

Alma 40 — The Space Between — Alma on Death, Paradise, and the Resurrection

Alma 40: c. 73 BC, the second movement of Alma's charge to Corianton, given in Zarahemla. Having confronted his son's sin and the doubt beneath it (Alma 39), Alma now begins answering the doctrinal questions that doubt had raised — and the first is the resurrection. Corianton was troubled about whether the dead would rise, and when. Alma walks his son patiently through what is revealed and what is not: that a resurrection is certain because Christ brings it to pass, that there is a real and conscious space between death and resurrection in which the righteous rest in paradise and the wicked wait in darkness, and that the resurrection itself restores the soul to the body so completely that not a hair is lost — every limb and joint to its proper and perfect frame. It is one of the Book of Mormon's two great resurrection texts (with Alma 11), and the most detailed scriptural map anywhere of the soul's journey from the grave to the judgment.

Alma 40 is the second answer in a four-chapter charge. In Alma 39 Alma confronted Corianton's sin and discerned the doubt beneath it — the boy was *troubled concerning the resurrection of the dead* (v. 1) and concerning the coming of Christ. So Alma now turns teacher, and the subject is the resurrection. What makes the chapter remarkable is its honesty about the boundary between revelation and speculation. Alma tells Corianton plainly what God has made known and, just as plainly, what God has not — *I do not know*, he says of the precise timing (vv. 4–5), refusing to pretend to a certainty he does not have. Within that honesty he lays out the most detailed account in all of scripture of what happens to a person between the moment of death and the morning of resurrection. The chapter answers two distinct questions Corianton had tangled together: first, *what becomes of the soul in the space between death and resurrection?* and second, *what is the resurrection itself?* Alma keeps them carefully apart, and the keeping-apart is much of the chapter's teaching.

Hebrew Word Studies

pardes / menuchah / anastasis (פָּרְדֵּס / מְנוּחָה / (Greek) ἀνάστασις) — **a walled garden, a royal park, paradise / rest, a resting place, the settled peace of the Sabbath / a standing-up-again, resurrection** v. 12, vv. 11–12, vv. 16–23. Three words carry the doctrine of this chapter. *Pardes* is the Hebrew behind *paradise* — a loanword from Old Persian (*pairidaēza*, an enclosed garden), used in the Hebrew Bible only three times (Neh. 2:8; Eccl. 2:5; Song 4:13) for orchards and royal parks, but chosen by the Septuagint translators to render *the garden* of Eden (Gen. 2:8). By Alma's day and after, *pardes / paradeisos* had become the name for the garden-state of the blessed dead — the place the dying thief is promised (Lk. 23:43) and the place Paul is *caught up* to (2 Cor. 12:4). Alma's *paradise* is therefore Eden-rest restored to the righteous soul ahead of the body's raising. The second word is *menuchah*, rest — not mere cessation but the full, settled peace of the Sabbath that God Himself entered (Gen. 2:2), the *rest* the faithful inherit (Ps. 95:11; Heb. 4:1–11). When Alma says the righteous *rest from all their troubles*, he means *menuchah*, the deep Sabbath of the soul. The third word is the Greek *anastasis*, resurrection — literally a *standing-up-again*, the word the New Testament uses throughout (Jn. 11:25; 1 Cor. 15:42). Alma is careful to keep *anastasis* distinct from *pardes*: the garden-rest of the soul is not yet the standing-up of the body. Paradise is the waiting-room; resurrection is the rising. To confuse them — as some did (v. 15) — is to mistake the soul's interim peace for its final, embodied glory.

From the Chapter's Architecture

``cross-references Gen. 2:8 (the LXX *paradeisos* for Eden — the garden behind v. 12); Job 19:25–27 (in my flesh shall I see God — the OT confidence of bodily resurrection); Ps. 16:9–11 (thou wilt not leave my soul in hell... in thy presence is fulness of joy — the soul taken home, vv. 11–12); Ps. 95:11; Eccl. 12:7 (the spirit shall return unto God who gave it — the homegoing of v. 11); Isa. 26:19 (thy dead men shall live... awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust — resurrection prophesied); Ezek. 37:1–14 (the dry bones, sinew and flesh restored — the reuniting of v. 23); Dan. 12:2–3 (many that sleep in the dust... shall awake, and the wise shall shine — the shining righteous of v. 25); Hosea 13:14 (I will ransom them from the power of the grave — quoted in 1 Cor. 15); Matt. 8:12; 22:13 (outer darkness; weeping and gnashing of teeth — verbatim with v. 13); Matt. 10:30 (the hairs of your head numbered — v. 23); Lk. 16:19–31 (the rich man and Lazarus — the conscious interim states, paradise and torment, vv. 12–14); Lk. 23:43 (today shalt thou be with me in paradise — v. 12); Jn. 5:28–29 (the resurrection of life and of damnation — vv. 25–26); Jn. 11:24–26 (I am the resurrection and the life — the Christ-grounding of v. 2); 1 Cor. 15:20–23, 42–54 (this corruption must put on incorruption — verbatim doctrine of vv. 2; the order of the resurrection); 2 Cor. 5:1–8 (absent from the body... present with the Lord — the soul taken home, v. 11); 2 Cor. 12:4 (Paul caught up to paradise — v. 12); Rev. 20:12–13 (the dead judged out of the books, the sea and death and hell delivering up the dead — the universal coming-forth of v. 5); Alma 11:41–45 (Alma's earlier teaching at Ammonihah — every limb and joint... restored to its proper frame, the parallel to v. 23); Alma 12:24 (this life a probationary state before the resurrection); Alma 41 (the moral restoration that the word restore hands forward at v. 25); Alma 42:23 (the resurrection that bringeth back men into the presence of God — the judgment side of this chapter); 2 Ne. 9:10–13 (Jacob: death and hell must deliver up their dead, body and spirit restored — the small-plates parallel); Mosiah 16:7–11 (Abinadi on the resurrection through Christ); D&C 88:14–17, 27–32 (the Restoration's doctrine of the resurrection of bodies quickened by the glory they can abide — vv. 23, 26); D&C 93:33–34 (spirit and element inseparably connected receive a fulness of joy — the embodied hope of v. 23); D&C 138 (Joseph F. Smith's vision of the spirit world — paradise and the spirits in prison, expanding vv. 11–14). ``