



“I Will Turn Their Mourning Into Joy”

Show Notes & Transcripts

Podcast General Description:

Follow Him: A *Come, Follow Me* Podcast with Hank Smith & John Bytheway

Do you ever feel that preparing for your weekly *Come, Follow Me* lesson falls short? Join hosts Hank Smith and John Bytheway as they interview experts to make your study for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ *Come, Follow Me* course not only enjoyable but original and educational. If you are looking for resources to make your study fresh, faithful, and fun--no matter your age--then join us every Friday and Saturday.

Podcast Episode Descriptions:

Part 1:

What does *The Wizard of Oz* have in common with the Book of Jeremiah? Dr. S. Michael Wilcox explores the themes of longing, loss, and redemption.

Part 2:

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox continues to examine the themes in Jeremiah and Lamentations.

Timecodes:

Part 1

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- 02:26 Dr. Wilcox tour information
- 02:55 Jeremiah’s call
- 05:12 The Greek myth of Cassandra
- 07:13 Jeremiah is a political prophet
- 08:14 Dr. Wilcox shares a personal story of running cattle
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Part 2

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- 09:18 Jeremiah asks the remaining Israelites to follow one thing in the law of Moses
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- 39:18 Dr. Wilcox shares a personal story involving Jeremiah and the love of God

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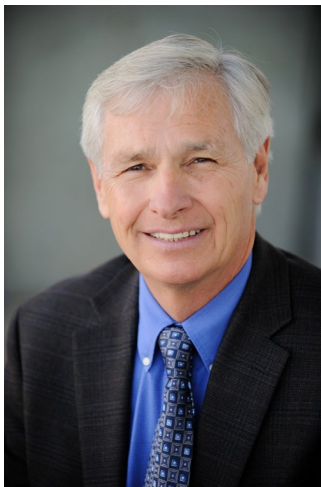
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Biographical Information:



S. Michael Wilcox received his PhD from the University of Colorado and taught for many years at the LDS Institute of Religion adjacent to the University of Utah. He has spoken to packed crowds at BYU Education Week and has hosted tours to the Holy Land, to China, to Church history sites, and beyond. He has served in a variety of callings, including as bishop and counselor in a stake presidency. He has written many articles and books, including *House of Glory*, *Sunset*, *10 Great Souls I Want to Meet in Heaven*, *Twice Blessed*, and *Finding Hope*. He and his late wife, Laurie, are the parents of five children.

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Hank Smith:	00:00:01	Welcome to FollowHIM, a weekly podcast dedicated to helping individuals and families with their Come Follow Me study. I'm Hank Smith.
John Bytheway:	00:00:09	And I'm John Bytheway.
Hank Smith:	00:00:11	We love to learn.
John Bytheway:	00:00:11	We love to laugh.
Hank Smith:	00:00:13	We want to learn and laugh with you.
John Bytheway:	00:00:15	As together we follow Him.
Hank Smith:	00:00:20	Hello, my friends. Welcome to another episode of FollowHIM. My name is Hank Smith, I'm your host. I'm here with my co-host who I will describe as turning my morning into joy. Now, let me explain this, John. John, you turn my morning into joy because we usually record our podcast in the morning, and I sit down, I get ready, and when I see your face here to record, it turns my morning into joy. Now, that's not what the Lord meant here in Jeremiah. Morning is spelled a little different, but I just had to say thank you for turning my mornings into joy.
John Bytheway:	00:00:54	Hank, I've got my improve appearance slider all the way to the right. It's taxing my laptop to the max, but-
Hank Smith:	00:01:02	The fan is really cooking this really cooking this morning. Hey, we are in the book of Jeremiah and Lamentations this morning, John. Who is joining us today?
John Bytheway:	00:01:13	Well, I'm so happy to have Dr. Michael Wilcox back again, S. Michael Wilcox, whom we've had before. And our audience loves Brother Wilcox, and we do too. A quick introduction. Mike Wilcox received his PhD from the University of Colorado and taught for many years at the Institute of Religion adjacent to the University of Utah. He's spoken to crowds at Education Week, has hosted tours to the Holy Land, to China, to church history

sites and beyond. He also served in a variety of callings including bishop, counselor in a stake presidency. He's written many articles and books including House of Glory, Sunset, 10 Great Souls I Want to Meet in Heaven, Twice Blessed, Finding Hope.

