

Before I Formed Thee



Jeremiah 1:1–5 · This week: Before I Formed Thee in the Belly I Knew Thee, Jeremiah 1–3; 7; 16–18; 20

In the manual: **Come, Follow Me lesson 43, “Before I Formed Thee in the Belly I Knew Thee,” on Gospel Library**

START

Before Jeremiah was born, the Lord already knew him. “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee” (Jeremiah 1:5).

READ TOGETHER

Jeremiah was the son of a priest from Anathoth, a small town near Jerusalem (Jeremiah 1:1). The Lord called him in the days of King Josiah, more than 600 years before Christ (Jeremiah 1:2).

JEREMIAH 1:4–5

⁴Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, ⁵Before 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 IT TEACHES

Verse 5 uses three verbs. The Lord knew Jeremiah, sanctified him, and ordained him, all before his birth. To be sanctified is to be set apart for a holy purpose.

Jeremiah was one of many. The Lord showed Abraham the spirits of many noble and great ones before the world was made. He told Abraham that he was one of them, chosen before he was born (Abraham 3:22–23).

Jesus Christ was chosen first of all. Peter wrote that he “was foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1 Peter 1:19–20). He knew his mission before he came, and he helps each of us find ours.

President Russell M. Nelson taught the same truth about each of us. “Your Heavenly Father has known you for a very long time.”

President Russell M. Nelson, “Decisions for Eternity,” General conference, October 2013

TALK ABOUT IT

What does it mean to you that Heavenly Father knew you before you were born? How could remembering it change a hard day?

TAKE TO CHURCH

The Lord knew Jeremiah before he was born and had work for him to do. He knew each of us too, and he has work for us.

Words in Thy Mouth



Jeremiah 1:6–19 · This week: Before I Formed Thee in the Belly I Knew Thee, Jeremiah 1–3; 7; 16–18; 20

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START

When the Lord called him, Jeremiah objected. “Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child” (Jeremiah 1:6).

READ TOGETHER

The Hebrew word Jeremiah used for child can mean a boy or a young man. He felt too young and too unskilled to speak for God.

JEREMIAH 1:7–10

⁷But 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. ⁸Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD. ⁹Then 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. ¹⁰See, 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 IT TEACHES

The Lord told him not to say he was a child. He promised, “Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee.” Then he touched Jeremiah’s mouth and said, “Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth” (verses 7 to 9).

Verse 10 lists Jeremiah’s work. Four of the six verbs are about tearing down, and two are about building and planting. A prophet warns people

away from what will hurt them so that something better can grow.

Next the Lord showed him the branch of an almond tree (verse 11). The almond is the first tree to blossom in Israel’s spring, and in Hebrew its name sounds like the word for watching. The Lord then said, “I will hasten my word to perform it.” In Hebrew, the word translated “hasten” is that word for watching. Like the almond awake in late winter, the Lord is awake and watching over his word.

The Lord still calls prophets and apostles and puts his words in their mouths. Earlier this month, at general conference, we heard them testify of Jesus Christ.

TALK ABOUT IT

When have you felt too young or too unsure to do something the Lord asked? What helped, or what might help next time?

TAKE TO CHURCH

The Lord answered a young prophet’s fear with a promise, “I am with thee.” He makes the same promise to young people he calls today.

Broken Cisterns



Jeremiah 2:11–13; 17:5–13 · This week: Before I Formed Thee in the Belly I Knew Thee, Jeremiah 1–3; 7; 16–18; 20

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START

Jeremiah asks us to picture two ways to get water. One is a spring that never stops flowing. The other is a cracked tank dug into the rock.

READ TOGETHER

In the dry hills of Judah, people cut cisterns, or tanks, into the rock to catch rainwater. A cracked cistern leaked, and whatever water stayed in it went stale. Water from a spring was called living water, because it kept moving.

JEREMIAH 2:13

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.

JEREMIAH 17:7–8

⁷ Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. ⁸ For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

WHAT IT TEACHES

In Jeremiah 2:13, the Lord says his people did two wrong things. They left him, “the fountain of living waters,” and they dug their own cisterns, “broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” Their idols took hard work and gave nothing back.

Jesus used the same picture with a Samaritan woman at a well. He told her the water he gives becomes “a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:10–14). He is the fountain Jeremiah described.

Jeremiah 17:5–6 compares a person who trusts only in people to a scrub bush in a salt desert. Verses 7 and 8 compare a person who trusts the Lord to a tree planted by a river. Its roots reach the water, so its leaves stay green in the heat, and it keeps bearing fruit in a dry year. A few verses later, Jeremiah calls the Lord “the fountain of living waters” a second time (Jeremiah 17:13).

TALK ABOUT IT

What are some “broken cisterns” people dig today, things that take a lot of work and still leave them thirsty? What helps you drink from the Savior’s living water?

TAKE TO CHURCH

Jeremiah called the Lord “the fountain of living waters.” Everything else we dig for ourselves leaks, and his water never runs out.

The Temple Gate



Jeremiah 7:1–23 · This week: Before I Formed Thee in the Belly I Knew Thee, Jeremiah 1–3; 7; 16–18; 20

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START

The Lord sent Jeremiah to stand in the gate of the temple and preach to everyone coming in to worship (Jeremiah 7:2).

READ TOGETHER

Many people in Jerusalem believed the temple would keep the city safe no matter how they lived. They repeated, “The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these” (Jeremiah 7:4).

JEREMIAH 7:3–5

³Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. ⁴Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these. ⁵For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour;

JEREMIAH 7:11

¹¹Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD.

