

# Lesson 45 - “If I Perish, I Perish”

## Daniel and Esther

Purpose: To help us have the courage to live according to gospel standards.



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/>

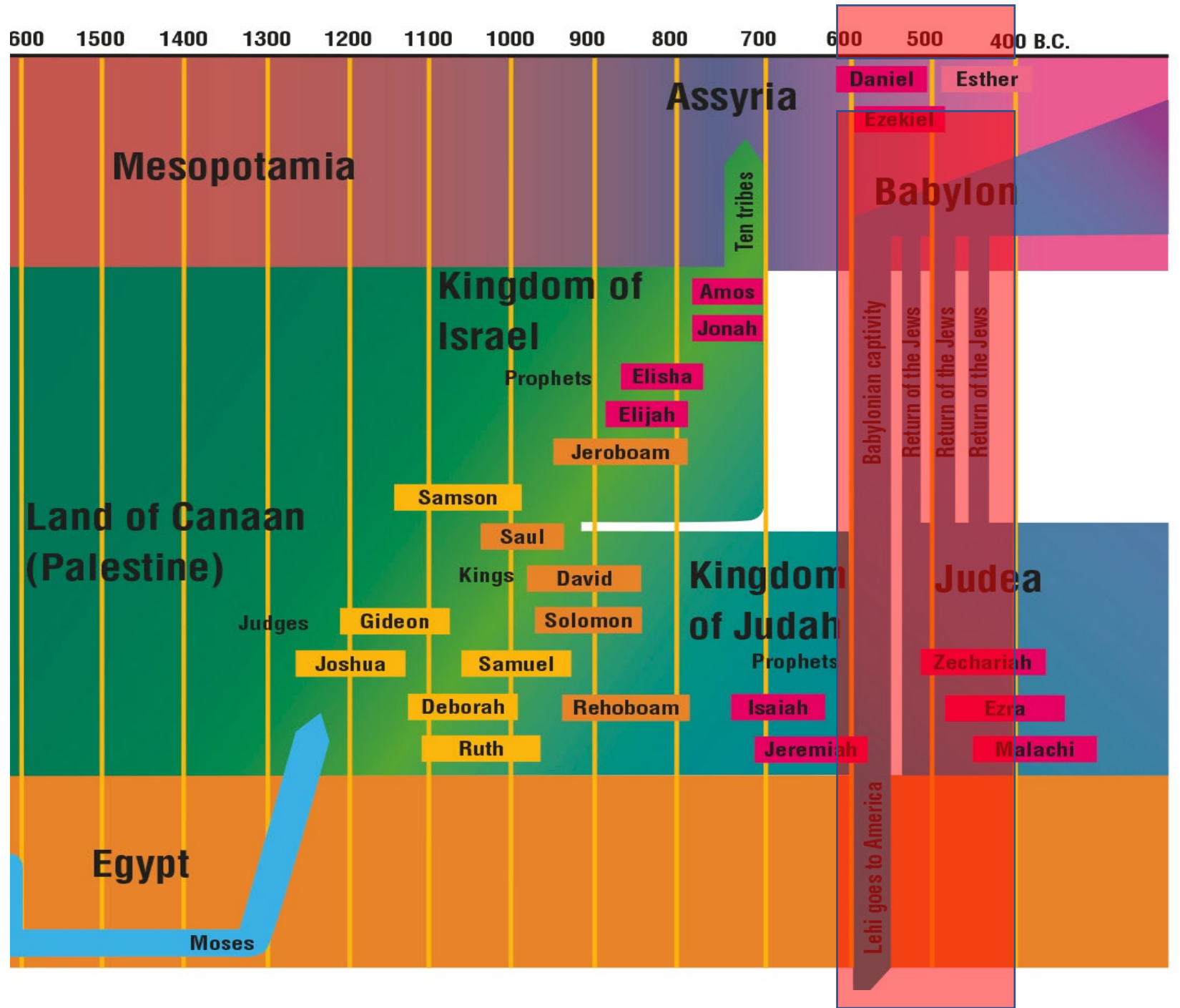
# Last Week's Lesson Challenge

Do we see the Gospel of Jesus Christ as waters that flow freely and multiply as they proceed forth from the east door of the temple. Is that too metaphorical?

