

# TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

HUGH NIBLEY

Semester 2, Lecture 48

Alma 10–12

Zeezrom and Lawyers

I trust that you have all read Alma to the end. It's long, as you know. I'm just going to point out some things you may have overlooked. That isn't being patronizing because I have overlooked them myself for years and years, and they are important, too. Alma 10 is the legalistic chapter. It's on legalism and lawyers. It packs a real wallop and shows immense insight. This was [translated] in 1829 before Joseph Smith had had any of his experience with lawyers. He was hauled into court and went through the routine 42 times. They were always bringing him to court. Americans were just as legalistic [then] as they are today. But remember that this was written before he had any of that experience at all. He knew nothing about lawyers or anything else; he had just lived on the farm all his life. This chapter is really something, and we're on verse 13 now. They began to question Amulek using "cunning devices [that] they might catch them in their words, that they might find witness against them, that they might deliver them to their judges that they might be judged according to the law, and that they might be slain or cast into prison, according to the crime [they would make it all legal] which they could make appear or witness against them."

That's the whole business of lawyers—to make your side appear whatever it is. And that's the art of rhetoric, as Plato said, and that's why he damned it. The Greeks were shocked by this new art, the art of the lawyer, which appeared with Protagoras and Gorgias in the time of Socrates and made the worse appear the better reason. That's the skill of rhetoric. You can take either side and make it win. Whether it was good or bad had nothing to do with it; you won the case. That's what you are supposed to do. To make the worse appear the better reason shocked everybody. That's what we have here; this is way up in it. But, of course, it was very old. You are going to have the lawyers and the law's delays forever. In the time of Lehi when they left the old country, this stuff reached its peak, in the days of Solon and after that.

Verse 14: "Now it was those men who sought to destroy them, who were lawyers." It's frightening because these people make the rules as they go. They're the lawyers and they're free to move the goal post anytime they want, so they always win. If anything makes my blood run cold, it's to get a big envelope saying, "Williamson, Johnson, Cullen, McArthur, and Jump, Attorneys at Law." I leave it unopened for weeks. It turns out to be a very innocent thing they've sent after all, but it's terrifying because they have you in their power. This is what they were trying to do; they had him in their clutches. They were going to weave a tangled net to get him. "Now these lawyers were learned in all the arts and cunning of the people." Well, that's their business. You know that Salt Lake City leads the nation in percentage of lawyers. The Americans are the most legalistic people by far. Japan can get on with about 1500 lawyers; we turn out 15,000 a year here. It's terrific the way we turn out lawyers, and Salt Lake City leads in lawyers. They're the most litigious people, and that has something to do with the "fraud capital of the world" and all that sort of thing.

Verse 16: “They began to question Amulek, that thereby they might make him cross his words, or contradict the words which he should speak.” [That’s exactly what the lawyer is supposed to do, make you contradict yourself. But he was onto them, of course.] . . . “O ye wicked and perverse generation, ye lawyers and hypocrites, for ye are laying the foundations of the devil; for ye are laying traps and snares to catch the holy ones of God.” That’s what a lawyer does; he lays traps and snares. Remember that Mosiah gave them their constitution. “Yea, well did Mosiah say . . . if the time should come that the voice of this people should choose iniquity . . . they would be ripe for destruction.” In Mosiah’s constitution the people chose the local judges in local elections, and it was the local judges that decided everything, after all, because they chose the chief judge and could remove him if they wanted to. So the people were responsible, and they will be responsible; that’s the whole idea of it. Not that they will always do right. He says, the voice of the people does right more often than not, but if they don’t—if you should choose iniquity—then it’s your own fault. You’ve made your own choice. If that time should come, then you would be ripe for destruction. These are the ground rules of the promise in the land.

This is a very interesting thing, you’ll notice. He tells them in verse 27 that it is going to be destroyed “by the unrighteousness of your lawyers and your judges.” And notice in the next verse [verse 20] how he contrasts it here. The Lord is the judge. When the Lord judges, he judges “by the voice of his angels.” This is a different thing. The one is by the voice of the people, and the other is by the voice of angels when the Lord judges. You are going to be judged by that. “Well doth he cry unto this people, by the voice of his angels: Repent ye, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Yea, well doth he cry, by the voice of his angels that: I will come down among my people, with equity and justice in my hands.” That’s the theme of the whole chapter; everything is on the theme of “equity and justice,” a very good study for a law review or something like that.

This is a theme we find very often repeated in the *Talmud*, for example. “If it were not for the prayers of the righteous which are now in the land . . .” That’s the only thing that keeps us from sinking right now, a few righteous people. We are making increasingly heavy drafts on rapidly dwindling reserves of righteousness in the land, which is what happens. People always do, just as we do in nature. We improve our means of exploitation as the substance gets less and less. Within the last five years this has been done by the big fisheries. The North Sea has been famous all the time, all through the Middle Ages, for its tremendous amount of herring. Now they have these new electronic devices for finding the schools of herring and then these new floating fish factories for getting rid of them. They got more efficient at finding them and getting rid of them up until about two years ago when the last herring disappeared. They got rid of all of them. The more efficient they got the faster the [fish] went, and then the time came when there were no more herring in the North Sea. Don’t think they haven’t exploited it. There are a dozen nations surrounding it, and every nation was out doing it. It’s the same thing here. We are making increasing drafts on what we have left of virtue, and that was the one thing that was going to keep us going. Of course, in both cases it’s an exponential increase; the curve goes up like that.

