

Lesson 41

“I Have Made Thee This Day ... an Iron Pillar”

Jeremiah Part 1

Purpose: To encourage us to remain faithful in times of opposition and adversity.

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/>

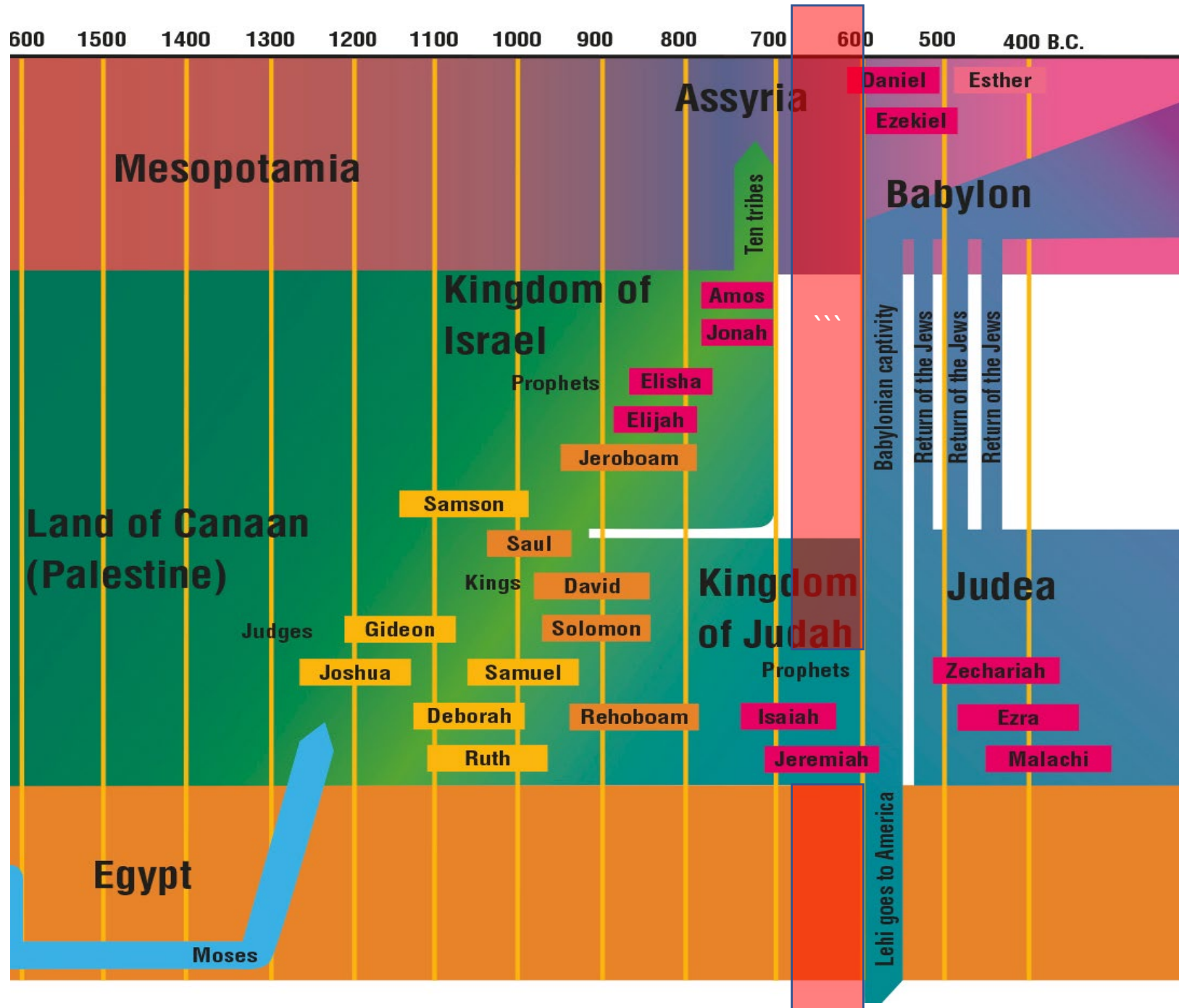
Last Week's Lesson Challenge

Two challenges last 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.