Last week's challenge was to start to look at some of the difficult metaphors of the Old Testament prophets and see how better understanding them can enhance our belief in the vast ways that the Gospel of Jesus Christ can heal and uplift both ourselves and our loved ones.

Would anyone wish to share their thoughts at this time?

# Daniel and Esther



The stories of Daniel, his friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and Queen Esther are some of the best stories in the Old Testament. They occurred during the 70 years that the Jews are held in captivity in Babylon. Each of the stories illustrate on one hand, how some of the faithful Jews prospered during the Babylonian captivity and held positions of high rank in the Babylonian Court. However, many of the Court Babylonians they displaced despised them and sought to have them killed.

**Each of the stories illustrate that the actions made through faith and obedience in the Gospel of Jesus Christ may place these individuals in mortal jeopardy, but ultimately their faith and obedience is rewarded and they are saved.**

**It is important to point out that while faith and obedience are requisite in receiving God's blessings, there is no promise that, in mortality, we will be saved, prospered or even live a comfortable life.** We come to mortality to be tested and for many, the tests are severe, sometimes even cruel to some. Many ask the question, why do bad things happen to good people.

While it is difficult in mortality to maintain an eternal perspective, that is a large part of the test of faith and obedience. We are here in mortality, not to succeed in mortality, but to succeed in eternal life.

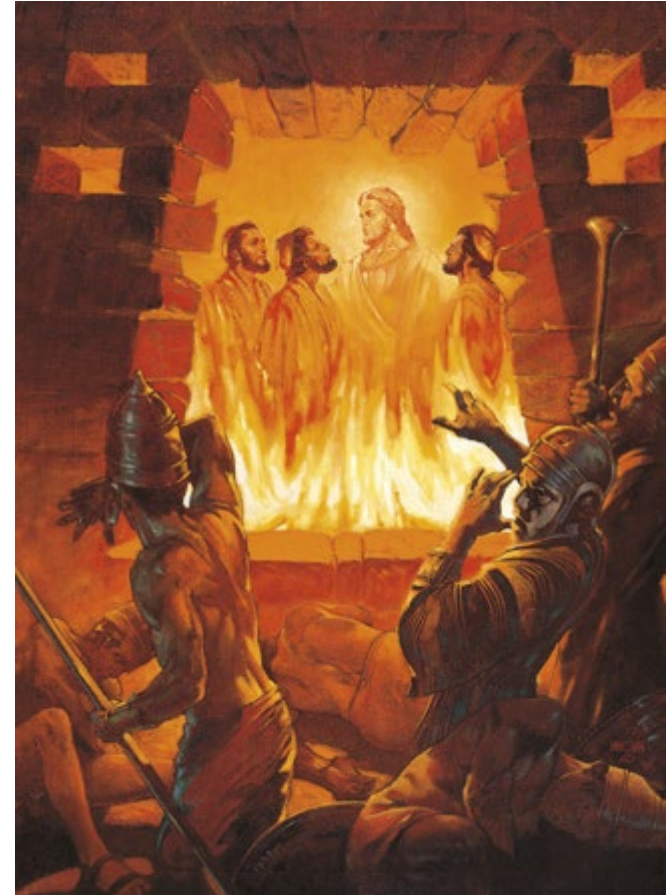
Daniel 1 tells the story of Daniel and his friends, his friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and (1) how they came to Babylon, (2) their importance in the King's Court and (3) how they were rewarded for continuing the Law of Moses dietary laws in Babylon.

- Daniel and his friends were taken from Jerusalem to Babylon and trained and educated in the King's Court. These young Jews were intelligent, educated, wise and thoughtful about how they lived. They were examples of the type of young men that the King wanted around him.
- As part of their upbringing in the Court, they were to be given the "king's meat and wine" that the King believed would make them strong.
- Daniel and his friends knew that the King's meat and wine was either not from animals that the Law of Moses' dietary laws would allow them to eat or was not properly prepared as the Law of Moses dictated.
- Daniel had endeared himself to the man who was charged with their education and care. When Daniel told him that eating the King's meat was against their beliefs, the man was concerned that they would look unhealthy and that he would be killed for not doing his job.
- Daniel asked the man to allow them to eat pulse, a food made of grains and seeds, and allow them to do that for 10 days. Then, the man would compare the health of Daniel and his friends with non-Jews in the Court who ate the King's meat. Daniel said that if they don't look healthier then the man could do with them as he needed to. The man consented because he favored Daniel.
- At the end of the 10 days, Daniel and his friends were healthier than the others. The man stopped giving the others the king's meat and wine and they all ate pulse.
- Eventually, Daniel and his friends were brought before the King where they prospered .
- They became some of the King's most trusted advisors.