“If it were not for the prayers of the righteous . . .” Then what would happen? He says, it would be as it was in the days of Noah. Remember, in the days of Noah the Lord says they bought and sold, married and gave in marriage, ate and drank. They did normal things—business as usual right up until the last minute. In one day it hit them like that. But he said this is different; this will be by “famine, and by pestilence, and the sword.” Of course, they all go together.

Should the warlike Harry himself assume the port of Mars,  
While at his heels, leashed in light hounds  
Should famine, sword, and fire crouch for employment.

The three go together—famine, sword, and fire, as Shakespeare puts it. So we have it here—famine, pestilence, and sword. They do go together. I remember after the last world war I moved a lot around Europe. The castle at Salzburg was just packed from top to bottom with refugees—Poles and others from all over Europe. Smallpox and cholera were everywhere; it's a mess when these things go on.

What saves them? “But it is by the prayers of the righteous that ye are spared.” Remember that—there won't be many of them around for long. This just made the people mad. Now the people were really angry with him.

What's the best defense when you feel guilty as hell? Then you become offensive and indignant. Then you are self-righteous. How dare you say such things to us? Verse 24: “This man doth revile against our laws which are just, and our wise lawyers whom we have selected.” There's your Oedipus irony again. They admit that it is their responsibility; they are taking it on themselves. Remember, at the trial of Jesus they said, “We have no other king but Caesar. Crucify him!” They brought it [the destruction] on themselves, and it's the same thing here. We have selected the lawyers, and we'll be responsible.

Then he came back to them, “O ye wicked and perverse generation, why hath Satan got such great hold upon your hearts?” Notice how he does it. Shakespeare called Satan “the fiend that lies like truth.” He's the clever lawyer. Macbeth says,

I pull in resolution, and begin  
To doubt th' equivocation of the fiend,  
That lies like truth. . . .

[the arguments this way and that—the way he balances them and lays traps]

That keep the word of promise to our ear  
And break it to our hope.

Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, act V, scenes 5 and 8

They [appear to] keep the promise. He says, “I'm willing to live up to my part of the agreement,” but actually he's playing a trick when he says that. In this it's the same way. It's legal, as it says in the fine print. You should have read the fine print. “And break it to our hope.” They promise you this, but they don't have to [deliver] because it's not in the fine print. This had been going on for a long time, and Amulek was certainly on to them. How does Satan get that power? This is an interesting thing. Are the poor people just victimized by Satan? Satan is a ravening lion who goes along seeking those whom he may destroy, and they become his helpless victims. Don't fool yourself; look at this verse here. “Why will ye yield yourselves unto him that he may have power over you, to blind your eyes, that ye will not understand the words which are spoken, according to their truth?” He won't have power unless you yield yourself up to him, and that's what they have done here. As Joseph Smith said, Satan cannot force us to sin, and God will not force our free will. So we are responsible. It is by deception that he blinds you. He uses all the correct

answers to make us blind by telling us lies—lies like truth. “. . . that ye will not understand the words which are spoken, according to their truth?” You’ll understand the words, but not according to their truth. You can twist them—twisting words, as he says, is the lawyer’s business. He has outraged their defense; they are the untouchables. Verse 26: “For behold, have I testified against your law?” They said he had. He said, no, you are breaking the law; that’s what we are testifying about. “I say unto you that the foundation of the destruction of this people is beginning to be laid by the unrighteousness of your lawyers and your judges.” This is exactly what Socrates said to his friend Gorgias long before this.

They [the experts] started making criticisms of Joseph Smith’s interpretation of the facsimiles from the Pearl of Great Price. There was a big fuss in 1912 about it, and Dr. Widtsoe had some very pointed questions. He said, in the first place none of you experts agree on it. In the second place, none of you have made the slightest attempt (they wouldn’t dare) to translate a word of this. You wouldn’t touch it yourselves. All you can agree on is that Joseph Smith must be wrong. So what did the *New York Times* say? A big scare headline all across the page of the *New York Times*: “MORMONS REVILE SCHOLARSHIP.” That was just because he asked some perfectly good questions. He was a better scholar than any of them, incidentally. Of course, he was in another field, but he could point out that they were trying to be so scientific about it and they had done nothing scientific about it. The reaction was that he was reviling scholarship. It was the most absurd thing you ever heard of—as if there was such a thing as Egyptian Wissenschaft [science].

Verse 28: “When Amulek had spoken these words the people cried out against him, saying: Now we know that this man is a child of the devil, for he hath lied unto us; for he hath spoken against our law. And now he says that he has not spoken against it.” This is the idea. This is typical legal sophistry here. He criticized the lawyers for their lawlessness, but to criticize the lawyers is to revile the law. They are the wise lawyers that [the people] had chosen. Amulek said he had not criticized the law but the lawyers. Ah, so he had lied when he said he didn’t criticize the law, because he did criticize the lawyers. So they had him in a trap now. This is typical. Verse 29: “And again, he has reviled against our lawyers, and our judges. And it came to pass that the lawyers put it into their hearts that they should remember these things against him.” Joseph Smith’s insight into lawyers is very good here. And verse 32 is the bottom line: “Now the object of these lawyers was to get gain [are you surprised? The bottom line was money, and here it is]; and they got gain according to their employ.” You may have followed *The Paper Chase*. The main object of all these people that go through all those shenanigans and all that dirty work is to get themselves connected with big corporations and make a lot of money. That’s the way it goes.