WHAT IT TEACHES

The Lord called those words “lying words” (verse 4). He cared how the people treated each other. In verses 5 and 6, he asks them to deal fairly with their neighbors and to stop oppressing the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.

Then he asks, “Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes?” (verse 11). Robbers hide in a den between crimes. Some people were treating the temple as a hiding place, as if going there made up for how they lived the rest of the week.

More than 600 years later, Jesus drove the moneychangers out of the temple. He quoted Isaiah, “My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer,” and then Jeremiah, “but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Mark 11:15–17).

Verse 23 says what the Lord wanted from the start. “Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.” The Lord’s house blesses us most when we bring him a heart that is trying to follow him every day.

TALK ABOUT IT

**What does it look like to worship the Lord at school, at work, or at home?
How can our family carry the way we act at church into the rest of the week?**

TAKE TO CHURCH

Jesus quoted Jeremiah when he cleared the temple. The Lord’s house is for people who are trying to follow him every day of the week.

Fishers and Hunters



Jeremiah 3:14–18; 16:14–21 · This week: Before I Formed Thee in the Belly I Knew Thee, Jeremiah 1–3; 7; 16–18; 20

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START

Jeremiah said a day would come when Israel would stop calling the Exodus the greatest rescue in their history (Jeremiah 16:14–15).

READ TOGETHER

For centuries, Israel remembered the Lord as the God who brought them out of Egypt. Jeremiah saw a greater gathering ahead, from the land of the north and from every land where they had been scattered.

JEREMIAH 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.

JEREMIAH 3:14–15

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 IT TEACHES

Verse 16 tells how the Lord would gather them. He would send many fishers, and after them many hunters to search every mountain and hill and the “holes of the rocks.” Jesus called fishermen to follow him and

promised to make them “fishers of men” (Matthew 4:18–19).

President Russell M. Nelson saw these verses fulfilled in missionary work. “In many nations our missionaries have searched for those of scattered Israel; they have hunted for them ‘out of the holes of the rocks’; and they have fished for them as in ancient days.”

President Russell M. Nelson, “The Gathering of Scattered Israel,” General conference, October 2006

Jeremiah 3:14 shows the gathering happening one person at a time. “I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion.” Many families in the Church today began with one person who listened. Verse 15 promises shepherds after the Lord’s own heart to feed the people who come.

The gathering is to Jesus Christ. People are gathered when they come to him and make covenants with him. Some come through a missionary or a friend, and some through temple work done for them after they die.

TALK ABOUT IT

How did the gospel come to our family, one person at a time? Who might the Lord want us to invite this month?

TAKE TO CHURCH

Jeremiah saw a gathering bigger than the Exodus, one of a city and two of a family. Every missionary and every friend who invites helps the Lord gather.

The Potter's House



Jeremiah 18:1–6 · This week: Before I Formed Thee in the Belly I Knew Thee, Jeremiah 1–3; 7; 16–18; 20

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START

The Lord sent Jeremiah to a potter's workshop to watch him work (Jeremiah 18:1–3).

READ TOGETHER

A potter shapes wet clay on a spinning wheel. If the pot goes wrong, he can press the clay back into a lump and start over, as long as it is still wet.

JEREMIAH 18:3–6

³Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. ⁴And 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.

⁵Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁶O 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 IT TEACHES

In verse 4, the pot was “marred in the hand of the potter.” The potter kept the clay. “He made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.”

Then the Lord says, “as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand” (verse

6). Our mistakes can mar us. When we repent, Jesus Christ takes the same clay and makes something good of it.

Clay has to stay soft to be shaped. In the next chapter, Jeremiah smashes a hardened clay jar in front of the city's elders, a vessel “that cannot be made whole again” (Jeremiah 19:10–11). Soft clay can be reshaped. A heart stays soft through prayer, humility, and a willingness to change.

TALK ABOUT IT

What helps a heart stay soft, so the Lord can shape it? When have you seen the Lord make something good out of a mistake?

TAKE TO CHURCH

When a pot was marred, the potter kept the clay and made it again. The Lord does the same with us when we stay soft in his hands.

Fire in My Bones



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START

Jeremiah once decided to quit. He told himself he would never speak in the Lord’s name again (Jeremiah 20:9).

READ TOGETHER

A priest named Pashur had Jeremiah beaten and locked overnight in the stocks by a temple gate (Jeremiah 20:1–3). People mocked him every day (Jeremiah 20:7–8).

JEREMIAH 20:9

⁹Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.

JEREMIAH 20:11

¹¹But the LORD is with me as a mighty terrible one: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper: their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten.

WHAT IT TEACHES

He could not keep quiet for long. “His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.” To forbear is to hold back. Holding back the Lord’s word wore him out.

Two disciples felt a fire like that on the evening Jesus rose from the dead. After he walked with

them and opened the scriptures to them, they said, “Did not our heart burn within us?” (Luke 24:32). In our day the Lord told Oliver Cowdery that when something was right, he would cause Oliver’s bosom to burn within him (Doctrine and Covenants 9:8).

Verse 11 shows where Jeremiah’s courage came from. “The Lord is with me as a mighty terrible one.” Here *terrible* means awesome and strong. Two verses later he is singing praise (Jeremiah 20:13).

Right after that, in verse 14, he is low again. Even prophets have hard days. The fire stayed with him through all of them.

TALK ABOUT IT

When have you felt the Spirit burn in your heart about the Savior or the scriptures? What do you know is true that you could share at church today?

TAKE TO CHURCH

Jeremiah tried to keep quiet, and the Lord’s word burned like fire in his bones. A testimony grows stronger when we share it.