

Lesson 35: God Reveals His Secrets to His Prophets

Amos and Joel

Purpose: To teach us that in the latter days, the Lord reveals his secrets to his prophets and pours out his Spirit on all people.

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/>

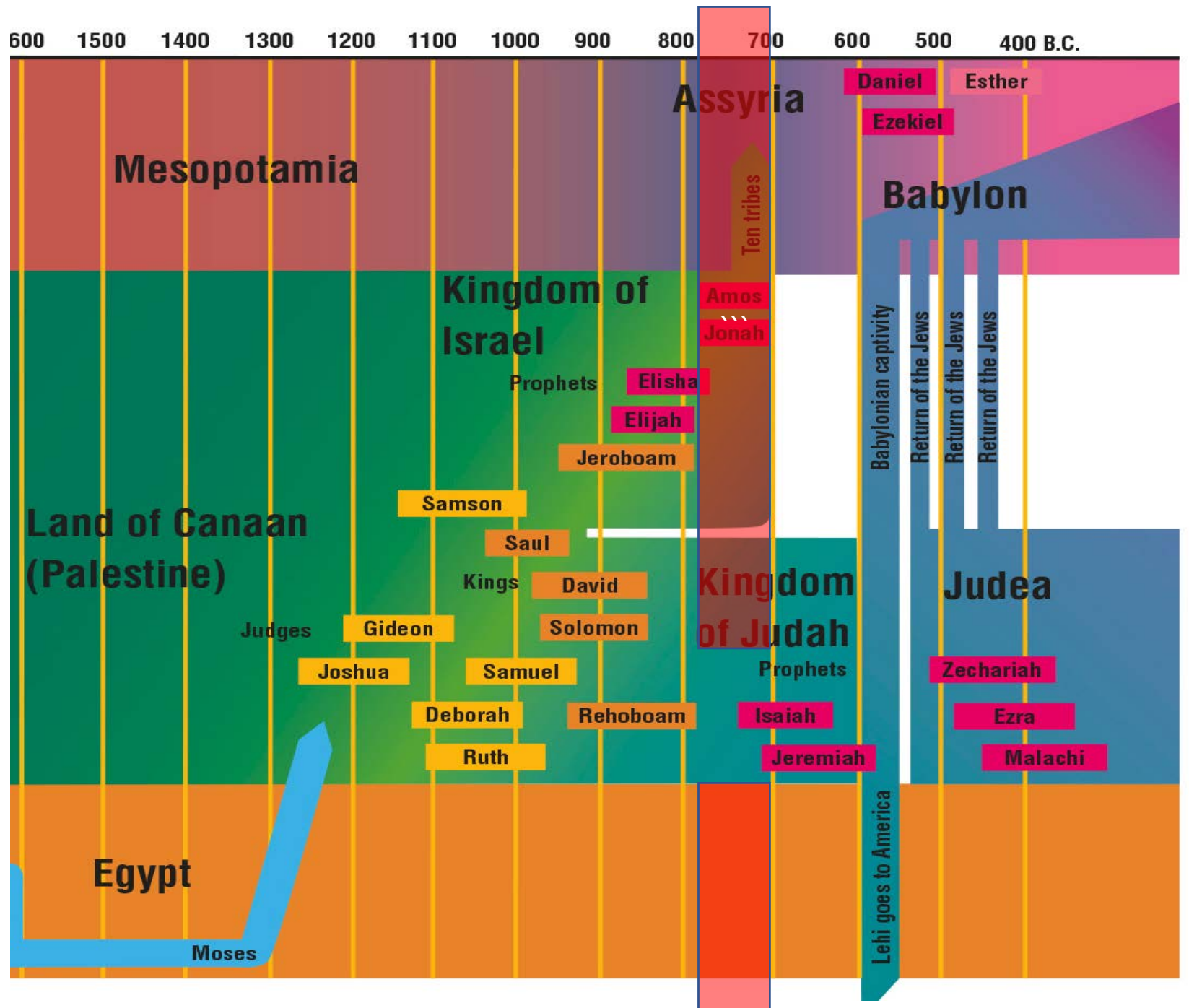
Last Week's Lesson Challenge

Last week's lesson challenge asked you to 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.