Brother Welch, who is in our Law School, has made a very good study on this next chapter about the payment of judges according the senine. It seems that in the ancient court the judge had to be paid before you were let out of prison. It says here that the judges’ pay was one senine a day. Later on it tells us in 3 Nephi 12:26 that you won’t come out of prison until you have paid the last senine. They won’t let you out until you have paid the judges. The judge is paid if nothing else. That’s exactly the system we have in the Book of Mormon, as Brother John Welch has pointed out. According to the law of Mosiah, judges would “receive wages according to the time which they labored.” It was a senine a day. Alma 11:3: “And the judge received for his wages according to his time—a senine of gold for a day, or a senum of silver, which is equal to a senine of gold.”

Then it breaks down the monetary system. (I certainly went off half cocked this morning.) I should have brought an article by Richard Smith who is a chemistry professor at Harvard. He analyzed this money system and came up with surprising things. It tells us here that “they altered their reckoning and their measure, according to the minds and the circumstances of the people.” They were not frozen, rigid, unyielding, or unrealistic in their monetary system. It says they changed their money to suit the circumstances and the times. Every nation has different monetary units. The exchange makes possible a lot of shenanigans for money making in the market. But here he says “they altered their reckoning and their measure according to the minds and circumstances of the people, in every generation [ah ha, it’s the Fed they’re fiddling around with now, isn’t it? They change the value and designation of the money as they go], until the reign of the judges, they having been established by king Mosiah.” This was the system established by King Mosiah. Since the new constitution this is what they had done; they had adjusted the money. They had a system which ran in sevens instead of fives and tens; or sixes and twelves, as the English [system] does; or the decimal system as we use it. It ran in sevens, and Richard Smith pointed out it was the best possible system that could be devised. It used the least coins for any necessary transaction. If you want to figure out a system that will use a minimum amount of coins and save you a lot of trouble, this is the system. It’s an almost perfect system which Joseph Smith devised for his Nephites here [laughter]. We won’t analyze it here, but I’ll try to bring that article next time.

This is a very interesting thing that hits you very hard here; it’s really something. Notice that the senu of silver was the basic [unit] of the money. Verse 7: “A senu of silver was equal to a senine of gold, and either for a measure of barley.” So they measured everything by [determining] how much silver it would take to buy a measure of barley. That was the market price of gold and silver. A senu of silver or a senine of gold, which is much smaller, would buy you a measure of barley. But it was barley. Then he says it again [in verse 15] with just silver this time: “A shiblon is half of a senu; therefore, a shiblon for half a measure of barley.” Notice that things were measured in terms of barley. This is very interesting because the first Babylonian and the first Egyptian money were always the amount of silver necessary to buy a measure of barley. It was always barley. It wasn’t emer wheat or the other grains they had. And it’s very interesting that barley doesn’t grow wild in Egypt as emer wheat and other things do. But barley was *it*. It was the word for *money*, and it was what they used. It started in Babylonia supposedly that barley was a silver standard, but the final decision was how much you could buy with it, of course. That was determined by how much you would have to pay for a measure of barley. The value of a measure of barley wouldn’t change, but the value of the silver would. So you could go into all sorts of speculation; it was just set up for the market. But the fact that it’s barley they refer to, I think, is very striking because nobody knew that in Joseph Smith’s day. It wasn’t until the 1850s that they discovered that. It first came out in the Babylonian [civilization], and then later was discovered in Egypt that barley was the standard.

Verse 20: “Now, it was for the sole purpose to get gain, because they received their wages according to their employ, therefore, they did stir up the people to riotings [a very profitable business]; . . . therefore they did stir up the people against Alma and Amulek. (I was so anxious to get to that last verse in chapter 10 that I forgot Brother Zeezrom here.) “Now he was the foremost to accuse Amulek and Alma [he was the leader], he being one of the most expert among them, having much business to do among the people.” There it is. He had associations, he had connections, he was making a lot of money, etc.—the

typical lawyer. Back in those days did they do it exactly as we are doing it today? If you keep up on the *Wall Street Journal*, you know it's the very same sort of thing. Yes, they did. I wrote a long article on this, and I taught a course in ancient rhetoric at Berkeley. That was the theme. Of course, ancient rhetoric was the training of lawyers for the law schools and the legislative courts. They worked right together, but you had to be a lawyer. It's a long story about ancient rhetoric. It was thoroughly corrupt, and it destroyed the ancient world. He says the same thing is going to destroy them here. But this Zeezrom was the most expert. Now we refer to him again here [in Alma 11:21].

