

Alma 12:31 *He knows thy thoughts*

If men's secret acts shall be revealed it is likely that their secret thoughts will also be revealed....

The one who harbors evil thoughts sometimes feels safe in the conviction that these thoughts are unknown to others....

Accordingly, men's deeds and thoughts must be recorded in heaven, and recording angels will not fail to make complete recordings of our thoughts and actions.... There will be no omissions in the heavenly records, and they will all be available at the day of judgment.

Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969], 108-109.

Alma 12:32 *Spirit of discernment*

The gift of discernment operates basically in four major ways.

First, as we "read under the surface," discernment helps us detect hidden error and evil in others.

Second, and more important, it helps us detect hidden errors and evil in ourselves. Thus the spiritual gift of discernment is not exclusively about discerning other people and situations... it is also about discerning things as they really are within us.

Third, it helps us find and bring forth the good that may be concealed in others.

And fourth, it helps us find and bring forth the good that may be concealed in us.

David A. Bednar, *Ensign*, Dec. 2006 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2006], 35.

3 [An experience of Heber C. Kimball] Being in charge of the Endowment House, while the Temple was in the process of construction, Heber C. Kimball met with a group who were planning to enter the temple for ordinance work. He felt impressed that some were not worthy to go into the temple, and he suggested first that if any present were not worthy, they might retire. No one responding, he said that there were some present who should not proceed through the temple because of unworthiness and he wished they would leave so the company could proceed. It was quiet as death and no one moved nor responded. A third time he spoke, saying that there were two people present who were in adultery, and if they did not leave he would call out their names. Two people walked out and the company continued on through the temple.

Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969], 112.

4 On the day I was released as a bishop, one of the ward members came to my home afterwards and said, "I know you are no longer my bishop, but could we talk just one more time? You have always spoken words I needed and given me such good counsel. The new bishop doesn't know me the way you do. Could we just talk one more time?"

Reluctantly I agreed. The member sat down in a chair opposite mine. It seemed to be just as it had been in the hundreds of times I had interviewed members of the ward as a judge in Israel. The conversation began. There came the moment when counsel was needed. I waited for the ideas, the words, and the feelings to flow into my mind, as they always had.

Nothing came. In my heart and mind there was only silence. After a few moments I said, "I'm sorry. I appreciate your kindness and your trust. But I'm afraid I can't help you."

When you are released from your calling, you will learn what I learned then. God magnifies those He calls.... Give thanks while that gift is yours. You will appreciate its worth more than you can imagine when it is gone.

Henry B. Eyring, in Conference Report, Oct 2002 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2002], 82.

5

While participating in an area conference in Manchester, England, in 1971, President Spencer W. Kimball, who was then acting president of the Quorum of the Twelve, confided in Dr. Nelson that he was having anginal pains....

President Kimball called a special meeting with the First Presidency. Invited to the meeting in addition to the First Presidency and Sister Kimball were Dr. Ernest L. Wilkinson and myself. President Kimball began the meeting by saying, "I am a dying man, I can feel my life slipping. At the present rate of deterioration, it is my belief that I can live only about two more months...."

Dr. Wilkinson reaffirmed President Kimball's statement, explaining that 'because of congestive failure.... spontaneous recovery would be unlikely and death would ensue in the not-too-distant future.'

Then President Kimball called on Dr. Nelson to speak asking, "What can cardiac surgery offer?"

Dr. Nelson said, "I indicated that the operation, if it were to be done, would be a compound surgical procedure consisting of two components...."

President Lee asked, "What would the risks be with such procedures?"

Dr. Nelson replied, "We have no experience doing both operations on patients in this age group.... All I can say is, it would entail extremely high risk."

Then a weary President Kimball said, "I'm an old man and ready to die. It is well for a younger man to come to the Quorum and do the work I can no longer do."

Elder Nelson described the dramatic reaction of President Lee: "At that point President Harold B. Lee, speaking for the First Presidency, rose to his feet, pounding his fist to the desk, and said, 'Spencer, you have been called! You are not to die! You are to do everything that you need to do in order to care for yourself and continue to live.'"

President Kimball responded, "Then I will have the operation performed...."

The decision was made to perform the operation on April 12, ... 1972....

Russell [M. Nelson] received a blessing from the First Presidency on the eve of the operation, under the hands of President Harold B. Lee and President N. Eldon Tanner. "They blessed me that the operation would be performed without error, that all would go well, and that I need not fear for my own inadequacies, for I had been raised up by the Lord to perform this operation."