Would anyone like to share their thoughts over the past week on this?

Amos and Joel



Are Latter-day Saints unique among Christians in our belief in modern day prophets?

If so, why don't other Christians believe in modern day prophets?

Are Latter-day Saints unique among Christians in our belief in modern day prophets?

Modern apostles and prophets are a distinctive characteristic of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Church members view senior Church leaders — Joseph Smith, Brigham Young and the presidents of the Church that followed — as prophets of God in the same way they view Abraham, Moses, Isaiah and the apostles in the day of Jesus Christ. Russell M. Nelson is the current president and prophet of the Church.

Members believe The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a restoration of the Church originally established by Jesus Christ during His mortal lifetime. Part of that restoration includes living prophets and apostles.

Belief in prophets and apostles at the head of the Church does not mean that members blindly follow their leaders. While the prophet of God receives revelation and inspiration to guide the Church as a whole, revelation flows at every level, including to the leaders of congregations and to individual families and members. In fact, individual members are expected to seek that kind of divine guidance to help them in their own lives, in their responsibilities in the Church and even in temporal pursuits, including their occupations. Members are also expected to prayerfully seek their own “testimony” or conviction of the principles their leaders teach them.

<https://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/modern-prophets-and-continuing-revelation>

Articles of Faith 1:6

We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.

Different than the other Christian churches of the time, the Restoration of the Gospel included a restoration of priesthood offices that had been lost in the Great Apostasy including prophets and apostles. In an October 1963 General Conference address, then Elder Howard W. Hunter of the Quorum of the Twelve said the following about Joseph Smith's calling to be the first prophet of the Restored Church.

Many times the gospel has been given to the world through the prophets, and each time it has been lost because of disobedience. In the year 1820 the silence was broken, and the Lord again appeared to a prophet. This prophet, Joseph Smith, could testify of his own positive knowledge that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, a Resurrected Being, separate and distinct from the Father. He did not testify as to what he believed or what he or others thought or conjectured, but of what he knew. This knowledge came to him because God the Father and the Son appeared to him in person and spoke to him.

If so, why don't other Christians believe in modern day prophets?

These statements are taken from a mainstream Christian blogger about prophets today.

*“While all Christians have the ability to prophesy in the sense of speaking forth the truth, there was a group of church leaders in the apostolic church who functioned uniquely as prophets. They were apparently next to the apostles in the order of authority within the church. According to Scripture, the function of the prophets was to edify, console and exhort (Acts 15:32: 1 Corinthians 14:3). **There are no prophets today in the same sense as there were under the old covenant and in the apostolic church. Before the canon of Scripture was complete, God used prophets to maintain order and teach correct doctrine. After the canon was completed, however, prophecy began to be more of a problem than a help. Eventually, the office of prophet died out.**”*

*“Finally, if you look at the two functions of the prophets, you can see that the office of prophet is one that is no longer necessary and has ceased within the Church because the foundation was laid long ago and God’s revealed Word was completed with the close of the New Testament canon. **The Church’s foundation does not need to be laid again and there is no need for further revelation beyond what God has provided for us in His complete Word.**”*

<http://www.beliefnet.com/faiths/christianity/articles/modern-day-prophets.aspx>

The basic belief among mainstream Christian churches is that with the writing and publishing of the Bible, all need for prophecy from God ended. The text of the Bible would provide all that was necessary for humankind to address the challenges of modern day.

In many respects, mainstream Christian churches have substituted the Bible interpretations of men and women for Heavenly Father's prophets. As time has progressed over 2,000 years, Christianity has chosen to follow the interpretation of men and women to update the Bible to address modern challenges rather than prophets.

Why Study Amos? - The book of Amos records some of the prophecies and teachings that the prophet Amos delivered to the kingdom of Israel during the reign of King Jeroboam II. The people rejected Amos's warnings and teachings and wished he would take his forceful message elsewhere. By studying this book, you can gain a greater understanding of the critical role prophets perform in the Lord's work and a greater appreciation for the calling of prophets in our day.