- John Bytheway: 00:01:55 He and his late wife, Laurie, are the parents of five children and 14 grandchildren. And I'm reading this introduction out of, I think this might be your latest book, Holding On. And the subtitle is Impulses to leave and strategies to stay. This was published in 2021. And we're just really glad to have you back and excited to have you help us through Jeremiah.
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:02:20 Thank you. Appreciate being here. It's always fun. Can't think of two people I'd rather chat with about scriptures.
- John Bytheway: 00:02:26 Oh, that's so nice.
- Hank Smith: 00:02:28 Mike, you find yourself doing a lot of tours and traveling. If one of our listeners wanted to go on a tour with you or go traveling with you, how do they look that up?
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:02:36 I always travel with a company called Fun for Less Tours, and we go all over the world.
- Hank Smith: 00:02:43 How do you want to jump into Jeremiah today, Mike? We're in the second half of Jeremiah and this book, Lamentations. We're not as familiar with it as we have been with the book of Isaiah that we've been studying for so long. How would you want to approach this?
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:02:55 There's a lot to try and cover. And nice thing about Jeremiah, we know a little bit more about his life than we know about the life of Isaiah. But maybe a couple of stories that will give the feel, the thematic power of Jeremiah. Just see this image up in heaven of God's got four, five men lined up he's going to call in to be prophets. We know from Jeremiah, the first part, you would've talked about that last week, God knew him.
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:03:25 There's Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Daniel, Lehi, they're all standing there. And Jeremiah's last in line. And the Lord says to Isaiah, "Well, I'm going to give you this great gift of poetry, and you're going to write some of the most beautiful prophecies and descriptions of God. People will study you forever. You'll be a little confusing to some of them. And you'll get to work with Hezekiah, one of the great kings."

- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:03:52 And Isaiah says, "Well, thank you. I appreciate that." And then Lehi, "Well, Lehi, I'm going to give you a whole new world. Now, you'll have to wander in the wilderness for a while, and you're going to have a couple of sons that will give you fits and a broken heart. But I'm going to give you two other wonderful sons that'll be prophets. And you'll have a promise land." And Lehi says, "Okay, that's good." "Ezekiel, Daniel, you're going to be carried captive. But Daniel, you'll be in the court, you'll be counselors to kings. You'll have a lovely little time in a lion's pit. Other than that, life's going to be pretty good for you."
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:04:29 And then Jeremiah steps up, and the Lord says, "Well, now, Jeremiah, nobody is going to believe anything you ever say to them. They're going to persecute you. They're going to drop you in pits. They're going to put you in the stocks. No matter how many times you're right, they're not going to listen to you. And eventually, they'll haul you into Egypt, and then there they'll kill you."
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:04:56 I just feel a little bit bad for Jeremiah assignment wise. He gets a pretty tough assignment and we learn quite a bit about prophets and the soul of a prophet. When I read Jeremiah, I think about the soul of a prophet.
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:05:12 There's a Greek myth that would fit Jeremiah really, really well. And it's the myth of a woman, she's named Cassandra. Cassandra is the daughter of the king of Troy during the Trojan War. She was loved by the God, Apollo. The Greek gods were always falling in love with mortal women. And in order to try and gain favor with her, he gives her the gift of prophecy, that she will always be able to see the future and be correct in what she sees in the future.
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:05:50 But Cassandra still resists, after he's given her the gift, his amorous advances. And so in anger and frustration, Apollo says, "Well, I can't take the gift back, Gods can't take gifts back, but I will add a curse to it. And the curse is that nobody will ever believe any prophecy that you give."
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:06:15 All through Cassandra's life, she's constantly correct in everything that she says, but nobody ever believes her. For instance, when the Greeks leave the Trojan horse to be pulled into Troy, it's Cassandra that says, "No, this is going to be the end." But of course, nobody ever believes her.
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:06:37 In a sense, Jeremiah is the Cassandra of the Old Testament. He's right again and again and again. He gives comforting things. He has some major themes. He's a political prophet. His major

messages certainly towards the latter half of the book of Jeremiah to the court: "Don't fight the Babylonians. Submit to the Babylonians. Don't fight them, and you'll be all right."

