



Type: Magazine Article

---

## Why Are They Not Chosen?

Author(s): Marion D. Hanks

Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 65, No. 4 (April 1962)

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Page(s): 260–261

---

**Abstract:** This article discusses how Alma 31:16-18 contains the prayer offered by the apostate Zoramites. They declare themselves the chosen and elect of God. 1 Nephi 1:20 tells us that the chosen are such because of their faith. Alma adds repentance and good works to faith (Alma 13:1, 3-4, 10). “The Lord chooses those who in faith choose him!”

# WHY ARE THEY NOT CHOSEN?

BY PRESIDENT  
MARION D. HANKS  
OF THE FIRST COUNCIL  
OF THE SEVENTY

MA, 31.

with him were 'Shiblon and 'Corianton; and these are the names of those who went with him among the 'Zoramites, to preach unto them the word.

8. Now the Zoramites were dissenters from the Nephites; therefore they had had the word of God preached unto them.

9. But they had fallen into great errors, for they would not observe to keep the commandments of God, and his statutes, according to the 'law of Moses.

10. Neither would they observe the performances of the church, to continue in 'prayer and supplication to God daily, that they might not enter into temptation.

11. Yea, in fine, they did pervert the ways of the Lord in very many instances; therefore, for this cause, Alma and his brethren went into the land to preach the word unto them.

12. Now, when they had come into the land, behold, to their astonishment they found that the Zoramites had built 'synagogues, and that they did gather themselves together on one day of the week, which day they did call the day of the Lord; and they did worship after a manner which Alma and his brethren had never beheld;

13. For they had a place built up in the center of their synagogue, a 'place for standing, which was high above the head, and the top thereof would only admit one person.

14. Therefore, whosoever desired to worship must go forth and stand upon the top thereof, and stretch forth his hands towards heaven, and cry with a loud voice, saying:

see q, Al. 27. e, see 2j, Al. 30. f, Om. 11. -42. j, see 2j, Al. 30. k, see o, 2 Ne. 25. 1, vers. 21, 23. ABOUT B. C. 74

ALMA, 31.

275

15. Holy, holy God; we believe that thou art God, and we believe that thou art holy, and that thou wast a spirit, and that thou art a spirit, and that thou wilt be a spirit forever.

16. Holy God, we believe that thou hast separated us from our brethren; and we do not believe in the tradition of our brethren, which was handed down to them by the childishness of their fathers; but we believe that thou hast elected us to be thy holy children; and also thou hast made it known unto us that there shall be no Christ.

17. But thou art the same yesterday, today, and forever; and thou hast elected us that we shall be saved, whilst all around us are elected to be cast by thy wrath down to hell; for the which holiness, O God, we thank thee; and we also thank thee that thou hast elected us, that we may not be led away after the foolish traditions of our brethren, which doth bind them down to a belief of Christ, which doth lead their hearts to wander far from thee, our God.

18. And again we thank thee, O God, that we are a chosen and a holy people. Amen.

19. Now it came to pass that after Alma and his brethren and his sons had heard these prayers, they were astonished beyond all measure.

20. For behold, every man did go forth and offer up the same prayers.

21. Now the place was called by them Rameumptom, which, being interpreted, is the holy stand.

22. Now, from this stand they did offer up, every man, the self-

o, vers. 16, 17. p, ver. 18. q, vers. 13, 21. r, ver. 18.

same prayer unto God, thanking their God that they were 'chosen of him, and that he did not lead them away after the 'tradition of their brethren, and that their hearts were not stolen away to believe in things to come, which they knew nothing about.

23. Now, after the people had all offered up thanks after this manner, they returned to their homes, never speaking of their God again until they had assembled themselves together again to the 'holy stand, to offer up thanks after their manner.

24. Now when Alma saw this his heart was grieved; for he saw that they were a wicked and a perverse people; yea, he saw that their hearts were set upon gold, and upon silver, and upon all manner of fine goods.