Would anyone wish to share their thoughts at this time?

Isaiah



Our study of the Book of Jeremiah will include two lessons.

Jeremiah was born of a priestly family in Anathoth, and prophesied from the 13th year of Josiah till after the downfall of Jerusalem, a period of over 40 years, 626–586 B.C. After Josiah's death he tried to stem, almost alone, the tide of idolatry and immorality, of self-deception founded on superficial reforms (Jer. 3:4–5; 7:8–10), and of fanatical confidence in the Lord's protection, in which all classes were carried away. He had to face continuous opposition and insult from the priests (20:2), the mob (26:8–9), his townsmen at Anathoth (11:19), the frivolous and cruel (22:13; 36:23; 26:20), the king (36:19), and the army (38:4). After the fall of Jerusalem the Jews who escaped into Egypt took Jeremiah with them as a kind of fetish (43:6), and at last, according to tradition, stoned him to death.

The Book of Mormon prophet Lehi was a contemporary of Jeremiah and the brass plates included some of Jeremiah's prophecies.

<https://www.lds.org/scriptures/bd/jeremiah?lang=eng>

It was Jeremiah's privilege (or burden) to predict and then live through the fall of Judah to Babylon. One of the first things the Lord told Jeremiah was, "I will hasten my word to perform it" (Jeremiah 1:12). Jeremiah, like Mormon, was called to labor among a people for whom there was no hope because they refused to repent, and "the day of grace was passed with them, both temporally and spiritually" (Mormon 2:15). Mormon, after witnessing the destruction of the Nephite nation, cried out for his people (see Mormon 6:17–19). Here was a righteous man, one of the best, lamenting over his people who were so blind, so foolish, so spiritually dead. Jeremiah, too, mourned his people's wickedness. You may think of Jeremiah as a harsh man as you read his scorching denunciations of the Jewish people and the lives they were living, but he was not. His motivation, like Mormon's, was love.

<https://www.lds.org/manual/old-testament-student-manual-kings-malachi/chapter-23?lang=eng>

Jeremiah 1:4-10

4 The word of the Lord came to me, saying,

5 “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

6 “Alas, Sovereign Lord,” I said, “I do not know how to speak; I am too young.”

7 But the Lord said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am too young.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you.

8 Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the Lord.

9 Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, “I have put my words in your mouth.

10 See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

Jeremiah 1:4–5 is a powerful proof of our premortal existence as individuals. The Lord certified to Jeremiah that his calling to a mission as a prophet unto the nations antedated his birth. The phrase “I knew thee” (Jeremiah 1:5) means more than a casual acquaintance. The Hebrew word *yada*, which is translated *knew*, connotes a very personal, intimate relationship. (See J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 145.) Indeed, Jeremiah’s premortal appointment consisted of being foreordained, sanctified, and sent forth (compare Abraham 3:23).

Jeremiah 1:6–10 shows Jeremiah, like others called by the Lord to such heavy and humbling assignments, expressed his feelings of inadequacy. Compare Jeremiah’s feelings with those of such others as Enoch (see Moses 6:31), Moses (see Exodus 4:10), and Gideon (see Judges 6:15).

In Jeremiah 1:9, the role of a prophet is succinctly set forth. A prophet does not necessarily say what he wants to say, for the Lord puts His own words into the mouth of the prophet. That is why it does not matter whether the word comes direct from God or through His servant: “it is the same” (D&C 1:38).

The purpose of this lesson is to encourage us to remain faithful in times of opposition and adversity. This life is a test of our faithfulness to Jesus Christ's Gospel. Like any other test, some times, like questions on a test, are harder than others. Learning how to have greater faith in Jesus Christ and withstand the more difficult times of opposition and adversity is a part of this life.

Jeremiah prophesied against great wickedness in Judah. He suffered because of it. Let's look at scriptural examples of adversities that Jeremiah faced and how he overcame them.

Jeremiah 20:1-6

1 Now Pashur the son of Immer the priest, who was also chief governor in the house of the Lord, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things.

2 Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the Lord.