The operation began the next morning.... Dr. Nelson observed, "From that very first maneuver until the last one, everything went as planned. There was not one broken stitch, not one instrument had fallen from the table, not one technical flaw had occurred in a series of thousands of intricate manipulations. I suppose my feelings at that time may have been like those of a concert pianist rendering a concerto without ever hitting a wrong note, or a baseball player who had pitched a perfect game—no hits, no runs, no errors, and no walks. For a long and difficult operation had been performed exactly in accordance with the blessing invoked by the power of the priesthood...."

"The feeling that came as we shocked President Kimball's heart and it resumed its beating immediately with vigor, was the manifestation of the Spirit which told me that I had just operated upon the man who would become president of the Church!"

I knew the President Kimball was a prophet. I knew that he was an Apostle, *but now it was revealed to me that he would preside over the Church!* This feeling was so strong that I could hardly contain myself as we performed the routine maneuvers to conclude the operation. Later on in the week as he convalesced, I shared these impressions with him and he and I wept."...

The evening after Christmas 1973, Brother Nelson heard the fateful news on television that President Lee had just died....

President Kimball became the president of the Church on December 30, 1973, at age seventy-eight.... It would be a dozen years before he passed away at the age of ninety.

Spencer J. Condie, *Russell M. Nelson, Father—Surgeon—Apostle* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003], 153-158; emphasis added.

6 Often blessed with the power to know and understand beyond their experience, women draw on this strength as they visit monthly to teach in the homes or to assess needs as directed by the bishop. We use it as we nurture our children and teach them the gospel.... Discernment is critical for our times. President Boyd Packer has said, "We need women with the gift of discernment who can view the trends in the world and detect those that, however popular, are shallow.

Ensign, Nov, 1978, p. 8.

7 **Alma 12:5**
The devil has no power over us, only as we permit him.

Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 181

8 **Alma 12:6**
Chains

(Jacob Marley to Scrooge)

"I wear the chain I forged in life," replied the Ghost. "I made it link by link, and yard by yard." Marley then warned Scrooge that he had already formed "a ponderous chain" of his own, though he was unaware of it.

Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*

9 **Alma 12:7**
Why was this arrogant, sophisticated, demagogue so susceptible to the influence of the Spirit? Other rebels in the Book of Mormon record were similarly confronted by spiritual leaders but persisted in their debauchery. Nehor, although rebuked by Alma, had no change of heart (see Alma 1), nor did Amlici (see Alma 2) or Sherem (see Jacob 7). Korihor stubbornly refused to repent (see Alma 30). What was there in the soul of Zeezrom that pressed him toward such a remarkable change?...

It appears that in spite of his having yielded to the influence of the environment in which he had gained notoriety, a spark of spiritual light must have endured in his soul.

Dean L. Larsen, *Heroes from the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995], 115-116.

10 **Alma 12:9**
"they shall not impart", "mysteries"

It is not wise to continually talk of unusual spiritual experiences. They are to be guarded with care and shared only when the Spirit itself prompts you to use them to the blessing of others. I am ever mindful of Alma's words (Alma 12:9). I heard President Marion G. Romney once counsel mission presidents and their wives..., "I do not tell all I know,... for I found out that if I talked too lightly of sacred things, thereafter the Lord would not trust me."

Boyd K. Packer (*Ensign*, Jan. 1983, p. 53)

11 Should you receive a vision or revelation from the Almighty, one that the Lord gave you concerning yourselves, ... you should shut it up and seal it as closed, and lock it as tight as heaven is to you, and make it as secret as the grave. The Lord has no confidence in those who reveal secrets, for he cannot safely reveal himself to such persons.

Brigham Young, *Discourses*, 40-41.

12 I have come to know that deeply spiritual experiences are usually given to us for our individual edification and it is best not to talk of them generally We may be prompted on occasion to tell of our spiritual experiences, but generally we should regard them as sacred. It is not out of order, however, to present some experiences from those who have lived in years past.

The fact that sacred spiritual experiences are not discussed widely—for instance, by General Authorities—should not be taken as an indication that the Saints do not receive them. Such spiritual gifts are with the Church today as they were in years past.

Experiences which involve dreams or visions or visitations might be recorded and put away in family records to serve as a testimony and in inspiration to our descendants in the generations ahead.

Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy Temple* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980], 243.