The name *Zeezrom* is very interesting. We'll allow for the *mination* on the end. In the Book of Mormon names regularly end in *m* and *n*, just as they do in Semitic. In early Semitic they end in *n*; in later Semitic they end in *m*. That's the regular ending. *Rajulun* in Arabic is a *man*, and *îsh/ănâshîm* in Hebrew. In the later form we put an *m* on the end of it. But good old Zeezrom's name is the same as that of Djoser. The greatest king of Egypt probably was Djoser, the king of the Third Dynasty. It's pronounced Djoser and spelled *Dsr*. And it's the same word as *Deseret*. It means "holy land, red land, desert, honey." *Deseret* means all sorts of things. The *t* on the end is a feminine ending. But *Jezzer* is a very common word in Egypt. It means "holy, sacred, set apart," and other things as well. It also means "the red country of Egypt." But Zeezrom's name is probably based on the Egyptian word *Jezzer*, which was a popular name. But this Zeezrom was a character anyway, wherever he got his name.

He begins to argue here, and he puts up the best argument he can. "Now Zeezrom was a man who was expert in the devices of the devil, that he might destroy that which was good [he set him up perfectly]. . . . Will ye answer the questions which I shall put unto you?" He has it all set up. He asks a very crude question here. I mean if he is trying to be subtle, isn't this about as crude as you can get? He says, "Behold, here are six onties of silver, and all these will I give thee if thou wilt deny the existence of a Supreme Being?" In front of all those people there, you see. Would he accept a bribe as conspicuously as that after his moral tirades, etc.? Well, of course he wouldn't. What is the guy planning to do? It lets us know what he's planning to do. As Amulek tells him, I know you had no intention to pay. What he was going to do was to up the ante. This was just a like a typical TV game show crowd. They would say, "Take it, take it, take it," and get more and more excited. He was going to offer him a fabulous amount, so people would think the guy was crazy for not taking it, whatever he believed. It's the corruptibility of the times. But Amulek said, I know you weren't going to pay it anyway, but I'm not going to accept it whatever it is. It seems like a rather crude approach, but you can see what he was doing. He had these people in the palms of his hands. It said he had much business with the people, and he was the most skillful lawyer in the place. He was the top man.

Verse 23: "Now Amulek said: O thou child of hell, why tempt ye me? Knowest thou that the righteous yieldeth to no such temptations? [even in a prize show here] . . . Nay, thou knowest that there is a God, but thou lovest that lucre more than him [it's the money that has spoiled him, he says]. And now thou hast lied before God unto me. Thou saidst unto me—Behold these six onties, which are of great worth, I will give unto thee—when thou hadst it in thy heart to retain them from me." He said, of course you weren't going to pay me that. He knew he wasn't.

Then he starts setting forth the gospel plan. Chapters 11, 12, 13, and 14 are a very important part of the Book of Mormon. If you say the Book of Mormon contains the

fullness of the everlasting gospel, this is it. This is the gospel plan, and a perfect epitome of the whole thing is given by Alma all through here. You'll see that it goes back to the old law of Moses. It has everything in it after verse 35, following this question/answer [episode]. He starts cross examining, and Amulek is more than a match for him. Verse 34: "Shall he save his people in their sins? And Amulek answered and said unto him: I say unto you he shall not, for it is impossible for him to deny his word. Now Zeezrom said unto the people: See that ye remember these things [watch that—we'll catch him on that]; for he said there is but one God; yet he saith that the Son of God shall come, but he shall not save his people—as though he had authority to command God." Notice that he omits the part, "in their sins." He just leaves that out. He says don't say "in their sins" is a typical lawyer question. Answer yes or no; will he save his people? Well, he won't save them in their sins. I didn't say "in their sins"; leave that out. I'm just asking you a question. Answer me *yes* or *no*—will he save his people? Of course, it's a conditioned answer. This is a very favorite trick of lawyers. Their tricks are all easy, foolish, and transparent. They always work though, more or less.

Then Amulek says you're the one that lies "for thou sayest that I spake as though I had authority to command God because I said he shall not save his people in their sins. And I say unto you again that he cannot save them in their sins [that's the thing he hadn't mentioned]; for I cannot deny his word. . . . Now Zeezrom saith again unto him: Is the Son of God the very Eternal Father?" This is the crux of the Christological controversy—how can he be the Son and the Father again? He tells us here in the next verse what he is the father of. It doesn't mention the Son here—just as Joseph Fielding Smith used to teach that Jesus Christ is our father because he made possible our physical bodies here and he made possible the Resurrection. It's through him that the Resurrection is possible. Who is it that begets a person's body? Well, it's your father. He doesn't beget your spirit, but he brings forth your body. Well, Jesus Christ by his work made the Resurrection possible—the literal bringing forth of the flesh. Not flesh and blood, but of the flesh to live eternally after the Resurrection. The one that makes that possible is your real father. He is the father who makes the Resurrection possible. We are not resurrected just as spirits or ghosts; we are resurrected with a real body. In that case he is truly the father, but not of our spirits. He is never referred to as that.