What Are Some Distinctive Features of Amos? - The book of Amos places an emphasis on prophets. Amos explained that God uses prophets to do His work (Amos 3:7). Amos warned of the judgments that were about to come upon the people of Israel because they had rejected the prophets. Additionally, Amos emphasized "the moral character of Jehovah, the righteous ruler of all nations and men. Amos [showed] that the offering the Lord most cares for is a righteous life—the sacrifices of animals lose their meaning if offered as substitutes for personal righteousness.

Amos prophesied of a famine "of hearing the words of the Lord" (Amos 8:11). During this famine, people would "seek the word of the Lord"—the inspired and authoritative teachings of prophets—but would "not find it" (Amos 8:12). This prophecy was initially fulfilled following the apostasy of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. After the ministry of Malachi, more than 400 years passed without prophets ministering in the land of Israel. Amos's prophecy was also fulfilled at a later time. After Jesus Christ established His Church on the earth, it too eventually fell into apostasy. Revelation for guiding the Church ceased, and the people of the earth were not able to receive the word of God through prophets for more than 1,700 years.

<https://www.lds.org/manual/old-testament-study-guide-for-home-study-seminary-students-2015/introduction-to-amos?lang=eng>

Amos 3:1-8

1 Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying,

2 You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

3 Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

4 Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing?

5 Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all?

6 Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?

7 Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.

8 The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?

Amos :1-8 NIV

1 Hear this word, people of Israel, the word the Lord has spoken against you—against the whole family I brought up out of Egypt:

2 “You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins.”

3 Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?

4 Does a lion roar in the thicket when it has no prey? Does it growl in its den when it has caught nothing?

5 Does a bird swoop down to a trap on the ground when no bait is there?

Does a trap spring up from the ground if it has not caught anything?

6 When a trumpet sounds in a city, do not the people tremble? When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?

7 Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.

8 The lion has roared—who will not fear?

The Sovereign Lord has spoken—who can but prophesy?

In a language and form that was simple for even a rebellious Israel to understand, Amos prophesizes about the need for prophecy. Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so? Does a lion roar in the thicket when it has no prey? Does it growl in its den when it has caught nothing? Does a bird swoop down to a trap on the ground when no bait is there? Does a trap spring up from the ground if it has not caught anything? When a trumpet sounds in a city, do not the people tremble? When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?

Like the Savior's parables, these were all common events that they could understand and apply to their lives. Amos was telling them that Jehovah's prophets continuing to bring Jehovah's prophecies was just as common as these things and that even if they didn't like hearing it, Jehovah's prophets would continue to bring it.

In the March 2002 First Presidency Message, then President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, wrote on the subject, “Why Do We Need Prophets?”

“Because Heavenly Father loves His children, He has not left them to walk through this mortal life without direction and guidance. The teachings of our Heavenly Father are not the ordinary, predictable, run-of-the-mill kind you can pick up in paperback at the local bookstore. They are the wisdom of an all-powerful, all-knowing celestial Being who loves His children. Encompassed in His words is the secret of the ages—the key to happiness in this life and in the world to come.

Heavenly Father reveals this wisdom to His children on earth through His servants the prophets (see Amos 3:7). From the days of Adam, God has spoken to His children through appointed oracles who are charged with revealing His will and counsel to others. Prophets are inspired teachers and are always special witnesses of Jesus Christ (see D&C 107:23). Prophets speak not only to the people of their time, but they also speak to people throughout all time. Their voices echo through the centuries as a testament of God’s will to His children.

Today is not different from ages past. The Lord does not love the people of our day any less than in past times. One of the glorious messages of the Restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ is that God continues to speak to His children! He is not hidden in the heavens but speaks today as He did in ancient days.

Brothers and sisters, God does speak to us today. And He desires that all His children listen to and heed His voice. As we do so, the Lord will bless and uphold us greatly, both in this life and through the worlds to come.”

<https://www.lds.org/ensign/2012/03/why-do-we-need-prophets?lang=eng>

This Week's Lesson Challenge

We are fortunate to have a belief in living prophets who are led by Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and direct the affairs of the Restored Church in modern times.

This week, consider what it means to have a living prophet. What obligation do we have to listen to a living prophet? How can a living prophet help us in our daily lives? How can a living prophet help us strive for exaltation?