13 Elder Bruce R. McConkie has written: “To those devoid of spiritual understanding, it is as though the inspired authors had set out, deliberately and with earnest intent, to sow the seeds of darkness and misunderstanding as to the God or Gods who live and abide and are.... At least to the spiritually sick and to the spiritually dead, who seek God through reason and the intellect alone, the scriptures appear to be a compilation of confusion and contradiction. And it was not intended to be otherwise, for salvation is of the Spirit and comes only to those who are spiritually alive and well, those who come to know God, not by reason and the intellect alone, but through the spirit of prophecy and revelation.”

Promised Messiah, p. 113.

14 The best educated man in the world may not be able to comprehend the simple truths of the gospel because his soul is not in tune; he has not been enlightened by the Spirit of the Lord. He, there, fails to see and feel the significance of these principles. They cannot be seen except through the touch of the Holy Ghost. For this reason Alma explained to Zeezrom how gospel light may be known [Alma 12:9-11].

Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:296-297.

15 Joseph Smith said, “God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what He will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them.”

Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 149

16 Alma 12:9-11

A lesser portion

It is impossible for the carnally minded to understand the reason for the fall and likewise understand the necessity for the atonement of Jesus Christ. It is true that not all the purposes of our Eternal Father have been revealed to man and there are some things that have to be received by faith; but these great truths have been made known and we have the assurance that through the sacrifice made on the cross all mankind and every other creature, even the earth *itself*, are redeemed from death and shall receive the resurrection and be restored to immortal life. Men receive assurance and knowledge due to their faithfulness and adherence to the commandments of Jesus Christ. Those who reject their Redeemer and refuse to keep his commandments cannot know and comprehend these eternal truths. Alma explained this to Zeezrom in the following words: [Alma 12:9-11]

“Naturally the Lord cannot reveal the mysteries of his kingdom to the scoffer, neither can he to the member of the Church who is not faithful. If a man does not exercise faith why should he have the revelations concerning the kingdom of God revealed to him? They cannot understand them because they are ‘fallen’ men, and without the enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit, they are as the Lord expressed it, ‘carnal, sensual and devilish.’ [Mosiah 16:3] It is written that when the disciples asked the Savior why he spoke in parables, he answered: ‘Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.’ [Matthew 13:11-12.] The Lord further said, ‘Give not that which is holy unto dogs, neither cast ye pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.’ [Matthew 7:6] There were occasions when he instructed his disciples not to reveal certain manifestations until after his resurrection.

"Of course, a man who believes that man has descended from lower forms of life, and by gradual development after an enormous length of time evolved from fish to reptile and then to ape, can never understand the fall of man and the atonement. These truths are mysteries to him and only contempt and abuse do they receive from him."

Joseph Fielding Smith, *Man, His Origin and Destiny*, pp. 358-60.

17 It is a popular notion that Jesus taught with parables to make his points clear and easy to understand, it just isn't so....

Make no mistake about it, Jesus used parables to conceal the mysteries of the kingdom from the unworthy and the spiritually careless. Parables were so effective at concealing the message that Jesus often had to explain the meaning afterward even to the disciples....

The deliberate withholding of spiritual information from those who do not believe is well established in scripture. There may be a merciful purpose to this, since they cannot reject what they haven't been taught. But mercy is not the only factor. There is justice also. The Lord withholds the greater spiritual truths from the proud and worldly-wise because they do not want to know, and do not value gospel truth enough to seek, ask, knock, or sacrifice anything to gain that knowledge,

Robert J. Matthews; as quoted in *The Book of Mormon: Alma, The Testimony of the Word*, ed. By Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate [Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 1992], 49-50.

18 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.

19 **Alma 12:11**
Led by his will down to destruction

I counsel all of you... to avoid every kind of addiction. At this time Satan and his followers are enslaving some of our choicest young people through addiction to alcohol, all kinds of drugs, pornography, tobacco, gambling, and other compulsive disorders. Some people seem to be born with a weakness for these substances so that only a single experimentation will result in uncontrollable addiction. Some addictions are actually mind-altering and create a craving that overpowers reason and judgment. These addictions destroy the lives not only of those who do not resist them but also their parents, spouses, and children....

The Lord in His wisdom has warned us that substances that are not good for us should be totally avoided. We have been warned not to take the first drink, smoke the first cigarette, or try the first drug. Curiosity and peer pressure are selfish reasons to dabble with addictive substances. We should stop and consider the full consequences, not just to ourselves and our futures, but also to our loved ones. These consequences are physical, but they also risk the loss of the Spirit and cause us to fall prey to Satan.