3 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Pashur brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then said Jeremiah unto him, The Lord hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magor-missabib.

4 For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it: and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword.

5 Moreover I will deliver all the strength of this city, and all the labours thereof, and all the precious things thereof, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of their enemies, which shall spoil them, and take them, and carry them to Babylon.

6 And thou, Pashur, and all that dwell in thine house shall go into captivity: and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and shalt be buried there, thou, and all thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied lies.

Jeremiah 19:14–15 records Jeremiah’s standing in the court of the temple, again reminding the people of the troubles that lay ahead because of their wickedness. When Pashur, the chief overseer of the temple, heard of the incident, he had Jeremiah beaten and placed in stocks (Jeremiah 20: 1-6).

Stocks were an instrument of torture by which the body was forced into an unnatural position, much as the wooden stocks of medieval times confined parts of the body, such as the arms, legs, or head, by means of wooden beams that locked them into place.

Far from being cowed by this harsh treatment, Jeremiah used it as a further opportunity to teach. Pashur, in Hebrew, means “free.” Jeremiah, upon being released, told Pashur that the Lord had a different name for him. Jeremiah said that God had not called him Pashur, or “free,” but Magor-missabib, which means “fear on every side.”

Jeremiah 26:7-15

7 So the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the Lord.

8 ¶ Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die.

9 Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant? And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the Lord.

10 ¶ When the princes of Judah heard these things, then they came up from the king's house unto the house of the Lord, and sat down in the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house.

11 Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears.

12 ¶ Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard.

13 Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; and the Lord will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.

14 As for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you.

15 But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.

Jeremiah 38:4-15

4 Therefore the princes said unto the king, We beseech thee, let this man be put to death: for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt.

5 Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hand: for the king is not he that can do any thing against you.

6 Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire.

7 ¶ Now when Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs which was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon; the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin;

8 Ebed-melech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king, saying,

9 My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is: for there is no more bread in the city.

10 Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon, before he die.

11 So Ebed-melech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence old cast clouts and old rotten rags, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah.

12 And Ebed-melech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now these old cast clouts and rotten rags under thine armholes under the cords. And Jeremiah did so.

13 So they drew up Jeremiah with cords, and took him up out of the dungeon: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

These scriptures show us how Jeremiah continued to prophesy knowing that it would result in being beaten and imprisoned. Even suffering great physical pain, Jeremiah's faith never wavered.

We often face opposition and adversity. It's understandable that it's difficult to compare the faith that Jeremiah showed because he was Jehovah's prophet and had seen great things. Do we think the same things of today's prophets. Is it hard to compare what President Nelson or the Apostles say about overcoming adversity to the adversity that we face. Is it because their different? Do they know more? Because of their position, do they have more faith?

We can have the same amount of faith as Jeremiah or President Nelson. Our faith in Jesus Christ is not a matter of Church calling or experiences. It's based upon our belief that Jesus Christ loves us as much as any other person, no matter the rank, and that if we are obedient and we pray and ask, Jesus Christ will do whatever He believes is best for our eternal salvation. This life may always be hard, but to have real faith, we must have an eternal perspective in this life.



Jeremiah 2:9-13

9 ¶ Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the Lord, and with your children's children will I plead.

10 For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing.

11 Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.

12 Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord.

13 For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

Through Jeremiah, Jehovah condemned Judah because they had “changed their gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.” Judah traded faith themselves and material things for faith in Jehovah.

We can be guilty of the same thing. When we think that we no longer need to live by faith in Jesus Christ, when we turn a deaf ear to today's prophets, when we value the material parts of the world and not the spiritual, we too can be found guilty of “forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”

Overcoming adversity is made more difficult when we don't have a strong foundation of faith in Jesus Christ to fall back upon. Do you build your faith on sand or on rock? Do you place in your faith in the fountain of living waters, Jesus Christ, or in the material world, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

This Week's Lesson Challenge

Remember when you had a time of great opposition or adversity. Who did you fall back upon, yourself or faith in Jesus Christ?

This week's lesson challenge is to consider where your real heart lies before adversity comes again and consider what greater value a strong faith in Jesus Christ's redeemer power will have as you struggle.