Verse 39: "And Amulek said unto him: Yea, he is the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth, and all things which in them are." He made the whole thing possible. And Hebrews 1:2 says the same thing. He made possible the physical resurrection. "And he shall come into the world to redeem his people." To redeem something, as we said before, is to bring back somebody who had been there before—to bring him home again. *Redemptio* is to buy back again. It's to buy back something that was yours before and got lost; now you buy it back again. Well, we were with Him in the eternities before this. Now we have been separated, and then we go back again. "And he shall take upon him the transgressions of those who believe on his name; and these are they that shall have eternal life, and salvation cometh to none else."

The Atonement is limited, you notice—but everybody is going to get resurrected. This is an important thing, and he brings this out. "Therefore the wicked remain as though there had been no redemption made, except it be the loosing of the bands of death." He couldn't buy us back if we didn't belong to him at some former time. But were we damned here? Did we separate ourselves from him? Yes, by the Fall we were separated to learn what we have to learn. How can we be brought back? Nevertheless, whether you have been good or bad, "all shall rise from the dead and stand before God, and be judged

according to their works . . . and the death of Christ shall loose the bands of this temporal death, that all shall be raised from this temporal death.” That makes him truly the Father as well as the Son. The temporal death is the death here, so there will be a physical resurrection.

Verse 43: “The spirit and the body shall be reunited again,” as they were here during this life. Of course, this is the ultimate question—this is the big one. These two verses here are the best answer, the best definition you will get anywhere, of what resurrection is: “The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time.” Now there is a very striking thing, because in the last issue of *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache*, the basic clearinghouse of Egyptological stuff, there’s a long article by Emma Brunner-Traut on this subject. This *both limb and joint* is an Egyptian expression. It’s an interesting thing that the Jews, the Arabs, and the Egyptians had no word for *body*. They just think of the body as a collection of members. The *gûf* of the body is just the *trunk*; the *jism* in Arabic is just the trunk, etc. It’s the same thing in Egyptian. The word *it* is simply *members*. They write it with members, and they write three members. But you are just an assemblage of arms, legs, joints and other members. They always refer to it that way. They would never use the expression “resurrection of the body.” They would say, “the resurrection of the body with its members added, and the joints that have to go with the members.” It’s a peculiar thing because you don’t find that in the Bible. This is the interesting thing where he says, “The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form.” What does this mean by “perfect form”? They would say, “Yes, the body could be restored again, but it must have all its limbs and all its joints and all in working order.” That’s what he says here, “both limb and joint,” as if they didn’t belong to the body. Well, the Egyptians, the Hebrews, and the Greeks before Homer [didn’t have a word for body]. Homer had no word for *body*; he used *guia*, which means *members*. Then there’s the other word for *torso*, the *sōma*, but the [Greek word for] *body* comes after Homer. It’s a very interesting thing that the ancients didn’t think of the body as one particular unit. Surprising isn’t it? They divided it up.

“Both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time [notice he is making it very vivid what’s going to happen]; and we shall be brought to stand before God, knowing even as we know now, and have a bright recollection of all our guilt.” We will be right back to square one, right back where we are now. But we’ll have a bright recollection; it will all come back to us. We will take up exactly where we left off before, so nothing will be lost. [You’ll remember] everything you experienced here, in other words. No experience and no detail of this life is wasted here. It will always be either for you or against you, even if you are guilty of wasting time, etc. It will all be with you then. It will all return, so nothing is lost here—everything is recorded. A good psychologist can get most of it out of you now just by hypnotizing you or cross-examining you, etc. So it happens.

Verse 44: “Now, this restoration shall come to all.” To everybody. Well, doesn’t that solve the question? That’s the big one. What do the Buddhists and the Moslems, etc., have to worry about? They are going to get just as much resurrected as we are. They are going to have as much eternal life as we do. Ah yes, but it’s the level. The idea, as he tells us here, is whether we have gained anything while we were here. But they are good people, too. There are righteous people among them, just as there are wicked Christians and Jews, etc.

Being resurrected is the only thing that worries most people. Alma 12:9 puts them into the picture (the mysteries of God), but let's go on and see what happens here.

“... and even there shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost.” That's the expression, but that doesn't mean we'll have all the hair that was ever cut off. That would be something. But you recognize how these expressions are—that everything will be as it should be in its proper and perfect form, which means we'll be very different. I won't suffer from malnutrition there, so I won't be so short, or something like that. “But every thing shall be restored [restored again] to its perfect frame, as it is now, or in the body, and shall be brought and be arraigned before the bar of Christ the Son, and God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, which is one Eternal God [there you go again; this is what atonement is: when you are made at-one, you are one in that case], to be judged according to their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil.” They are going to be at-one. Not one person, but one office and calling, which requires one comprehension. They comprehend the same things, etc. As our knowledge becomes more perfect, the knowledge of all of us becomes more alike. As we become more perfect physically, we also become more alike. But the external is not what our true nature is; nevertheless, we have to have this to carry on at another level. “I say unto you that this mortal body is raised to an immortal body, that is from death, even from the first death unto life, that they can die no more.” This goes for everybody here. This is really at-one-ment, coming together. In at-one-ment of the body and spirit, you bring them together to be one again. They had been separated before. That's redemption, bringing them back again. And they are at-one with each other.