James E. Faust, *Ensign*, May 2006 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2006] 53.

20 **Alma 12:12-14**
Judgment according to our words, works, and actions

The prophet Nephi describes the Final Judgment in terms of what we *have become*: "And if their words 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 declared, "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.

Dallin H. Oaks, Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 41; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32.

21 If I had time to enter into this subject alone I could show you upon scientific principles that man himself is a self-registering machine, his eyes, his ears, his nose, the touch, the taste, and all the various senses of the body, are so many media whereby man lays for himself a record which perhaps nobody else is acquainted with but himself; and when the time comes for that record to be unfolded all men that have eyes to see, and ears to hear, will be able to read all things as God himself reads them and comprehends them, and all things, we are told, are naked and open before him with whom we have to do.

John Taylor, JD, 26:31

22 "In the armory of thought [man] forges the weapons by which he destroys himself; he also fashions the tools with which he builds for himself heavenly mansions of joy and strength and peace.... Between these two extremes are all grades of character, and man is their maker and master....

"...man is the master of thought, the moulder of character, and the maker and shaper of condition, environment, and destiny." [James Allen, *As a Man Thinketh*, pp. 5-6.]

The cumulative effect of our thinking, and its power over life's circumstances, is strikingly expressed by James Allen:

"A man does not come to the almshouse or the jail by the tyranny of fate or circumstance, but by the pathway of groveling thoughts and base desires. Nor does a pure-minded man fall suddenly into crime by stress of mere external force; the criminal thought had long been secretly fostered in the heart, and the hour of opportunity revealed its gathered power. Circumstance does not make the man; it reveals him to himself. No such conditions can exist as descending into virtue and its pure happiness without the continued cultivation of virtuous aspirations; and man, therefore, as the lord and master of his thought is the maker of himself, the shaper and author of environment....

"...Let a man radically alter his thoughts, and he will be astonished at the rapid transformation it will effect in the material conditions of his life. Men imagine that thought can be kept secret, but it cannot; it rapidly crystallizes into habit, and habit solidifies into circumstance." [*As a Man Thinketh*, p. 16, 26-27.]

"This 'solidifying into circumstance' is the key to most of the success stories we read. The successful man thinks he can. As someone expressed it briefly and pointedly, 'Whether you think you can or you can't, you're right.'"

Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, pp. 104-5.

23 Our words, our works, and our thought are but illustrations, evidences of what we really are or have become. Those who seek with all their hearts to come unto Christ and be perfected in him; who desire earnestly to forsake sin and sinfulness; who yearn, who hunger and thirst after righteousness—these shall in time have their beans changed transformed by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost. They speak "not as other men" (JST, Matthew 3:25). They perform the works of righteousness, not alone because such is required of them but also because they desire to do so, because it is the right thing to do. Their thoughts are upon good things, upon noble things, uplifting things, because their eye is single to the glory of God. They are not perfect, for they still err occasionally in judgment, speak or work or think what they should not. But their desires are to be like and with God, and they therefore repent speedily (D&C 109:21) and return without let or hindrance to the path of peace.

Millett & McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987-1992], 3:86

24 All evils to which so many become addicted begin in the mind and in the way one thinks. Experience teaches that when the will and imagination are in conflict, the imagination usually wins. What we imagine may defeat our reason and make us slaves to what we taste, see, hear, smell, and feel in the mind's eye.

Joseph B. Wirthlin, *Ensign*, May 1982, pp. 23-25.

Alma 12:15

25 *Bringeth forth fruit unto repentance*

First, we must stop the flow into our minds of ... vulgar stories, jokes, pictures, conversation, and a myriad of other satanic products....

Now, assuming we have cut off the flow—not cut it down, but cut it off—the second thing we must do is to develop a filtering system that will cleanse the great reservoir of our mind so that the life-giving thoughts coming from it may again be pure and fit for our use....

The secret to cleansing our spirit of whatever the impurity is not very complicated. It begins with prayer every morning and ends with prayer every night. This is the most important step I know in the cleansing process....

Secondly, an added refinement will come in the filtering process: An added measure of spiritual purity, if you please, can be found in a daily study of the scriptures—not long, perhaps, but *every day*....

Third, feed refreshments to your spirit that comes when you do something good for another that he or she doesn't expect. Keep it simple, but do it—daily. It may only be a cherry hello, a short visit to [someone who is] homebound, a phone call, or a note....

