

Lesson 40 - “Enlarge the Place of Thy Tent”

Isaiah 54-65

Purpose: To encourage us to strengthen the stakes of Zion and prepare for the Second Coming and the Millennium.

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.

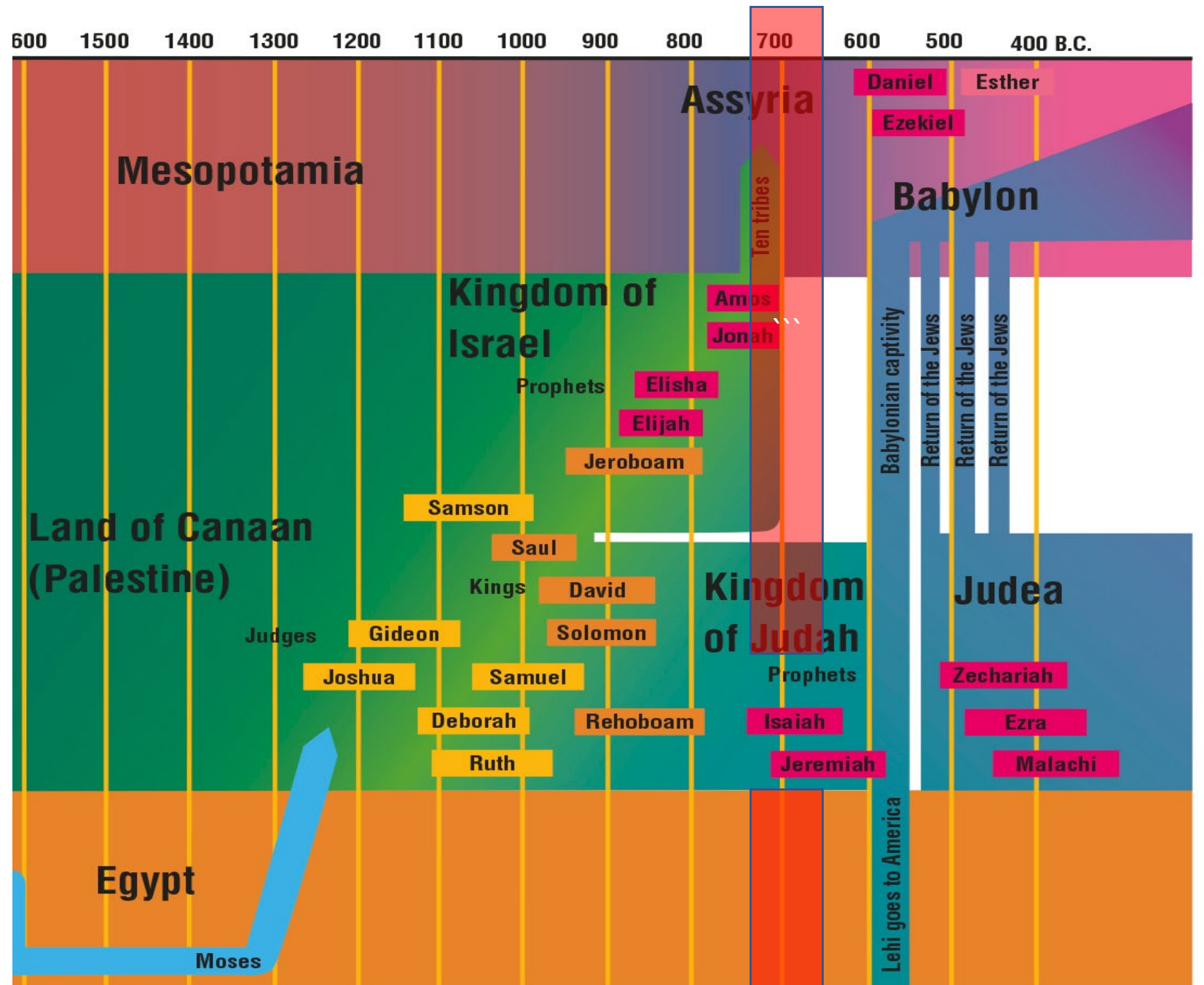
If you are interested in downloading the PowerPoint file, links to source material or reading posts about improving Gospel Doctrine class preparation, delivery and engagement, you can join my Facebook Group and have full access to the content posted there. The link is <https://www.facebook.com/groups/188904648521022/>

Last Week's Lesson Challenge

Last week's challenge was to again read Isaiah 50-53 and take the opportunity to listen to Handel's The Messiah and read along in Isaiah and experience the inspiration that Handel felt as he composed The Messiah in only 24 days. Also, the challenge was to gain a renewed faith in the Jesus Christ's atonement.

