

Lesson 33 - Sharing the Gospel with the World

Jonah and Micah

To encourage us to fulfill their responsibilities as latter-day Israel to love all the people of the world and share the blessings of the gospel with them.



My lessons take a different path than the Gospel Doctrine lesson manual. The lesson outline looks closer at the doctrinal topics included in the lesson purpose and scripture block. The lessons are designed to challenge mature, active Latter-Day Saints who have a solid Gospel foundation and are looking for insights into the scriptures that will broaden their faith and understanding.

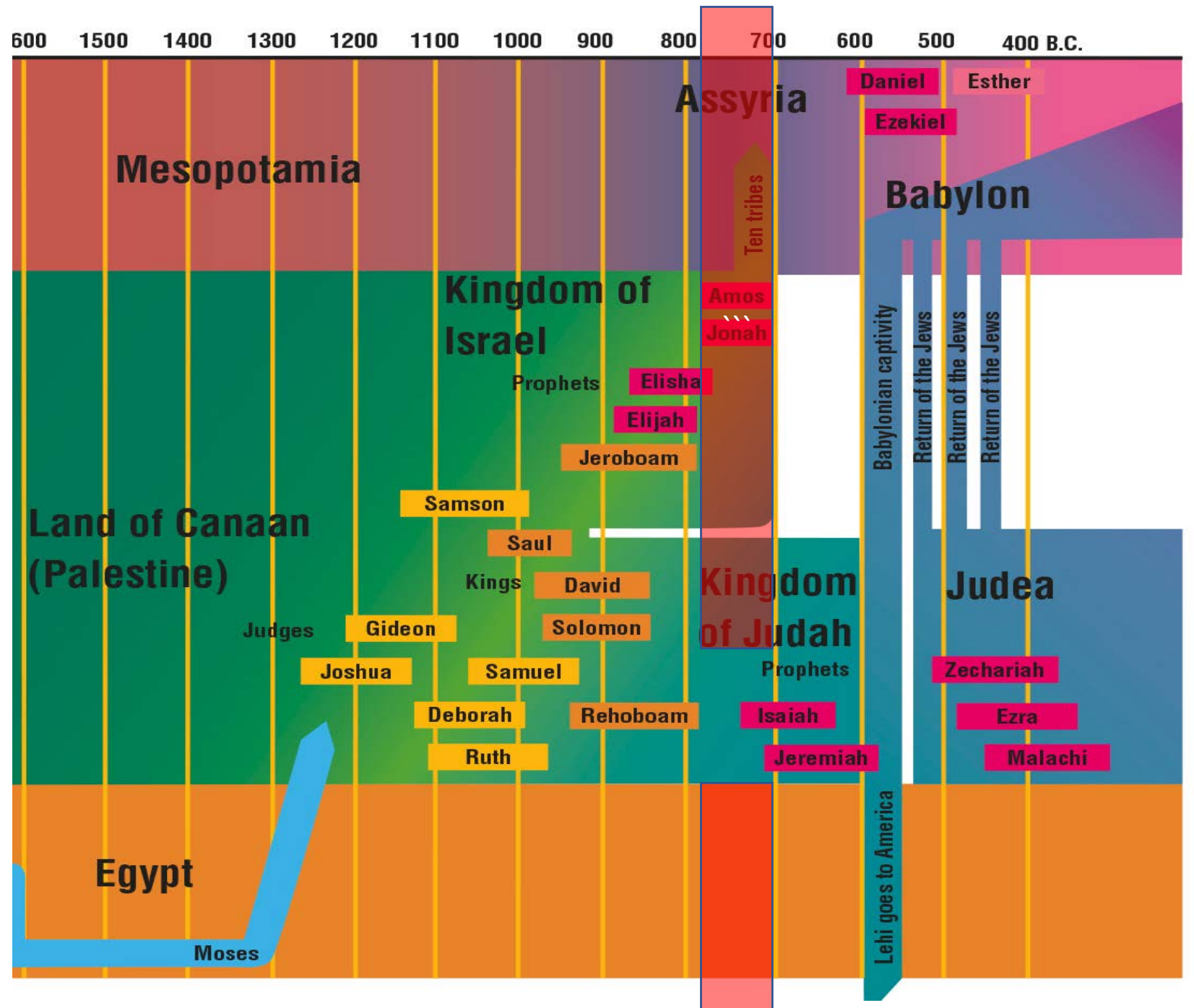
If you are interested in downloading the PowerPoint file, links to source material or reading posts about improving Gospel Doctrine class preparation, delivery and engagement, you can join my Facebook Group and have full access to the content posted there. The link is <https://www.facebook.com/groups/188904648521022/>