25. Yea, and he also saw that their hearts were lifted up unto great boasting, in their pride.

26. And he lifted up his voice to heaven, and cried, saying: O, how long, O Lord, wilt thou suffer that thy servants shall dwell here below in the flesh, to behold such gross wickedness among the children of men?

27. Behold, O God, they cry unto thee, and yet their hearts are swallowed up in their pride. Behold, O God, they cry unto thee with their mouths, while they are puffed up, even to greatness, with the vain things of the world.

28. Behold, O my God, their costly apparel, and their ringlets, and their bracelets, and their ornaments of gold, and all their precious things which they are ornamented with; and behold, their hearts are set upon them, and yet they cry unto thee and say—We 'thank thee, O God, for

ABOUT B. C. 74



Bible readers as well as persons interested in religious history are familiar with the concept of a "chosen" line of God's children and that there have been individuals especially "chosen" to serve the Lord and his people and his holy purposes. Members of the Church know that latter-day scriptures also deal with these themes and shed important light on them.

*How are men "chosen" by the Lord? In what way, by what standards, for what purposes?*

These matters have sometimes been misunderstood. There is a classic example in the Book of Mormon story of the apostate Zoramites who built a high stand in the center of their synagogue which they called "Rameumptom," upon which they would climb, stretch forth their hands towards heaven, and "cry with a loud voice, saying:

"... Holy God, we believe that thou hast separated us from our brethren; . . . and thou hast elected us that we shall be saved, whilst all around us are elected to be cast by thy wrath down to hell; for which holiness, O God, we thank thee; . . .

"And again we thank thee, O God, that we are a chosen and a holy people." (Alma 31:14, 16-18.)

Alma, who had observed this sorrowful spectacle, later counseled his son Shiblon concerning the Zoramites and their false understanding of what it means to be "chosen."

"Do not pray as the Zoramites do, for ye have seen that they pray to be heard of men, and to be praised for their wisdom.

"Do not say: O God, I thank thee that we are better than our brethren; but rather say: O Lord, forgive my unworthiness, and remember my brethren in mercy—yea, acknowledge your unworthiness before God at all times." (*Ibid.*, 38:13-14.)

*How are individuals "chosen?"* In the first chapter of the Book of Mormon, Nephi bears his testimony that,

"... the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, . . ." (1 Nephi 1:20.)

To the people of Ammonihah, Alma taught the plan of salvation and then said,

"... the Lord God ordained priests, after his holy order, which was after the order of his Son, to teach these things unto the people.

"[These teachers were] . . . called and prepared from the foundation of the world . . . on account of

their exceeding faith and good works; . . . being left to choose good or evil . . . they having chosen good, and exercising great faith, are called with a holy calling. . . ."

"And thus they have been called to this holy calling on account of . . . their exceeding faith and repentance, and their righteousness before God, they choosing to repent and work righteousness rather than to perish." (Alma 13:1, 3-4, 10.)

It is, then, as the prophets have said: *The Lord chooses those who in faith choose him.*

To the Saints in Kirtland in 1833 he said, ". . . these are many who have been ordained among you, whom I have called but few of them are chosen."

Why were they not chosen?

"They who are not chosen have sinned a very grievous sin, in that they are walking in darkness at noon-day." (D&C 95:5-6.)

They had *chosen* to walk in darkness rather than in the light!

From Liberty Jail in Missouri in 1839, the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote a sublime and moving document in which were included these familiar and impressive words,

". . . there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen?

"Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson—

"That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness."

Then follows a marvelous admonition and warning against sin, pride, vain ambition, compulsion, unrighteous dominion, and this summation,

"Hence many are called, but few are chosen." (*Ibid.*, 121:34-40.)

To the Saints in Missouri in 1834 the Lord said, "There has been a day of calling, but the time has come for a day of choosing." (*Ibid.*, 105:35.)

Ours is still a day of choosing. Those who listen to the Lord and harden not their hearts, who magnify their callings, obey the holy ordinances leading to exaltation, and endure in faithfulness and righteousness are choosing the Lord, and thus manifesting that they are anxious to be worthy to be "chosen" by him. They are in a sense choosing themselves.

*The Lord chooses those who in faith choose him!*