

Chiasmus in Alma 36

Key Scripture Alma 36

Explanation In his blessing to his son Helaman, Alma uses chiasmus in recounting his conversion to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This chart illustrates the deep structure of Alma 36. Jesus Christ is the crux of the chiasm, just as he is the center of the gospel and the only means whereby salvation can be attained. The turning point in Alma's conversion was not the appearance of the angel or the fear of eternal banishment, but calling on the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Fittingly, Alma makes this spiritual turning point the literary focal point of this entire chapter, one of the finest examples of chiasmic composition anywhere in world literature.

Source John W. Welch, "A Masterpiece: Alma 36," in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 114–31.

Chiasmus in Alma 36

My son give ear to my *words* (v. 1)
 Keep the *commandments* and ye shall *prosper in the land* (v. 1)
 Do as I have done (v. 2)
 Remember the *captivity* of our fathers (v. 2)
 They were in *bondage* (v. 2)
 He surely did *deliver* them (v. 2)
 Trust in God (v. 3)
 Supported in *trials, troubles, and afflictions* (v. 3)
 Lifted up at the *last day* (v. 3)
 I know this not of myself but of *God* (v. 4)
 Born of *God* (v. 5)
 I sought to destroy the church (vv. 6–9)
 My *limbs* were paralyzed (v. 10)
 Fear of being in the *presence of God* (vv. 14–15)
 Pains of a damned soul (v. 16)
 Harrowed up by the *memory of sins* (v. 17)
 I remembered *Jesus Christ, a son of God* (v. 17)
 I cried, *Jesus Christ, son of God* (v. 18)
 Harrowed by the *memory of sins no more* (v. 19)
 Joy as exceeding as was the *pain* (v. 20)
 Long to be in the *presence of God* (v. 22)
 My *limbs* received strength again (v. 23)
 I labored to bring souls to repentance (v. 24)
 Born of *God* (v. 26)
 Therefore my *knowledge* is of *God* (v. 26)
 Supported under *trials, troubles, and afflictions* (v. 26)
 Trust in him (v. 27)
 He will *deliver* me (v. 27)
 And *raise me up at the last day* (v. 28)
 As God brought our fathers out of *bondage* and captivity (vv. 28–29)
 Retain a *remembrance of their captivity* (v. 29)
 Know as I do know (v. 30)
 Keep the *commandments* and ye shall *prosper in the land* (v. 30)
 This according to his *word* (v. 30)