And finally, pick up a commandment you are still struggling with and give it an honest chance to bless your life. Bishop H. Burke Peterson, "Purify Our Minds and Spirits," *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, pp.38-39.

26 All of us need to understand and appreciate that repentance is the mechanism for personal growth and development. Repentance is so fundamental that the Lord gave a revelation to Oliver Cowdery through the Prophet Joseph Smith in which he said, "Say nothing but repentance unto this generation; keep my commandments, and assist to bring forth my work, according to my commandments, and you shall be blessed." (D&C 6:9)

Just what is repentance? Actually it is easier for me to tell you what repentance is not than to tell you what repentance is.

My present assignment as a General Authority is to assist the First Presidency. I prepare information for them to use in considering applications to readmit transgressors into the Church and to restore priesthood and/or temple blessings. Many times a bishop will write: "I feel he has suffered enough!" But suffering is not repentance. Suffering comes from *lack* of complete repentance. A stake president will write: "I feel he has been punished enough!" But punishment is not repentance. Punishment *follows* disobedience and *precedes* repentance. A husband will write: "My wife has confessed everything!" But confession is not repentance. Confession is an admission of guilt that occurs as repentance begins. A wife will write: "My husband is filled with remorse!" But remorse is not repentance. Remorse and sorrow continue because a person has *not* fully repented. But if suffering, punishment, confession, remorse, and sorrow are not repentance, what *is* repentance?

Not only must we change our ways; we must as well change our very thoughts which control our actions. Repentance is a turning back to God!

Theodore M. Burton, *BYU Devotion*, March 26, 1985.

Alma 12:16-18

27 *Second death, spiritual death, temporal death*

The Fall brought upon them and their posterity two deaths: (1) a temporal death, which is the physical death—the cemetery death; and (2) a spiritual death in which they were shut out from the presence of the Lord. Spiritual

death does not mean the death of one's spirit, but means to be out of God's presence and to be dead as to righteousness. Every person born into the world suffers these two deaths. There are no exceptions.

The atonement of Jesus Christ ransoms and rescues all mankind, without exception, from both deaths brought by the Fall of Adam. This means that every person will die physically and every person will be resurrected physically from the grave and be given everlasting life. In like manner, every person, regardless of worthiness or unworthiness, will also be reclaimed from the spiritual death and will be brought back into the presence of God for the Final Judgment. No matter how wicked or unrepentant, every person will, after the Resurrection, be brought back into the presence of God for judgment. Thus all will be reclaimed from the two deaths that resulted from the fall of Adam. Those who are righteous will remain in his presence. Those who are still unclean and filthy at the time of judgment will be sent away from his presence a second time, and thus they a second spiritual death. Only the sons of perdition suffer the complete second death.

Robert J. Matthews, *The Probationary Nature of Mortality*, p. 55

28 Death entered the world by means of Adam's fall—death of two kinds, temporal and spiritual. Temporal death passes upon all men when they depart this mortal life.... Spiritual death passes upon all men when they... sin [and] die spiritually;... they are cast out of the presence of God.

Bruce R. McConkie, *Promised Messiah*, 349-50

29 This second death is not... the dissolution or annihilation of both spirit and body, but banishment from the presence of God and from partaking of the things of righteousness.

Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:222.

30 The suffering to which the wicked are subjected takes place in the postmortal spirit world. This is hell, both a place and a state of mind. Concerning hell as a state of mind, Joseph Smith explained: "A man is his own tormenter and his own condemner. Hence the saying, They shall go into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. The torment of disappointment in the mind of man is as exquisite as a lake burning with fire and brimstone."

Millett & McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 3, p. 86.

31 It is very clear in the Doctrine and Covenants 76:30-37, that the only persons who will be completely overcome by this dreadful fate [the second death] are the sons of perdition, who go with the devil and his angels into "outer darkness." All the rest of mankind, even the wicked, will receive some measure of salvation after they suffer the wrath of God. However, they will of necessity be brought to repentance and acceptance of the gospel of Jesus Christ as far as it will apply to them.

Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:76.

Alma 12:18

32 *No death after the resurrection*

The tabernacles we were to receive [when coming into mortality] were to be *tabernacles of corruption*. Do not misunderstand me in the use of that word, for I mean bodies that are changeable, subject to change as we see change in mortality. Our bodies are constantly changing, throwing off the waste and taking on the new to replace the waste. And so in the scriptures they are spoken of as being corruptible bodies.