Would anyone wish to share their thoughts at this time?

Isaiah



We have reached our concluding Isaiah lesson. Do you feel that you know Isaiah better because of your study this year? Have you committed yourself to continuing your study of Isaiah as a part of your personal scripture study? Isaiah is not something you will understand and love if you only read it once every four years as part of Adult Sunday School. Are you ready to acknowledge the importance of Isaiah in our understanding of Jesus Christ and His Gospel?

The concluding chapters of Isaiah look at the establishment of Zion in the latter-days, in our time, as humankind begin to prepare for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, the Millennium, the final defeat of evil, the judgement of humankind and the establishment of the eternal degrees of glory. Isaiah had a lot to say about the “stakes of Zion” that would be established in the latter-days.

3 Nephi 22:1-9 (Jesus Christ Recites Isaiah 54 Before the Nephites)

1 And then shall that which is written come to pass: Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord.

2 Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes;

3 For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left, and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.

4 Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed; neither be thou confounded, for thou shalt not be put to shame; for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.

5 For thy maker, thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel—the God of the whole earth shall he be called.

6 For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.

7 For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee.

8 In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.

Once again the figure of a marriage is employed. Israel is called a barren wife because of her inability or unwillingness to produce spiritual offspring for the Lord. But in the end, when she is gathered once again, there will be more children from the “desolate,” or temporarily forsaken, wife than when she enjoyed her wedded status in ancient times (Isaiah 54:1). This being true, space must be found so that the latter-day “tent” of Zion can be expanded to accommodate them all. When one wishes to make a small tent larger, one must pull up the stakes and move to a further distance from the center pole. This is what is meant by lengthening the cords and strengthening the stakes. Israel’s latter-day growth through conversion and gathering is represented as breaking “forth on the right hand and on the left” (Isaiah 54:3).

In ancient times, the inability to bear children was considered a great curse by women of the Middle East. As a gathered “wife,” Israel will forget the shame or cast-off status of her earlier years and rejoice in her new and prosperous condition. She is once again “married” to the Lord (see vv. 4–5). The barren or forsaken years, though they seemed long, were but a small moment compared to the vast eternity that lies ahead (see vv. 6–8).

In the January 1991 Ensign, President Ezra Taft Benson said the following about stakes.

The term stake is a symbolic expression. Picture in your mind a great tent held up by cords extended to many stakes that are firmly secured in the ground. The prophets likened latter-day Zion to a great tent encompassing the earth. That tent was supported by cords fastened to stakes. Those stakes, of course, are various geographical organizations spread out over the earth. Presently, Israel is being gathered to the various stakes of Zion.

Each stake, presided over by three high priests and supported by twelve men known as a high council, becomes a miniature Church to the Saints in a specific geographic area. The purpose is to unify and perfect the members who live in those boundaries by extending to them the Church programs, the ordinances, and gospel instruction.

Stakes are to be a defense. They do this as stake members unify under their local priesthood officers and consecrate themselves to do their duty and keep their covenants. Those covenants, if kept, become a protection from error, evil, or calamity.

We only build temples in stakes. The blessings and ordinances of the temple prepare one for exaltation. Of course, it is not possible for every stake to have a temple, but we are presently witnessing some remarkable—yes, miraculous—developments in the building of temples in different parts of the world. Such a program permits members of the Church to receive the full blessings of the Lord.

With these purposes of stakes in mind, I want to discuss the responsibility stakehood places on members. Let me summarize. We must be a “light” of the gospel of Jesus Christ to others. The Savior commanded, “What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.” (3 Ne. 27:27.) We must seek for opportunities to share the gospel message with others. Member-missionary work is the key to the future growth of the Church, and it is one of the great keys to the individual growth of our members. We should do all we can to help prepare our sons and grandsons to serve missions. Each boy should have a mission savings account. Our homes should be places of refuge, love, and harmony. Under the direction of the father, each family should have prayers, gospel study, and family home evenings.

<https://www.lds.org/ensign/1991/01/strengthen-thy-stakes?lang=eng>

Isaiah 55:1-5

1 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

2 Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

3 Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

4 Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.

5 Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

Similar to His sermons during His earthly ministry, Jehovah talks to Judah about being thirsty and coming to the waters. Even those who have no money can come and buy and eat wine and milk with money for what Jehovah offers has no earthly price.

Do we work and earn for things that are of this world and not eternal things. Again, bread is used here not the bread of the earth that only gives physical nourishment, but the bread of life that gives spiritual and eternal nourishment.