Daniel 3 tells the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, Daniel's friends and, by this time, advisors to the King of Babylon.

- King Nebuchadnezzar had an image of gold made that was unveiled in an elaborate ceremony. It was decreed that from that time forth, each time the sounds of music were played, all in Babylon should bow to the image of gold.
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were powerful men in Babylon and some of the King's men were jealous. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego would not bow to the image of gold, because to them, it was idol worship, something the Law of Moses forbade them to do. These men told the King about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego and he was very angry with them. He exacted the penalty of being thrown in a fiery furnace to punish them.
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were taken to the fiery furnace and thrown in. The furnace was so hot that the men who put them in it died by getting near to it.
- Soon after the three were thrown in the fiery furnace, some must have told the King that they were still in the fiery furnace and walking around.
- When the King came he sees four people in the fiery furnace, loose and walking around.
- 26 ¶ Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, came forth of the midst of the fire.
- Everyone there was amazed and the King praised God who hath sent his angel and made a decree that no harm shall come to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego under penalty of death.



In Daniel 6, we find events some time later where Darius is King and Daniel serves him. Daniel was the president of group of 120 princes that ran Babylon on a day by day basis.

- Those who served under Daniel were jealous and tricked King Darius into signing a decree that if anyone “shall ask a petition of God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.
- Daniel, knowing that the decree against prayer had been signed, went to his room and in front of an open window, prayer to God.
- Those who conspired against Daniel went to the King and forced him to punish Daniel. The King was angry with himself for being fooled.
- The King summoned Daniel as said to him, “Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.”
- That night the King went to his room and worried about his friend Daniel. The next morning the King went to the lion’s den and call out to Daniel saying Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? “ Daniel then said to the King “O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.”
- In retribution, the King took those who had accused Daniel and fooled the King and cast them and their families into the lion’s den where they were not saved.



# Esther

Esther's beauty was such that it could catch and hold the eye of an oriental emperor accustomed to being surrounded by loveliness. Combined with physical charms were qualities of spirit that revealed that she had inward beauty as well. The qualities were loyalty, love, and dedication. Submissive yet courageous, yielding yet faithful, she was able to avert the intent of evil individuals determined to destroy her people. Indeed, she saved God's covenant people from an intended extinction.

The story of Esther is sacred to the Jews and compelling to all because of her dauntless defense of her convictions and her people. Her name, in the Persian tongue, means "a star"; the many meanings of that symbol are most fitting.

<https://www.lds.org/manual/old-testament-student-manual-kings-malachi/chapter-31?lang=eng>





Esther was a Jew who lived in Babylon during the later part of the captivity. She was a great beauty. Babylon's queen had refused to join the King in a celebration and was deposed as queen.

King Ahasuerus sought for a new queen. Mordecai was an official in the king's palace and was Esther's uncle who had raised her. When the call came for young women of beauty to present themselves before the Court, Mordecai brought Esther. The King loved Esther and took her for his new wife.

A court official named Haman, was made the King's first minister. As Haman walked around the palace, everyone would bow before him, everyone except Mordecai. Haman was insulted and very angry. Haman decided that he would not only kill Mordecai, but would kill all the Jews in Babylon that Mordecai represented.

Haman convinced the king that the Jews were not faithful to the king and set aside a day when all the Jews would be killed.

It was not known to the King or Haman, that Queen Esther was a Jew.

As told in Esther Chapter 4, Queen Esther learns of the plot to kill the Jews and summons Mordecai. Mordecai explains to her what has happened and what is going to be done. Esther sends a message to Mordecai.