Notwithstanding that, we rejoiced in the opportunity to receive bodies of that kind, for a season, with the understanding that eventually we would pass through death and then the resurrection, and then we would take up those bodies incorruptible. The spirit and the body in that resurrection would be again united, inseparably, never again to die, never again to receive corruption in the sense in which I am using that term, but to exist forever. [See 1 Corinthians 15:42-54; Alma 11:45, 12:18.] Is there any wonder that the sons of God shouted for joy?

Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:67.

Alma 12:2133 *Cherubim*

Apparently a *cherub* is an angel of some particular order or rank to whom specific duties and work are assigned. That portion of the Lord's word which is now available among men does not set forth clearly either the identity or work of these heavenly beings. The concept of sectarian scholars that they are "mythological living creatures," who filled for the Hebrew people the same position that the griffins did for the Hittites, is utterly false. (Griffins were supposed to be winged sphinxes having the bodies of lions and the heads and wings of eagles, and they were in fact mythological creatures.)

Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 124.

Alma 12:2234 *By the fall, all mankind became a lost and fallen people.*

This is a hard doctrine, one from which too many Latter-day Saints tend to flee. It is the doctrine that Lehi taught (see 1 Nephi 10:4-6), that Benjamin declared (see Mosiah 3:18-19), that Abinadi made known (see Mosiah 16:11-3), that the Brother of Jared professed (see Ether 3:2). It is the burden of scripture, particularly in the Book of Mormon. Adam fell. His posterity fell with him, in the sense that all mankind—no one excepted—became, through conception (see Moses 6:55), subject to a fallen nature, a nature which must be put off through sincere repentance unto Christ. Though we are not heir to an "original sin"—a taint that many Christians think entailed upon the posterity of Adam and Eve as a result of their disobedience—we are subject to the Fall and thereby in dire need of redemption. In fact, the Fall and the Atonement are a packaged deal, a joint doctrine; there is no place in the Book of Mormon which the atonement of Christ is taught wherein the fall of Adam is not also taught or implied. If there had been no fall, there would have been no need for atonement. This is true on an individual as well as a cosmic basis.

Millet & McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol.3 p.88

35 Not only had Adam and Eve fallen, but now their entire posterity would be relegated to a similar fate, to be born and raised estranged from the presence of God, a form of spiritual death. Such a universal condemnation was observed by Alma....

Two of the consequences of the Fall were negatives, namely physical and spiritual death. But there was also good news. The two previous negatives of the Garden became positives. Adam and Eve were now blessed with a knowledge of good and evil, and appropriately so, for they had partaken of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This enabled them to "[become] as Gods, knowing good from evil" (Alma 12:31). Satan told a half-truth: "Ye shall not surely die [this was the falsehood]" but "in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:44-5; see also Alma 42:3). The latter portion of Satan's promise was true. At least eventually, they did become like God in their understanding of good and evil; innocence was exchanged for knowledge; and the potential for joy became a reality. A negative became a glorious positive in the eternal scheme.

In addition, Adam and Eve's mortal bodies could now procreate and fulfill the divine command to multiply and replenish the earth.

Tad R. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000], 41.

Alma 12:23

36 Mortal or physical death was absolutely necessary in order for the plan of God to be put into effect. As Jacob declared, "Death hath passed upon all men, to fulfill the merciful plan of the great creator" (2 Nephi 9:6). Death is the final stage of life.

Millet & McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, p. 88

37 **Alma 12:24**
Probationary state

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.

L. Tom Perry, Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 16; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 14.

38 **Alma 12:25**
Plan of Redemption/Plan of Salvation

Where Did I Come From?

Sons and Daughters of God
The Grand Council

Why Am I Here?

Creation, Fall and Atonement
The Purpose of Mortality
Ordinances of Salvation

Where Am I Going?

The Spirit World
Resurrection and Judgment
Rewards of Darkness and
Glory

39 **Alma 12:25-26**

The gospel is the plan of salvation, the plan ordained and established by the Father to enable his spirit children to advance and progress and become like him. It is all of the laws, truths, rites, ordinances, and performances by conformity to which men can save themselves with eternal exaltation in the mansions on high. It is the system that enables the sons of God to become gods.

Bruce R. McConkie, *Mortal Messiah*, 2:8.

40 **Alma 12:26**

If Adam and Eve had been permitted to partake of the fruit of the tree of life before living out their mortal lives, they would have been taken into immortality without the experience—the pains, the struggles, the opportunities to overcome, the posterity, and thus the joys—of this life. They would have been damned in their progress. And the rest of us would have known no progress; we would have remained forever as unembodied spirits.

