

Three Accounts of Alma's Conversion

Key Scriptures Mosiah 27; Alma 36; 38

Explanation Alma's conversion is documented in three places in the Book of Mormon. This chart compares the rhetorical situation of each of these accounts and shows how the context of the situation may have in part determined the way Alma expressed his conversion story each time he told it. For example, Alma's initial account of his conversion (see Mosiah 27:7–37) is spontaneous and detailed, perhaps because it had just occurred and was still very vivid in his mind. In this account, he uses direct, antithetical parallelism to emphasize that the atonement had miraculously changed him from one former state into a new person.

Alma's account to his son Helaman (see Alma 36) is the longest and most elaborate. This is perhaps because Alma gave this account in a blessing to his first son. To emphasize his pivotal acceptance of Jesus Christ as the Savior—the turning point in his life—Alma expresses his conversion story in the form of an extended chiasm.

Alma's narrative account in Alma 38, given to his second son, Shiblon, is much shorter. Alma focuses on the mercy of Christ in this account and counsels Shiblon not to “boast” in his wisdom or strength. Though each account differs from the others, all were appropriate for the contexts in which they were given.

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	Mosiah 27:7–37	Alma 36:1–30	Alma 38:4–8
When	about 100 B.C. immediately after conversion	about 73 B.C. 27 years after conversion	about 73 B.C. 27 years after conversion
Told by	Alma and Mosiah	Alma	Alma
Audience	multitude of people	Helaman	Shiblon
Tone	spontaneous	deliberate	brief
Technique	antithetical parallelism	chiasmus	narrative
Feelings	snatched, redeemed	relief, exquisite joy	peace to my soul
Sphere	public	personal, spiritual	personal, moral
Length	long	medium long	short
Angel's Words	long quote (vv. 13–16)	short quote (v. 9)	no quote
Causal Forces	prayers of God's people	Alma's cry for mercy	God's mercy
Called on	not mentioned	Jesus, thou Son of God	the Lord Jesus Christ
Unique Parts	Alma's evil deeds detailed (vv. 8–10, 30) affirmation of God's power (v. 18) angel departed (v. 17) Alma carried before a multitude (vv. 19, 21) God's declaration of judgment on all (vv. 25–27) the redeemed become God's sons and daughters (v. 25) Alma persecuted as he preaches (v. 32)	Alma heard no more (v. 11); sons of Mosiah hear more	angel face to face (v. 7) God sent angel in mercy (v. 7)