Incidentally, Paul makes it very clear that he is following the old Greek tradition when he tells the famous Roman story [to] Agrippa about the argument between the head and the stomach. Or can the eye say to the hand, “I have no need of thee,” speaking of them as if they were separate members arguing with each other. Paul uses that expression: Is the head more important than the stomach? That's the famous argument of Agrippa. No part of the body can say that the rest can get along without it; it's all one and nothing is superior. They viewed it as separate members, but this is different. “... that they can die no more; their spirits uniting with their bodies, never to be divided.” You can divide spirit and body, and also the people can be divided from each other. [This includes] the spirit and the body, the members of the body themselves, and all the rest of us. “... never to be divided; thus the whole becoming spiritual and immortal, that they can no more see corruption.”

Well, that's putting us on a different stage all right, and in that stage you are going to go on forever. So it's of enormous importance that you get started on the right foot while you are here because this is where we choose our direction. This is where you get going. That's why it pays to have the gospel. It makes all the difference in the world that people hear the gospel to know how to prepare for this. As he is going to tell us, this is the time to prepare. Now when Zeezrom heard this, he began to tremble because it was the question he thought couldn't be answered.

Alma 12:1: “Now Alma, seeing that the words of Amulek had silenced Zeezrom, ... He opened his mouth and began to speak unto him.” Alma gets into the picture now and goes to the heart of the matter, which Zeezrom had been avoiding. He wouldn't touch that. “He began to tremble under a consciousness of his guilt.” It had all come back to him. The resurrection stops everybody cold after going through all the expository stuff. The clergy of the Catholics, Protestants, and Jews always talk around it and talk around it. They will never come right back to it and make a clear specific statement like this. You

can believe this or reject it, but if there is a resurrection this is what it is. So stop messing around about it. This being Easter week, they will talk a lot about the Resurrection. “Well, it’s a spiritual resurrection,” etc. St. Augustine said he believed in an afterlife, but the idea of a resurrection is utterly absurd—we couldn’t have flesh resurrected. Even Augustine said that.

He had an opening now, so Alma followed up “to explain things beyond, or to unfold the scriptures beyond that which Amulek had done. Now the words that Alma spake unto Zeezrom were heard by the people round about.” They were in on the discussion, too. Now as to the subtlety of the devil: “And thou seest that we know that thy plan was a very subtle plan, as to the subtlety of the devil, for to lie and to deceive this people that thou mightest set them against us, to revile us and to cast us out [not having the answers, the only excuse for religious people is to be very offended, and touchy, and dangerous]. Now this was a plan of thine adversary, and he hath exercised his power in thee.” Notice that the adversary is the adversary to Zeezrom as well as he is to us; he’s not the friend of those that follow him. It’s interesting that we “cozy up” to our adversary, the one who is really our enemy. He is our adversary, and yet we seek to make friends with him and follow him all over the place. He leads us around by the nose because we allow it.

Verse 6: “And behold I say unto you all that this was a snare of the adversary . . . that he might bring you into subjection unto him, that he might encircle you about with his chains, that he might chain you down to everlasting destruction, according to the power of his captivity.” His great ego asserts itself over others—he wants to get you in. Then Zeezrom began to tremble when Alma spoke, “for power was given unto them that they might know of these things according to the spirit of prophecy. And Zeezrom began to inquire of them diligently, that he might know more concerning the kingdom of God.” Well, now there’s been a turning point; he has changed his mind. They could see through him and he knew it. So now he is going to ask some interesting questions, and he becomes a different man. It’s very interesting that this top man, this most depraved person, is going to become a zealous missionary. It’s surprising what goes on, you see. “And Zeezrom began to inquire of them diligently.” Once they start asking the questions, that’s exactly what we want. The usual thing is to ask the question and then leave before they answer it. They always do that. They ask very shrewd and pointed questions about the Book of Mormon, etc., but do not wait for an answer. That’s the thing to do [they think]. Those are the questions we want, but we want to have a chance to answer them, and want to go into the mysteries of God. He calls them “the mysteries of God.” Verse 9: “It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him.” That’s true of all learning. You learn your math, or whatever it is, only according to the heed and diligence you give to it. The Lord is not going to give you something that you haven’t paid attention to with heed and diligence. In section 10 of the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord “bawls out” Oliver Cowdery and tells him to think it out in his own mind. You solve the problem and then ask me if the answer is correct.

Verse 10: “And therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word.” Now it keeps using the word *harden* all throughout here; it’s a very interesting thing. Notice, “harden his heart” in verse 10 and “harden their hearts” at the beginning of verse 11. Verse 13: “Then if our hearts have been *hardened*, yea, if we have *hardened* our hearts against the word.” What is this “hardening of the heart” that’s used even more in the rest of the chapter? Well, [it’s like] hardening of the arteries or the

joints, or the drawing up of tissue. I know at my age things start hardening, and that's the point. They become less effective, less workable, etc. Intelligence is a quick, lively, mobile, fluid sort of thing. I have to wait two or three minutes sometimes to remember something, which ordinarily I would have remembered instantly. But it always comes, so it doesn't worry me very much. There are the four elements that the ancients talk about, the four humors. They go from earth to water, air, and fire. They become more refined and more active, and it's the fire that's the spiritual. That's the more vivid and the more active, as you know. The molecules move faster. You start out with heavy earth. It's the same thing as Shakespeare says:

Sit, Jessica: look, how the floor of heaven  
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:  
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st

[See there, that's what I'm telling you about—it's hardened up. I should be able to remember that without any trouble. Ah, here we go. See, it comes.]

