

October 19–25: Jeremiah 1–3; 7; 16–18; 20, “Before I Formed Thee in the Belly I Knew Thee”

Life in the Time of Jeremiah

Recall from a previous reading assignment that the Assyrians had captured the Northern Kingdom and were threatening the Southern Kingdom. King Hezekiah sought and followed the counsel of Isaiah, and the Lord delivered Jerusalem from the Assyrians.

Jeremiah’s time as a prophet was a significant period in the history of Judah. His ministry spanned the reign of Judah’s last righteous king, Josiah, the grandson of Hezekiah, through the Babylonian captivity of the Jews and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

627 BC: Jeremiah is called by God to be a prophet. Josiah, age 21, has been king of Judah for 13 years.

Josiah heeds Jeremiah’s words and begins repairing the temple. He renews the covenant between the Lord and the people of Israel and restores the celebration of the Passover.

612 BC: The Fall of the Assyrian Empire

The fall of the Assyrian Empire created a power vacuum in the region, leading to a struggle among Egypt, Babylon, and other regional powers to control the territory and influence that Assyria had once held.

609 BC: The Death of Josiah

Josiah dies in battle against the Egyptians. After his death, all three of Josiah’s sons would eventually become king. All three were wicked kings, and the period of renewed righteousness that Josiah had ushered in quickly came to an end.

608 BC: Jehoahaz Becomes King

Jehoahaz, Josiah’s second son, is anointed king of Judah. Three months later, Pharaoh Neco of Egypt takes him captive and installs his older brother, Jehoiakim, as a puppet king. Judah is forced to pay a heavy tribute to Egypt.

605 BC: Babylon Rises to Power

Nebuchadnezzar takes control of Syria and Israel, shifting Judah’s allegiance from Egypt to Babylon. Judah is now required to pay a heavy tribute to the Babylonians.

601 BC: Babylon Defeats Egypt

Babylon defeats Egypt and gains control over much of the region. However, the Babylonian army suffers heavy losses in the battle. Seeing an opportunity to resist Babylon's weakened position, Judah stops paying its annual tribute.

597 BC: Nebuchadnezzar's First Siege of Jerusalem

Nebuchadnezzar lays siege to Jerusalem for the first time. Jehoiakim, Josiah's son, dies during the siege. Jehoiachin, Josiah's grandson, is anointed king of Judah. When Jerusalem is captured, Jehoiachin is taken captive to Babylon, along with approximately 10,000 Israelites. The treasures of the temple and the royal palace are taken to Babylon.

Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's uncle and Josiah's third son, is installed as a puppet king under Babylonian rule.

The Book of Mormon begins during the reign of King Zedekiah:

1 Nephi 1:4

"...in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah."

It is interesting to note that while the Jewish nation was experiencing a period of great decline, the Nephite civilization was just beginning. As one nation was approaching its destruction, another civilization was being established in the Americas.

587 BC: The Destruction of Jerusalem

Zedekiah revolts against Babylonian rule. Nebuchadnezzar responds by laying siege to Jerusalem, which lasts approximately a year and a half. When the Babylonian forces breach the walls, they capture and destroy Jerusalem, including the temple, leaving the city in ruins. Zedekiah's sons are killed, and Zedekiah is taken captive.

Except for Mulek, who was either an infant or unborn at the time.

570 BC: Jeremiah dies while in captivity in Egypt.

Jeremiah's Calling

Jer 1:4-5

4 Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

What does this passage teach us about God's knowledge of us before our mortal birth?

(I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet)

Joseph Smith

“Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of Heaven before this world was”. (TPJS, pg. 365)

Wendy Nelson

“I've seen [President Nelson] be clear about doctrine. I've seen him become younger. I've seen him become happier because he's doing what he came to earth to do.... He was foreordained to be the prophet of God on the earth today.”

“I have seen him changing in the last ten months. It is as though he's been unleashed. He's free to finally do what he came to earth to do.”
(mormonnewsroom.org, Oct 30, 2018)

Jeremiah expresses his weaknesses and the Lord promises to support and uplift him

Jer 1:6-10

6 Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.

7 ¶ But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

8 Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord.

9 Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy 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.

What responsibilities did the Lord give Jeremiah as His prophet?

(arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee

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)

Jer 1:17-19

17 ¶ Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them.

18 For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land.

19 And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee.

What did the Lord promise Jeremiah to help him fulfill his calling despite the

opposition he would face?

(I am with thee to deliver thee
I have put my words in thy mouth
I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen
walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah)

Jeremiah Calls Judah to Repentance

Jeremiah uses a parable to illustrate the wickedness of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms.

Jer 3:6-11

6 ¶ The Lord said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot.
7 And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it.
8 And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.
9 And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks.
10 And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the Lord.
11 And the Lord said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah.

What does Jeremiah liken Judah's wickedness to, and what had happened to the Northern Kingdom because of similar wickedness?

(and there hath played the harlot
her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also)

- Under the Law of Moses, a man could divorce his wife for such unfaithfulness. In certain circumstances, she could even be put to death by stoning.
- In this parable, the Northern Kingdom had already been "put away," while Judah had not yet been rejected, even though she was guilty of similar unfaithfulness.