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:07:13

They take some of the people captive. Ezekiel goes captive, Daniel and Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego go captive into Babylon. But Jeremiah's message is, "You can't fight the Babylonians. You can't win. Trust in God. Just submit to them." Which is a political message, not a very popular political message, but that's his message. And since he's a Cassandra, nobody's going to believe him. They will make alliances with the Egyptians hoping that the Egyptians can save them. And as a result of that, they'll be destroyed, the temple will be destroyed. Jeremiah is a very political prophet. Sometimes people don't like religious people fiddling with politics. It can be good and bad. Now, his second theme has to do... Since they're going to be carried away captive, you have to have hope. Always, the Old Testament prophets have hope. They always give hope. There is forgiveness, as the lesson title is, the mourning will be turned to joy.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:08:20

The second is that they will return. And that return has a lot of fulfillments; they'll be built back up again. And we can talk about three or four different ways that that fulfillment comes in Jeremiah's second major message regarding gathering them back, returning to the land.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:08:41

I used to run cattle when I was a boy, and we were branding one time. And we used to separate the calves and the cows from the bulls and the steers after we branded. And I had just pushed the calves with their mothers up through a fence, up a little slope, and we'd kept the steers and the bulls in the corral. One of the bulls, a little anxious that his harem was being taken away from him, broke through the corral and started lumbering up the hill.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:09:07

And my uncle, whom I idolized... He was the major male of my life. I had never disobeyed my uncle. We were about 100 yards away, and he yelled at me, "Head the bull, Mike, head the bull." I started turning my horse down the hill. Now, the smart thing to do would've been just to stay at the gate, not let him get through, but this was my John Wayne hero moment. I'm going to stop this rampaging bull who's lumbering up the hill towards me. And so I got my horse going about as fast as you could get going down that hill.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:09:44

As I went down, I could see my uncle at the bottom of the hill just frantically waving his hands back and forth and yelling, "No,

Mike, no. Go back to the gate. No, no, don't come down the hill." And I saw my cousins. There was always a little bit of a one-sided competition between me and my cousins for being real cowboys. And I thought he thought I couldn't do it. And he was sending my cousins, because they were getting on their horses to come after the bull. And I was determined to get to that bull first so I ignored my uncle. For the first time in my life, I disobeyed and I just got that horse going down that hill as fast as I could with my uncle waving, "No, Mike, no. Stop."

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:10:33

Now, my uncle wasn't worried about me proving that I could stop a bull, but he knew with the sage brush and the rocks and the slope of the hill that anybody running a horse that fast down that kind of hill was liable to roll the horse. He was worried about my neck and being seriously injured. But I'm John Wayne smelling sage and the wind blowing my hat off, and I'm going down the hill full bore. And I did roll the horse. And all of a sudden, I couldn't get my foot out of the stirrup and I'm slammed to the ground, and the horse rolls over me and slams me to the ground and rolls over me. And when, stop, the horse was lying on me. And I'm sitting there, and I can remember out of the corner of my eye seeing my uncle on those bow legs that he had running up the hill to pick up the pieces.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:11:28

Because of that, I've gave myself a little phrase to remind myself, and I've tried to teach my children in classes the phrase old eyes see best. Old eyes see best. They're experienced. And as young people whose eyesight may not always be as good, we do call prophets seers. They're seers. They see things.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:11:54

And my vision of Jeremiah, in one sense, I like him as a Cassandra. He's also at the bottom of the hill waving at the children of Israel. "No, don't do this. Don't rebel against the Babylonians. Don't trust the Egyptians. Trust God. Don't keep on this destructive path." And it's not just they're relying on the Egyptians and rejecting Babylon's yoke for a while, it's they're worshiping false gods and listening to the wrong voices, and they're riding down the hill for a fall.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:12:30

That is one way of looking at some of the thematic elements of what Jeremiah is. And he's the Cassandra of the Old Testament. The people are ignoring him. He's the uncle at the foot of the hill waving, trying to stop disaster. And he doesn't turn away after disaster comes and say, "Well, you stupid people, I told you so." He will weep. And that's what Lamentations is all about. That's one way of looking at Jeremiah.

