of deposits required to be made in some heavenly account. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 41; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32).

### Alma 12:15–18. “Second Death, Which Is a Spiritual Death”

- For information on the second death, see commentary for Jacob 3:11 (p. 120), Alma 40:26 (p. 244), and Helaman 14:15–19 (p. 284).

### Alma 12:21. Cherubim

- Cherubim are “figures representing heavenly creatures, the exact form being unknown. They are found in the Holy of Holies, on the Mercy Seat of the Ark (Ex. 25:18, 22; 1 Kings 6:23–28; Heb. 9:5), and in the visions of Ezekiel (Ezek. 10; 11:22). In the account of the Fall, cherubim are represented as keeping ‘the way of the tree of life’ (Gen. 3:24)” (Bible Dictionary, “Cherubim,” 632).



### Alma 12:24. “Probationary State”

- The term *probationary state* or *probationary time* is a phrase used only by Alma in the Book of Mormon (see Alma 42:4, 10, 13). Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described this probationary time: “The main purpose of earth life is to allow our spirits, which existed before the world was, to be united with our bodies for a time of great opportunity in mortality. The association

of the two together has given us the privilege of growing, developing, and maturing as only we can with spirit and body united. With our bodies, we pass through a certain amount of trial in what is termed a probationary state of our existence. This is a time of learning and testing to prove ourselves worthy of eternal opportunities. It is all part of a divine plan our Father has for His children” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 16; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 14).

#### **ALMA 12:25–33**

*Why is the title “plan of redemption” an appropriate name for God’s preparations for His children?*

### Alma 12:32. Commandments *after* Knowing the Plan

- President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, taught that knowledge of God’s plan provides answers to difficult questions. Speaking to teachers of youth, he said:

“Young people wonder ‘why?’—Why are we commanded *to do* some things, and why we are commanded *not* to do other things? A knowledge of the plan of happiness, even in outline form, can give your minds a ‘why.’ . . .

“Most of the difficult questions we face in the Church right now, and we could list them—abortion and all the rest of them, all of the challenges of who holds the priesthood and who does not—cannot be answered without some knowledge of the plan as a background.

“Alma said this, and this is, I think of late, my favorite scripture, although I change now and again: ‘God gave unto them *commandments*, *after* having made known unto them the *plan of redemption*’ (Alma 12:32; emphasis added). . . .

“. . . If you are trying to give [students] a ‘why,’ follow that pattern: ‘God gave unto them commandments, *after* having made known unto them the plan of redemption’” (“The Great Plan of Happiness” [Church Educational System symposium on the Doctrine and

Covenants, Aug. 10, 1993], 3; see LDS.org under gospel library/additional addresses/CES addresses).

## Points to Ponder

- Alma 8:18 records that Alma “returned speedily” to Ammonihah. In Genesis 22:3 we read that Abraham “rose up early in the morning” to take Isaac upon the mount. How might you apply these verses to yourself when you receive a prompting from God?
- Read Alma 10:6. What do you suppose Amulek meant when he said he was “called many times” but “would not hear”?

## Suggested Assignments

- Alma 9:8–14 highlights the importance of remembering. Make a short list of significant spiritual experiences you have been privileged to have. You might also talk to your parents and grandparents and make a similar list of significant spiritual experiences from their lives as well. What blessings might come from regularly reviewing these lists and continually adding to them?
- Alma 11–12 records much detail about the Resurrection. Write a short paper from these chapters about key doctrines of the Resurrection and the impact your knowledge of the Resurrection and Judgment has had on your life.