Heber J. Grant

"By the laws of Moses, adulterers were stoned to death. God said to Israel: 'There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel...' (Deut 23:17). When God, through Jeremiah, chastened Israel for apostasy, He pictured her loathsomeness by calling her a harlot." (CR, Oct. 1942)

He uses the analogy of a marred vessel that the potter must reshape and remake.

Jer 18:1-6

1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying,

2 Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.

3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.

4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.

5 Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying,

6 O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.

What does the analogy of the potter and the clay teach us about the Lord's ability to shape and remake His people?

(the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter)

Heber C. Kimball

"There are many vessels that are destroyed after they have been moulded and shaped. Why? Because they are not contented with the shape the potter has given them, but straightaway put themselves into a shape to please themselves; therefore they are beyond understanding what God designs, and they destroy themselves by the power of their own agency. [These people] have to go through a great many modelings and shapes, then... have to be glazed and burned; and even in the burning, some vessels crack". (Heber C. Kimball: Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer, Stanley B. Kimball, pg. 270)

Jeremiah boldly confronts Judah regarding the wickedness they have committed.

Jer 2:12-13

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.

What two evils did the Lord say His people had committed, as represented by the fountain of living waters and the broken cisterns?

(they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water)

Bruce R. McConkie

"Israel forsook Jehovah, from whom living waters flow, and worshipped other gods. Israel no longer drank the living water, which, if men drink, they

shall never thirst more. Rather she made her own churches, her own cisterns —‘broken cisterns,’ false churches—which can hold none of the waters of life. (The Millennial Messiah: The Second Coming of the Son of Man, pg. 187)

Jeremiah promises the people that they can avoid the destruction that awaits them if they obey one very important commandment:

Jer 17:21-25

21 Thus saith the Lord; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem;

22 Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the sabbath day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers.

23 But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction.

24 And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto me, saith the Lord, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the sabbath day, but hallow the sabbath day, to do no work therein;

25 Then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain for ever.

What does the Lord’s promise to Judah teach us about the importance of keeping the Sabbath day holy?

(hallow ye the sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers
if ye diligently hearken unto me... but hallow the sabbath day... the men of Judah,... and this city shall remain for ever)

Bruce R. McConkie

“The Sabbath is the haven of life. Our conduct on all days is influenced by what we do on the Lord’s day. Ancient Israel received this command: ‘Bear no burden on the sabbath day.... Hallow ye the sabbath day.’ That is: ‘Rest from your labors, and worship the Lord.’ Had they done so, the Lord would have preserved their kingdom forever (Jeremiah 17:20-27). Similarly, if we would keep the Sabbath, the Lord would bless and prosper us beyond anything we have ever known.” (A New Witness for the Articles of Faith, pg. 301)

Gathering of Israel

Like the other prophets of his time, Jeremiah saw little hope for Israel in his day. Yet, they looked forward with hope and rejoiced in the Israel of the latter days. Let’s read some of Jeremiah’s teachings concerning our day.

Jer 3:12-15

12 ¶ Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou

backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever.

13 Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord.

14 Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:

15 And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

What does Jeremiah reveal about how the Lord will gather His people to Zion in the last days?

(I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion)

What does the Lord promise to provide Israel to teach them and give them “knowledge and understanding”?

(And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding)

Gordon B. Hinckley

“We think of our brothers and sisters in distant lands. We have met hundreds of thousands of you, have looked into your faces, have felt of your spirits. You are so very precious to this work. The Lord has gathered you ‘one of a city, and two of a family,’ as prophesied by Jeremiah. He is teaching you with pastors after His own heart. We pray for you, we visit you, we respect and admire you, we love you. We are all part of a great family.” (CR, Oct. 1998)

After the latter-day gathering there will be things sacred to ancient Israel that will no longer be relevant

Jer 3:16-19

16 And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more.

17 At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.

18 In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.

19 But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call me, My father;

and shalt not turn away from me.

What will characterize the worship of God's people when they are gathered and united in Jerusalem?

(in those days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind)

Roy L. Huntington

“Building faith among latter-day Israel will not depend upon constant visual signs as it did in ancient times. God consistently reminded Moses’s people of His divine presence and redeeming love through miracles and visual signs.... In contrast, Jeremiah made clear that in the last days ‘they shall say no more, the ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind...’. The ark of the covenant was a representation of God’s presence and power. Modern Israel, however, will not need the physical presence of the ark to remind them of God. Instead,... modern Israel will remember God through their ordinances, their covenants, and the voice of God’s Spirit.” (“Jeremiah and the New paradigm of the Gathering,” Religious Educator 9, no. 2 (2008): 83–90)

Jer 16:14-16

14 ¶ Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;
15 But, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers.
16 ¶ Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.

What does the Lord's comparison to the Exodus teach us about the significance of the latter-day gathering of Israel?

(The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them)

LeGrand Richards

“Just contemplate that statement for a few moments. Think how the Jews and the Christians all through these past centuries have praised the Lord for his great hand of deliverance under the hands of Moses when he led Israel out of captivity, and yet here comes Jeremiah with this word of the holy prophet, telling us that in the latter days they shall no more remember that, but how God has gathered scattered Israel from the lands whither he had driven them....”

“The Prophet Joseph Smith received the truth and sent the messengers out to

share it with the world. Thus have they gone out, fishing and hunting, and gathering them from the hills and the mountains, and the holes in the rocks. I think that is more literal than some of us think!” (CR, April, 1971)