Millet & McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, p.89.

41 **Alma 12:31**
"in a state to act"

Agency is largely a product of knowledge and understanding. Adam and Eve, in their paradisiacal condition, were naively innocent and thus unable to serve as responsible moral agents. Having partaken of the fruit or the tree or knowledge of good and evil, having gained an understanding of good and evil... they were now in a position to act instead of simply being acted upon.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary*, 3:90.

42 **Alma 12:32**
Commandments

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 Education System symposium on the Doctrine and Covenants, Aug 10, 1993], 3: 344 LDS.org under gospel library/additional address/CES addresses).

Boyd K. Packer

Alma 12:32

43 *Spiritual death, second death*

Second death, What is that? After you have been redeemed from the grave, and come into the presence of God, you will have to stand there to be judged; and if you have done evil, you will be banished everlastingly from his presence,... this is what is called the second death.

Orson Pratt, *Journal of Discourses* [London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1855], 1:288.

44 At the time of the Final Judgment, after the Resurrection, the wicked will suffer a second death—not a death of the body, but a death as to righteousness—a spiritual death, meaning they will be banished from God's presence, and from his joy and happiness forever....

Spiritual death does not mean the death of one's spirit, but means to be out of God's presence and to be dead as to righteousness. Every person born into the world suffers these two deaths. There are no exceptions....

Every person, regardless of worthiness or unworthiness, will also be reclaimed from the spiritual death and will be brought back into the presence of God for the Final Judgment. No matter how wicked or unrepentant, every person will, after the Resurrection, be brought back in the presence of God for judgment. Thus all will be reclaimed from the two deaths that resulted from the fall of Adam. Those who are righteous will remain in his presence. Those who are still unclean and filthy at the time of judgment will be sent away from his presence a second time, and thus they die a second spiritual death. Only the sons of perdition suffer the complete second death.

Robert J. Matthews; as quoted in *The Book of Mormon: Alma, The Testimony of the Word*, ed. By Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate [Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 1992], 54-55.

45 This second death is not, then, the dissolution or annihilation of both spirit, and body, but banishment from the presence of God and from partaking of the things of righteousness....

It is similar to the first spiritual death, which has passed upon all men who have remained unrepentant and who have not received the gospel. Those who have suffered the first spiritual death or departure, which is a shutting out from the presence of God, have the privilege of being redeemed from this death through obedience to the principles of the gospel. Through baptism and confirmation they are *born again* and thus come *back into spiritual life*....

Those who partake of the second death are those who have had the spiritual light and have rebelled against it. *These remain* in their sins in their banishment.... Alma in the Book of Mormon has clearly and forcefully depicted their status [see Alma 12:16-18]....

Resurrection shall come unto all who have received tabernacles of flesh and this because they kept their first estate which entitled them to this mortal existence in the flesh....

However, because they have failed utterly to keep their second estate, when they are raised in the resurrection with their bodies and spirits inseparably connected, they still remain, as the prophets have said, *as though there had been no redemption made for them, "except it be the loosing of the bands of death,"* (Alma 11:41; D&C 76:42-48) that is the mortal death. Then shall the final sentence be passed upon them, and with Lucifer and those who served him in the beginning, shall they be cast out into outer darkness.

Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. by Bruce R. McConkie [Salt Lake City: Boodcraft, 1955]; 2:222-224.

46 What is the penalty? Second death....If you cease not to do evil, you shall be punished with everlasting destruction from my presence, and from the glory of my power," saith the Lord.

"But," says one, "He is so merciful, that He would not inflict such a penalty upon us." Have you ever seen a man that has escaped from the first death? or who had any prospect of it? No; you cannot find a remedy to hinder him from going down to his grave. Has there been an escape for any individual for 6000 years past? Now, if the Lord has been punctual to make every man, woman, and child suffer the penalty of the first transgression, why should you suppose that you can stand in His presence, and behold the glory of His power, and have everlasting life and happiness, when He has told you that you should be banished therefrom, that the second death should be inflicted upon you? For the first provocation, He has fulfilled to the very letter the penalty of the law; so will He in the second, and there is no escape. Says one, "Is there no escape? No; not so far as you are able to provide. But I will tell you that there is a redemption for man from this second death or penalty, and the Lord remains a perfect, just Being, His justice being magnified.