- John Bytheway: 00:13:02 I'm still wondering what happens to a young man with a horse on top of him. How did you come out of that event?
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:13:09 Well, I was lucky. My cousin, she rolled a horse chasing a calf once and broke her back, so I was very lucky that I ended up with bruises and cuts and was really sore but not any permanent damage, thank heaven. It was a great lesson. And it helps me with Jeremiah now. It helps with all the prophets. They're all saying that. But nobody like Jeremiah is waving at the people in terms of turnaround because Jeremiah is going to witness the great disaster. Isaiah sees it in vision, I guess. Ezekiel hears about it and Daniel hears about it. They're already in Babylon when the temple is burned and the city destroyed. But Jeremiah sees it, and so it is probably appropriate that there is a little book attached separate to Jeremiah called Lamentations because they're going to rebuild that temple, and then the Romans will destroy it again.
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:14:09 But if there is one thing that really defines the Jewish people in particular, it is the lamenting of the loss of their temple. At the moment of your greatest joy, a marriage, is that very Jewish, this mingling of sorrow with joy, they crush the glass to remind them that the temple is destroyed. And Jeremiah sees it, he sees it. We'll talk maybe a little later, they put in the Come Follow Me manual a painting by Rembrandt. He captures something essentially in paint of Jeremiah. That's one way of feeling Jeremiah and what's going on in Jeremiah.
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:14:56 I love telling this story. It's a beautiful story, and it does capture a great element of chapter 31, the main verse that they've taken. It's one of the most important verses of Jeremiah: "I will turn their mourning into joy, will comfort them, make them rejoice from their sorrow." And you get Jeremiah's sorrow in lamentations. Jeremiah 31:25 says, "I have satiated the weary soul. I have replenished every sorrowful soul."
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:15:37 Now, there is in the Jewish people, and you're going to see it in all the prophets, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Josiah, Joel, Micah, they all have this sense, this spirit of joy, hope, longing, yearning for a time of peace where everybody will leave them alone. They'll rejoice that longing, hope, sorrow, mingling that probably Jeremiah, among all the prophets, is the best illustration of that strange combination of emotions that will define Judaism and the Jewish people from Jeremiah onward, certainly from Rome onward.
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:16:27 I like to ask people, "What was the number one song of the 20th century? The most influential song of the 20th century voted by

the National Academy for the Arts and the recording industry, the motion picture screen guild." They all vote the same song, it's my favorite song sung by the Tabernacle Choir, as the number one most important influential song of the 20th century. In 100 years, which one do you think got it? I'll give you number two. Number two was White Christmas. Irving Berlin. Written by a Jewish son of an immigrant. Well, the number one won the Academy award for best music in 1940; an interesting year. Was written by a Jewish son of an immigrant family from Eastern Europe named Isadora Hochberg. Now, nobody's ever heard of Isadora Hochberg. Nobody's even heard of his Americanized name. He Americanized his name to Edgar Harburg. And he had a nickname from his youth, Yipsel, so everybody called him Yip Harburg.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:17:46

And Yip Harburg was a second generation Jewish immigrant. Between 1880 and 1920, two and a half million Jews from Europe, mostly Eastern Europe and Russia came to the United States. He wanted to be a songwriter. Now, he ends up selling appliances. His parents are poor. And the depression comes, and he writes the anthem for the Great Depression. Everybody knows this song. Nobody knows Yip Harburg, but everybody knows the song. If I start you, you'll finish it. Buddy, can you spare-

John Bytheway: 00:18:22

A dime.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:18:23

... a dime?. That's Yip Harburg. A lot of people feel that song put Franklin Roosevelt in the White House. Well, in 1939, the Jewish immigrants to America... I don't want to get too far off on this because we want to dive into Jeremiah, it's just if I get this song in your mind, it'll help you understand Jeremiah and all the prophets from this point on and that mingling of hope and longing.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:18:49