### Esther 4:11-17

11 All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.

12 And they told to Mordecai Esther's words.

13 Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.

14 For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

15 ¶ Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer,

16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.

17 So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

## Esther 5:1-9

1 Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house.

2 And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre.

3 Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.

4 And Esther answered, If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him.

5 Then the king said, Cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther hath said. So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

6 ¶ And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed.

7 Then answered Esther, and said, My petition and my request is;

8 If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do to morrow as the king hath said.

9 ¶ Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai.

In Esther 6, the story broadens with the King being restless at night and while awake was reading from his court history and read about Mordecai telling the king about two of his chamberlains that wanted to kill the king. He asked one of his servants, what honor did we bestow upon Mordecai for his help in saving the king and he was told no honor had been bestowed.

The King asked which of his ministers was in the court and he was told that Haman was because he had something that he wanted to talk to the King about. The thing that Haman wanted to talk about was hanging Mordecai as he had already built a gallows to hang Mordecai upon.

The King asks Haman what should I do to honor someone. Haman believes that the King is talking about him and proposes an elaborate honor including royal apparel, riding the king's horse, wearing the king's crown and doing all the things that Haman hoped the king would do for him.

The King replied, excellent idea. Now do all those things for Mordecai.

Haman did as he was told and honored Mordecai as the King had asked and went home and mourned and vowed to hang Mordecai. At that time, the King's chamberlains come to bring Haman to Esther's banquet.

## Esther 7

1 So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen.

2 And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom.

3 Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request:

4 For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage.

5 ¶ Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?

6 And Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen.

7 ¶ And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath went into the palace garden: and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king.

8 Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther was. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.

9 And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon.

10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.

## **Esther 9:17–32. The Festival of Purim**

The pur (plural purim), or lots, Haman used (see Esther 3:7) to determine the day of destruction for the Jews were now viewed by the Jews as a great blessing. The fact that the lot had fallen on a day some distance into the future allowed Esther and Mordecai time to save the people. In celebration of this great deliverance, the Jews initiated a new festival which is still observed among them to this day. It is called Purim for the lots cast by Haman and is a festival of great joy. A modern Jewish writer described its celebration:

“Purim is the nearest thing Judaism has to a carnival. It is another full-moon celebration, falling on the fourteenth of Adar, usually in February or March. The origin of the holy day is in the Book of Esther. The occasion is, of course, the famous deliverance of the Persian Jews from their oppressor, Haman. ...

“Beyond this gaiety, it carries four religious obligations: to hear the Megillah (the Scroll of Esther) read, to distribute largesse to the poor, to make a feast, and to exchange presents with neighbors and friends. This last institution is Shalakh Manos, the Sending of Gifts: things that can be eaten and drunk the same day.”

Mordecai's situation is parallel in some ways to that in which modern followers of Jesus find themselves. For Mordecai, Babylon was a physical reality. He was forced to function in the midst of an alien society. Today, Babylon, or the world, is a spiritual reality. The standards of the modern world are increasingly alien to the values held by the disciples of the Savior. The challenge is to keep the values intact and yet find ways, as did Mordecai, to be of service both to society and to Christ. Mordecai could not have done what he did if he had compromised his standards. Because he had prepared himself and was willing to become involved, he eventually became the chief minister of the king.

“Anne Morrow Lindbergh, in her book *Gift from the Sea*, says: ‘My life cannot implement in action all the demands of all the people to whom my heart responds.’ You will care for more things than you will be able to do things about. Wise selection of causes is one of the highest forms of the use of free agency that there is, and, really, one of the ways God tests our basic wisdom and our capacity to love.” (Neal A. Maxwell, speech delivered at Catalina Young Adult Conference, 23 Oct. 1972.)

<https://www.lds.org/manual/old-testament-student-manual-kings-malachi/chapter-31?lang=eng>

## **This Week's Lesson Challenge**

It's likely that our faith and belief in Jesus Christ will not have to withstand the same degree of challenge that Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego and Esther had to face. However, small subtle things happen every day in our lives that test of faith and belief.

As you go about your week, think about the little challenges that you face and how you react to them. A lifetime of little challenges has the same eternal consequences as a single challenge as we find in Daniel and Esther.