There is a way of escape from the effects of your own individual transgressions, but it is different from the redemption from the original sin of Adam. The redemption from that sin was universal without works, but redemption from your own personal sins is universal with works on the part of the creature—universal in its nature, because it is free to all, but not received by all. The salvation, or redemption from your own sins, is not by free grace alone, it requires a little work. But what are the works? Jesus Christ, through his death and sufferings, has answered the penalty, on the condition that you believe in him, and repent of your sins, and be baptized for the remission of them, and receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost, by the laying on of hands, and continue humble, and meek, and prayerful, until you go down to your graves.

Journal of Discourses, 26 vols. [London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854-1886], 1:288

Alma 12:34

47 *Enter into the Rest*

Phrases similar to "enter into the rest of the Lord" appear in the Old Testament, in the Book of Mormon, as well as in Hebrews chapters 3 and 4, and in D&C 84:24. As noted, "the rest of the Lord" can refer both to physical rest and to spiritual rest. In Doctrine and Covenants 84:24, *rest* is defined as the fullness of God's glory. The word can also mean *remainder*. Since God gives us only according to our readiness and diligence, what the faithful receive is "the rest of the Lord," meaning they shall receive the remainder, the rest of the knowledge and blessings God bestows upon his faithful children.

Robert J Matthews; as quoted in *The Book of Mormon: Alma, the Testimony of the Work*, ed. By Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate [Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 1992], 60

48 The ancient prophets speak of "entering into God's rest"; what does it mean? To my mind, it means entering into the knowledge and love of God, having faith in his purpose and in his plan, to such an extent that we know we are right, and that we are not hunting for something else, we are not disturbed by every wind of doctrine, or by the cunning and craftiness of men who lie in wait to deceive.... The man who has reached that degree of faith in God that all doubt and fear have been cast from him, he has entered into "God's rest,"... The rest here referred to is not physical rest, for there is no such thing as physical rest in the Church of Jesus Christ.... We may thus enter into the rest of the Lord today, by coming to an understanding of the truths of the gospel... But there are many [Saints] who, not having reached this point of determined conviction, are driven about by every wind of doctrine, thus being ill at ease, unsettled, restless. These are they who are discouraged over incidents that occur in the Church, and in the nation, and in the turmoils of men and associations. They harbor a feeling of suspicion, unrest, uncertainty. Their thoughts are disturbed, and they become excited with the least change. Like one at sea who has lost his bearings.... Let them seek for it in the written word of God; let them pray to him in their secret chambers, where no human can hear... and they will immediately begin to grow in the knowledge of the truth.... Let them seek for strength from the

Source of all strength, and he will provide spiritual contentment, a rest which is incomparable with the physical rest that cometh after toil. All who seek have a right to, and may enter into, the rest of God, here upon the earth, from this time forth, now, today; and when earth-life is finished, they shall also enjoy his rest in heaven.

Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975], 58, 126.

Alma 12:36-37

49 *"first provocation" "last provocation"*

The "first provocation" was in the Garden of Eden; God kept his word and brought death as a consequence. The second provocation was with the children of Israel in the wilderness. Again, God kept his word and withdrew his presence. He did not allow those who came out of Egypt to enter the promised land, but caused them to die in the wilderness without finding rest for their bodies nor for their spirits.

Alma warns that since God was true to his word in earlier provocations, we have reason to believe that he will be equally true to his word, if we provoke him by our disobedience.

Robert J. Matthews; as quoted in *The Book of Mormon: Alma, The Testimony of the Word*, ed. By Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate [Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 1992], 59.

50 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."

Dallin H. Oaks, "Nourishing the Spirit," *Ensign*, Dec. 1998, 10.

51 The first death, with all its attendant evils, has extended its ravages... since the first law was broken. If God, then, has fulfilled His work in the first provocation, to the very letter, why should any one suppose that He will not inflict the second death as a penalty of the second provocation?

Orson Pratt, *Journal of Discourses*, 1:330.

52 This is a reference to the refusal of the ancient Israelites, under Moses, to receive the further light and knowledge which the Lawgiver sought to give them, including the fullness of the blessings of the priesthood and thus the privilege of coming into the divine presence. And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest. And without the ordinances there, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh; for without this "the power of godliness" no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live. Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God; but they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence; therefore, the Lord in his wrath, for his anger was kindled against them, swore that they should not enter into his rest while in the wilderness, which rest is the fullness of his glory.)D&C 84:19-24; see also JST, Exodus 34:1-2; JST, Deuteronomy 10:1-2; Psalms 95:11; Hebrews 3:11.)

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millett, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987-1992], 3:92.