But in his motion like an angel sings,  
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims.  
Such harmony is in immortal souls;  
But, whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it. . . .

[That's this hardening.]

The man that hath no music in himself,  
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,  
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils [of war];  
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,  
And his affections dark as Erebus:  
Let no such man be trusted.

Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, act V, scene 1

See, it's this thickening, densing, and darkening that goes on with the mind. And it's the same sort of thing that he is talking about here [in Alma] when he talks about hardening. That's why he uses this word *hardening*; it's very effective. That is what happens when you get things hardened. You harden into a mold is what you do. If you've made up your mind and you won't change it at all, that's hardness of heart. You become doctrinaire; you become an ideologue, etc. This is an interesting thing to note here; notice the nice contrast between these verses: "And he that will not harden his heart, to him is given [progressively, you see] the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until he know them in full." That's progressive knowledge, and notice that the next verse reverses that exactly: "And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries." In the first one, if they don't harden their hearts, they will progress until they know the mysteries in full. In the next one, they will get harder and harder and know less and less until finally they know nothing at all. It works in the opposite direction. You can't be static. You can't just stay between them; you must make your choice. As Heraclitus says, the road upward and the road downward are the same. It depends entirely on the way you are facing. You can't compromise between them; you take the up road or

the down road. You can't go off at an angle, or anything like that. It's the same thing here. You harden or you keep open. "Now this is what is meant by the chains of hell." He has been using "chains of hell" just as an image here. They aren't real chains, but this is what is meant by the "chains of hell." It refers to them again in Alma 13:30; that's a very common statement here.

Verse 13: "Then if our hearts have been hardened, yea, if we have hardened our hearts against the word, . . . then will our state be awful." Then it happens. Notice in verse 14 the three things we can do that all condemn us if we harden our hearts. We have no idea of changing; we've made up our minds what it is. See, I may be completely wrong in everything I say. Well, all right, I'm still open. I'll still change. I find that I'm way behind in certain things. "For our words will condemn us, yea, all our works will condemn us; . . . and our thoughts will also condemn us." These are the three things we can produce: words, works, and thoughts. The others go back to thoughts. They are the three things that motivate us, and they can all become hardened and conventionalized and in a groove. In that case "we shall not dare to look up to our God." You can see why. If you get in your cozy shell, anything outside will terrify you. It's like being in your foxhole. You don't want to get out, and yet you know it's dangerous to stay in. What are you going to do? "And we would fain be glad if we could command the rocks and the mountains to fall upon us to hide us from his presence." That's how guilty we would feel. We don't want to face up to it. We don't want to get out and get mobile again. Once you have been frozen in the mold, once you change the custom, the thought of having to get out and move around in the open is terrifying. We have an awareness of our own responsibility and potential. When we haven't taken advantage of it, we feel very guilty. We do not want to look upon Him; we would prefer the rocks and the mountains to fall on us.

But sorry! We are ongoing creatures. You are going to live forever, he says. You can die no more. Verse 15: "But this cannot be; we must come forth and stand before him [we are not going to get out of it, so we might as well get used to it now; that's why we need to hear the gospel now] in his glory, and in his power . . . and acknowledge to our everlasting shame [we can't avoid it; we can't deny that it's all true] that all his judgments are just. . . . He has all power to save every man that believeth on his name and bringeth forth fruit meet for repentance." He wants to save us, and if we don't take advantage of it we are going to be very much ashamed of ourselves. So therefore the subject is repentance; we preach nothing but repentance.

Then he talks about the second death. The second death is on a different level, just like the morning of the first resurrection is on another level of existence permanently hereafter. The second death is when you die as to things pertaining to righteousness. As Macbeth said,

I've stepped in blood so far,  
That should I wade no more  
Return would be as tedious as go o'er.

You reach a point when it's easier just to go ahead with it than go back and try to reform and change things. You reach that point of no return. That's what happens here. Then you are stuck with it. You are in the second death until you don't want to change. It's the sort of thing that paranoids get. You die as to things pertaining to righteousness. When you are paranoid you go on living, but you go on living at another level. It won't be such a happy one. Eventually, you are going to have to come around anyway, so [we should]

get that into our thick heads. Verse 17: “Then is the time when their torments shall be as a lake of fire and brimstone [it doesn’t mean literally]; . . . they shall be chained down to an everlasting destruction, according to the power and captivity of Satan, he having subjected them according to his will.” He just told us what he meant by being “chained down.” That is what is meant by the “chains of hell,” when you go on until you know nothing. You become completely committed [to evil], and you can’t get out of the hole that you have dug yourself into. Notice how strongly he puts it in verse 18: “Then . . . they shall be as though there had been no redemption made.” That’s a terrible doom on you. There are people like that now, of course, as though there had been no redemption made. But they are stuck with it. In the same verse he says, “And they cannot die, seeing there is no more corruption.” This is the real stroke of doom here. It’s not death or destruction that’s the stroke of doom. It’s the fact that they can’t die, and yet they are living as if there had been no redemption. They are going to have to go through an awful hell before they can get out of that.