All we need to do is listen and hearken and the everlasting covenant can be ours, the covenant that King David spoke about in Psalms 105:

8 He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations.

9 Which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac;

10 And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant:

Isaiah 56:1-8

1 Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.

2 Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.

3 ¶ Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree.

4 For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant;

5 Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.

6 Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant;

7 Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for fall people.

8 The Lord God which gathered the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather both to him, beside those that are gathered unto him.

Who Are the “Son of the Stranger” and the “Eunuch”? What Is Their Significance?

To understand Isaiah’s meaning in 56:1–8, one must understand the significance of three words and their meaning to ancient Israel. The words are Sabbath, strangers, and eunuchs.

Sabbath. Modern readers think only of Sunday, or the Lord’s day, as the Sabbath, but for ancient Israel Sabbath had a wider meaning. The weekly sabbath was only one of several days called the Sabbath. All of the feast days, including Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles, and the day of Atonement, were also called sabbaths. Thus, to “keep my sabbaths [plural]” (v. 4) implied a keeping of the whole law of Moses, since the various feasts covered many aspects of the Israelites’ commitment to God. Also, by revelation, the Lord told Moses that keeping the Sabbath was a sign of the covenant between Israel and God. When Isaiah talked about polluting the Sabbath, he meant far more than simply working or playing on Sunday.

Strangers. “A stranger in the Mosaic law, and in the Old Testament generally, means one not of Israelitish descent dwelling with the Hebrews, as distinguished from a foreigner temporarily visiting the land. The stranger was not a full citizen, yet he had recognized rights and duties. He was under the protection of God, and the Israelites were charged to treat him kindly.

Eunuchs. Under the Mosaic law, anyone who had been sexually mutilated was not allowed into full fellowship in the house of Israel (see Deuteronomy 23:1–2). The law was likely written because wholeness of body typified or symbolized spiritual wholeness. A priest or Levite who was a eunuch could not function in the priesthood offices (see Leviticus 21:17–23).

With an understanding of these three words, one can see the beauty of Isaiah’s promise given in Isaiah 56. Strangers (Gentiles) and eunuchs (those previously excluded from full fellowship with the covenant people, and who felt they could produce no fruit in the covenant, being “a dry tree” [v. 3]) would now find the full blessings of God extended to them if they kept the sabbaths (epitomizing the law of God). Not only will the “outcasts of Israel” (those who were scattered) be gathered in the last days, but so will “others” (v. 8). Whether one is a literal descendant of Israel will not matter as much as whether one will make and keep the covenant with God. In the age of restoration, the house of God will be “an house of prayer for all people” (v. 7; emphasis added).

What do these passages teach about the mercy of the Lord?

What do they teach about how we should view all of Heavenly Father's children?

The Apostle Peter was reminded of this when he saw a vision of forbidden foods he was told to eat. (Acts 10).

Do we need to be reminded that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ love all humankind equally and unconditionally.

[Isaiah 65:17-25](#)

17 ¶ For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

18 But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

19 And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.

20 There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.

21 And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.

22 They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

23 They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.

24 And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.

The closing chapters of Isaiah's record present a beautiful picture of the Millennium, the thousand-year period of peace that will be ushered in by the Savior's Second Coming.

The Lord will create new heavens and a new earth ([Isaiah 65:17](#)).

2. There will be great joy and no more weeping for the Lord's people ([Isaiah 65:18–19](#)).

3. People will not die young; they will live to be 100 years old ([Isaiah 65:20](#)).

4. People will enjoy the fruits of their own labors ([Isaiah 65:21–23](#)).

5. Prayers will be answered immediately ([Isaiah 65:24](#)).

6. There will be no enmity among beasts ([Isaiah 65:25](#)).

Has someone ever recommended a book to you? Did it make any difference *who* recommended it? Did the recommendation influence your feelings toward the book?

Ponder the following recommendation given the writings of Isaiah: “And now, behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah.” ([3 Nephi 23:1](#)).

This instruction was given by the Savior to the Nephites, but the commandment to “search these things diligently” forms a challenge that continues for us today. Isaiah had a wide perspective of God’s workings with His children. He understood the power and principles of the Zion society and saw their application for his day and for the future. While strengthening the spiritual of his own day, he prophesied of the establishment of Zion for those who would be called to carry it out.

<https://www.lds.org/manual/old-testament-student-manual-kings-malachi/chapter-17?lang=eng>

This Week's Lesson Challenge

Two challenges this week. First, consider Isaiah writings about extending our stakes. What is it we are asked to extend? What does it take for us to extend them?

Second, consider adding the Book of Isaiah to your ongoing scripture study program. Further consider what you will learn when you readily understand Isaiah's writings and what they can do to enlighten your eternal perspective.