Last Week's Lesson Challenge

Last week's challenge was to consider what does it take to be grateful in adversity? Is it even possible to be grateful in adversity? It is possible to be grateful in adversity, it takes great faith that Jesus Christ loves us and will always be there to pick us up when we fall.

Would anyone like to share their thoughts about considering being more grateful in times of adversity?

Jonah and Micah



The book of Jonah is the only book in the Prophets section of the Old Testament that primarily records what happens to the prophet instead of recording his revelations and prophecies. Jonah most likely lived during the time Jeroboam II was king of Israel (about 793–753 B.C).

The key to the book is to be found in Jonah 3:10–4:11 in the reasons the prophet gives for his flight and unwillingness to preach at Nineveh. Jonah’s story opposes a narrowmindedness that would confine the love of God to a single nation. He shows that Jehovah reigns everywhere, over sea and land; even in the gentile world the minds of men are conscious of sin and prepared to acknowledge that Jehovah is God. The book is a beautiful poem, whether it paints the humanity of the gentile sailors; the mourning of the prophet over the decay of the grass of the field; or the divine tenderness in ministering to the prophet with his imperfect conceptions or in pitying the little children of Nineveh. The story of Jonah was referred to by our Lord on two occasions when He was asked for a sign from heaven. In each case He gave “the sign of the prophet Jonah,” the event in that prophet’s life being a foreshadowing of Jesus’ own death and resurrection (Matt. 12:39–41; 16:4; Luke 11:29–30).

Jonah's story is usually associated with being swallowed and living in a whale's belly for three days. However, the whale is not really Jonah's story. Jonah's story is about:

- Jonah is called by Jehovah to go to Nineveh to call the Assyrians to repentance.
- Jonah knows how evil the Assyrians are and assumes that if he goes to Nineveh, he will be tortured and killed.
- As we find in Chapter 4, in addition to his fear of the Assyrians, he also doesn't want to go to Nineveh because he doesn't believe they deserve Jehovah's love or repentance.
- Jonah believes that he can flee from Jehovah and his responsibilities and secures passage to Tarshish. Historically, Tarshish was thought to be in Spain. Recent archaeological finds makes scholars believe that Tarshish is the island of Sardinia.
- Either way, Jonah wants to get as far from Nineveh as his world will take him.
- Jonah finds a ship that sets out on the Mediterranean and soon is in a violent storm while Jonah sleeps. The gentile crew asks Jonah to pray to his god for safety.
- Jonah knows that Jehovah has caused the storm and tells the sailors to throw him overboard. They resist, but finally do so.
- Jehovah has prepared a "great fish" to swallow up Jonah from the sea.

Jonah's life and experiences, like Job's, provide a universal lesson similar to an allegory, and the application to all men is drawn from one man's actual experiences.

Jonah was a type of Christ in that he was in the belly of the whale—in “hell,” in his own words (Jonah 2:2)—just as Jesus was in the grave for three days, and then came forth again. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch showed that the significance of Jonah's story is broader than that:

“The mission of Jonah was a fact of symbolical and typical importance, which was intended not only to enlighten Israel as to the position of the Gentile world in relation to the kingdom of God, but also to typify the future adoption of such of the heathen, as should observe the word of God, into the fellowship of the salvation prepared in Israel for all nations.

Jonah Flees Jehovah Because He Doesn't Believe the People of Nineveh Should be Saved

The attitude of Israel towards the design of God to show mercy to the Gentiles and grant them salvation, is depicted in the way in which Jonah acts, when he receives the divine command, and when he goes to carry it out. Jonah tries to escape from the command to proclaim the word of God in Nineveh by flight to Tarshish, because he is displeased with the display of divine mercy to the great heathen world, and because, he is afraid lest the preaching of repentance should avert from Nineveh the destruction with which it is threatened. In this state of mind on the part of the prophet, there are reflected the feelings and the general state of mind of the Israelitish nation towards the Gentiles.