Verse 20: “But there was one Antionah, who was a chief ruler among them, came forth and said unto him . . .” He’s indignant. He’s had all he can take here, and he says, what is this stuff you are talking about here, “that the soul can never die?” Then he tells [Alma] about the cherubim and the flaming sword that guarded the tree of life. Adam was not supposed to touch the tree of life, lest he partake of it and live forever in his sins. So, [Antionah] said we can die—we are not supposed to eat of the tree of life; we are forbidden to touch it at all, so that settles that. “. . . lest our first parents should enter and partake of the fruit of the tree of life, and live forever? [no] And thus we see that there was no possible chance that we should live forever.” The tree was set up there, but we couldn’t eat from it. If we had eaten from it, then we would live forever. But he said, no, there’s to be no tree. He thought that was a good argument. Alma said, ah, that’s all right for now. “All mankind became a lost and fallen people.” They did; that’s true. They couldn’t go on living that way; that’s the whole point—living in the sewer.

Verse 24: “And we see that death comes upon mankind . . . which is the temporal death [that’s real]; nevertheless, there was a space granted unto man in which he might repent [that’s what we are here for; this is a very important verse here]; therefore this life became a probationary state.” We are being tested every minute of the day by the choices we make, by the reactions we have, by the things we say, by the things we think about. It’s like the ancient Christian doctrine of the two ways, the way to the right and the way to left, whichever they are. You must make the choice, and you may have made the wrong choice every day of your life up until now, but as long as you are here it is still not too late. You can still make the right choice—every minute you can make the right choice. It’s never too late to make the right one, but you can make the wrong one—that happens, too. We have a time to repent; “therefore this life became a probationary state.” Well, it can’t be anything else; it’s a time to prepare to meet God. That’s why we need the gospel here. We are assured of our resurrection. That’s all very well taken care of, but how do we prepare for the long stretch ahead? That’s what we are doing here. This is “a time to prepare to meet God; a time to prepare for that endless state which has been spoken of by us, which is after the resurrection of the dead.

Verse 25: “Now, if it had not been for the plan of redemption, which was laid from the foundation of the world, there could have been no resurrection of the dead.” This is the doctrine of the preexistence. (Oh, the time is up now.) I was going to talk about the Christian doctrine of predestination. The only alternative to preexistence is predestination. We will talk about that next time. [This verse] goes right back to the

preexistence. The plan was set for *redemption* and for *resurrection*. It was already arranged before the foundation of the world that we should come back again, that we should be redeemed and raised up again. *Resurrection* means raised up again. “But there was a plan of redemption laid, which shall bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, of which has been spoken.”

See, that whole thing was planned ahead of time. This is the picture. He says this whole life is nothing but a preparation for the next stage—for the long haul ahead. You did pretty well on the one before. This was the teaching of the ancient Christians. Origen was the best of [ancient] Christian theologians. He says they didn’t know what to make of these doctrines, but the brethren in the early church used to teach that before we came into this world we had to pass an examination, just as we do when we leave this world. In the hereafter we will be tested in the judgment. Well, there was a judgment before we came here. That’s why the various conditions in which we are born here, says Origen, are not unfair and unjust. Some people are born into a miserable condition; other people are born with great advantages and blessings. In the end we are all very much alike, though; nevertheless, this great difference has to do with what we did before. Some people are born, for example, in the Church. He said that means they had good marks before they came here. Others got pretty bad marks, so they start at a disadvantage. It’s going to be the same after this [life]. If you behave yourself here in this time of probation, then you will begin with an advantage in the next world. That’s why we preach the gospel.

Verse 26: “And now behold, if it were possible that our first parents could have gone forth and partaken of the tree of life they would have been forever miserable, having no preparatory state.” It’s too late now. You’ve partaken of the tree of life; you’re going to live forever now, whether you like it or not, in the state you are in now. They would have lived forever in their sins; they would have been stuck as we are now. Well, that was not to happen. They mustn’t touch the tree of life; it is too soon. We will come to that later when we get to the tree of life, but this has become a preparatory state. Well, it all makes very good sense, and it’s the only answer, the only scenario, that anyone has ever come up with. The Christians don’t have any. They say it’s a mystery and a contradiction they just don’t understand. They won’t accept the physical resurrection or the judgment that way. They say it’s a spiritual thing, etc. The great center of Easter for them is the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem; that’s where they all go at Easter. That’s where the Crusaders went and where everybody goes—to the Holy Sepulchre. Why go to the sepulchre? Remember, when the ladies went to the sepulchre with John there was an angel there. He said why are you looking for him here? “Why are you looking for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen.”

As John Chrysostom said, we go so we can view the bloody image of the Lord and see his sufferings, see him on the cross, and all that. Well, that’s all over with, he said. We’re told that in the scriptures where the angel says, “He is not here; he is risen.” We don’t talk about him dead. *Christos anestē* is the way the Greeks put it. Everybody says *Christos anestē*, as far as that goes. But now we are coming to Good Friday, and oh that’s black and terrible—that’s a terrible thing we have to go through. [This idea] is very ancient and goes back to prehistoric times. And the gospel plan was there, too.