
Alma 12 — The Plan of Redemption Made Known — Mysteries According to Heed and Diligence, the Fall, and the Second Death

Alma 12: still the tenth year of the reign of the judges (c. 82 BC), still in the public confrontation at Ammonihah. Zeezrom is trembling (Alma 11:46) and Alma rises to press the doctrine where Amulek left off. The chapter opens with Alma perceiving Zeezrom's thoughts and rebuking the lying-in-wait, then expands into the most developed pre-Pauline articulation of the doctrine that the mysteries of God are given according to heed and diligence. Alma teaches the second death — spiritual separation from God — and is then interrupted by Antionah's question about Eden. He turns the interruption into the Book of Mormon's most developed discourse on the Fall and the plan of redemption, anchored on the cherubim with the flaming sword and the doctrine of mortality as a probationary state. The chapter closes by warning the people not to harden their hearts.

Alma 12 is the Book of Mormon's master text on the plan of redemption, the second death, and the probationary state. The chapter takes up where Amulek's resurrection sermon left off and builds the Fall-and-Atonement superstructure on the resurrection foundation. By the time it closes, it has taught a doctrine of graduated revelation, identified hell as the progressive loss of light, defined the second death as spiritual separation from God, reframed the Fall as mercy, and named mortality itself as a *probationary state*. Three doctrinal vocabularies that the Latter-day Saint tradition has carried for two centuries originate, in their cleanest scriptural form, in this chapter: the mysteries by heed and diligence, the rest of the Lord, and the probationary state.

Hebrew Word Studies

shamea / mishmeret / sod (שָׁמַע / מִשְׁמְרֶת / סוֹד) — **to hear with the intent to obey / to keep the charge, guard the trust / the secret counsel of the Lord vv. 9–11.** The chapter's three Hebrew anchors of revelation. *Shamea* — *to hear with the intent to obey* — is the verb of the Shema (Deut. 6:4 — *Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord*). It is not mere auditory reception; it is receptive obedience. Alma's *heed* is precisely *shamea*: a hearing that is already doing. *Mishmeret* — *to keep the charge, guard the trust* — is the noun of Num. 1:53 (*the Levites... shall keep the charge of the tabernacle*) and Mal. 3:14 (*what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance*). It is the language of faithful stewardship of what has already been given. Alma's *diligence* is *mishmeret*: a faithful keeping of the portion granted that qualifies the keeper for a greater portion. Together, *shamea-and-mishmeret* form the Hebraic pair the chapter is teaching as the precondition of mystery-reception. *Sod* — *the secret counsel of the Lord, the divine assembly's deliberation* — is the noun of Ps. 25:14 (*the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him*) and Amos 3:7 (*surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets*). Alma's *mysteries of God* is the Nephite *sod Adonai* — the council secret, accessible to those who fear the Lord and disclosed by His prophets only with His permission.

From the Chapter's Architecture

Finally, the chapter is the hinge into the densest doctrinal sequence in the Book of Mormon. Alma 11 laid resurrection; Alma 12 has laid the Fall and the plan of redemption; Alma 13 will rise to the priesthood after the order of the Son of God. Three of the most cited and most studied chapters in Latter-day Saint scripture stand together, and Alma 12 is the center on which the other two depend.