<https://www.lds.org/manual/old-testament-student-manual-kings-malachi/chapter-9?lang=eng>

The prejudice of the Jews against Gentiles both in Jonah's time and Jesus Christ's time, led them to believe that Gentiles were not worthy of Jehovah's love and Gospel. The Apostle Peter is shown in Acts 10:9-16 that the Gentiles shall receive the Gospel.

Can our feelings about our neighbors – whether they be across the street or across the world --, keep us from sharing Gospel of Jesus Christ with them?

Can we, like Jonah, find them unworthy of Heavenly Father's love?

Jonah 2:1-10

1 Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly,

2 And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.

3 For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.

4 Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.

5 The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.

6 I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God.

7 When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.

8 They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.

9 But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.

10 ¶ And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.



In Chapter 3, Jonah goes to Nineveh and preaches repentance. It seems as though the people readily accept Jonah's message, but it's likely that Jonah had to work to convert the people of Nineveh, including the King, to repent.

Jonah 4:1-11

1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

2 And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

3 Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.

4 ¶ Then said the Lord, Doest thou well to be angry?

5 So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.

6 And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.

7 But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.

8 And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.

9 And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.

10 Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:

11 And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

Chapter 4 is a beautiful lesson taught to Jonah by a loving Jehovah. It sounds like the Sermon on the Mount. Jonah had sinned, he repented and then worked diligently to convert the people of Nineveh. At the end, he questioned Jehovah's wisdom in allowing Nineveh to repent and not be destroyed as Jonah believed they should be.

Here Jonah demonstrated a second weakness, he pouted because the people did repent and God turned His wrath away. Jonah was so upset that he wished he were dead. Though he had repented of his desire to escape the call of the Lord and went to Nineveh, Jonah had not substantially changed his attitude toward the Gentiles.

The Lord taught Jonah in a way that he could understand that all things are in His hand—the gourd, the worm, even life itself. First, the Lord sent the dreaded east wind, which was very destructive, for it blew off the hot, dry Arabian Desert. Then the Lord caused the sun to beat upon Jonah, making him so uncomfortable that he wished for death. Once Jonah was in that position, the Lord was able to teach him the worth of souls in Nineveh. Because the thousands who lived in Nineveh were ignorant of the saving gospel principles, they could not fully “discern between their right hand and their left hand” (Jonah 4:11). Surely the Lord felt more pity for them than Jonah felt for the gourd. By means of this simple plant, the Lord taught Jonah about the way in which God loves all of His children.

Like Jonah, we all have prejudices that could stand in the way of our own spiritual growth and, more importantly, may stand in the way of spreading the Gospel in our neighborhood and around the world. Jonah teaches us two lessons.

First, there is no hiding from Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. They are everywhere and are a part of everything. Jonah thought he could find a place that he could hide from Jehovah. Do we believe we have places that we can also hide from the Lord? Does the darkness of a room, the remoteness of a place or the inner reaches of our own heart and mind allow us to hide from the Lord? While we know they don't, we act like they do.

Second, Jonah didn't believe that the people of Nineveh should receive Jehovah's love and forgiveness. Like most Jews of his time, he was prejudiced and believed that Jehovah's love and forgiveness was reserved for the Jews. Jehovah lovingly showed Jonah through the example of the gourd and the worm, that Jonah was wrong and that Jehovah loved all people equally, Jew and Gentile. God is no respecter of persons as Peter learned in the Book of Acts.

Are there people in our neighborhood that we secretly believe are unworthy of the Gospel in their lives? Are there people and nations around the world that we secretly believe are unworthy of the Gospel in their lives? It's easy to believe so, especially if we only secretly believe it. However, like Jonah and the story of the gourd and worm, it's not our believe to have or decision to make, it's Jesus Christ's. We have been told to go into all the world – next door or around the other side of the Earth – to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Do we need to repent, as Jonah did, to not secretly impede the work and glory of Heavenly Father?

This Week's Lesson Challenge

Consider your innermost feelings about your neighbors, who or wherever they may be. Is there even a shred of doubt that they are unworthy of Jesus Christ's love and forgiveness?

As members of Jesus Christ's church, we have accepted a commission to spread the Gospel. Consider what you should do to promote the missionary program of the Church across the street or around the world.