The Jews very quickly could see that the motion picture industry was going to be very influential, and they wanted to raise the opportunity for middle class Americans to have great works of literature. A lot of people can't afford to go to the theater, but television was going to be the way of bringing, edifying powerful entertainment to the American... And so Hollywood is really begun by Jews. Every major Hollywood studio, Universal, Paramount, Fox, Warner Brothers, MGM, they're all started by Jews.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:19:25

And in 1939, again, think of what's going on in Europe in 1939. Louis Mayer at MGM wants to take a children's book and make

it into a movie with color for the first time. And what's that children's story?

John Bytheway: 00:19:42

Wizard of Oz.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:19:43

You had mentioned it, John, The Wizard of Oz. And they asked Yip Harburg, second generation Jewish immigrant, to write the lyrics first. And they decide to write the very first song Judy Garland's going to sing. And now you know what's the most influential song of the 20th century? Somewhere Over the Rainbow.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:20:09

Now, when we listen to Somewhere Over the Rainbow, we think of Judy Garland. And it was really hard to get that song into it because there's nothing in the Wizard of Oz about over the rainbow or wishing for lands over the rainbow. But Yip Harburg and Harold Arland fought to keep that song in. They took it out several times. Number of reasons. They didn't want Judy Garland in a barnyard singing a song for too long. They wanted to get her out of the barnyard. It wasn't in the book, it wasn't in the novel. Slowed the beginning of the movie down, so they kept eliminating it. And Harburg and Arlen kept insisting, and finally Louis Mayer, who was a bit of a sentimentalist, said, "We'll leave it in." And the rest is history. It becomes the single most influential song of 100 years. Everybody knows Somewhere Over the Rainbow.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:21:04

What they don't realize, that it is a song written by two Jewish boys in 1939. 1940, the Academy Award, the Oscar will be given to that song. And what's going on in Europe in 1939 and 1940? If you think about the lyrics, and I'll quote them here to you, you understand a whole new perspective on Over the Rainbow. If you understand that new perspective, you grasp something of the power of the emotional impact of Jeremiah and all the prophets and something that all of us have in us, this yearning, longing in our mournings, in our sadnesses, in our imperfect worlds, whatever they might be for joy and rejoicing and an end to those things.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:22:10

And it's just more powerful if you make Somewhere Over the Rainbow not about a little Kansas girl. What in the world would a little American Kansas girl be singing a song like that for? But a little Jewish boy, fresh out of the shtetls of Eastern Europe would understand that song.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:22:31

Here's the lyric: Somewhere over the rainbow, way up high, there's a land that I heard of once in a lullaby. Somewhere over the rainbow, skies are blue, and the dreams that you dare to

dream really do come true. Someday I'll wish upon a star and wake up where the clouds are far behind me, where troubles melt like lemon drops away above the chimney tops, that's where you'll find me. Somewhere over the rainbow, blue birds fly. Birds fly over the rainbow. Why then, oh why can't I? If happy little blue birds fly beyond the rainbow, why, oh why can't I?

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:23:27

And there's something in, Harburg and Arland married Jewish yearning and longing that all of us feel in our own ways, but they especially could feel. They bonded Jewish longing and yearning for a better world, a happier world with American, in this case, optimism and hope. And that mingling of longing, yearning, sorrow with the hope that that song catches and that we all love, and hopefully, you'll love it more when you know the background behind it and who wrote it and the timing of the writing of it and what's going on when it's being written. That, for me, and I maybe will share that later, why that song in a personal way has such power as it transfers into my life out of Jeremiah chapter 31.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:24:32

I know that's a long introduction. I'm sorry I did too much Cassandra and Uncle Verlin waving his arms and Yip Harburg's Over the Rainbow, but I can't think of any way to grab the power of what Jeremiah means and what all the prophets... That spirit. And we're going to be looking at some of the other prophets, but especially Jeremiah because he had the greatest cause to mourn. He saw the temple burnt, he saw the nation destroyed. And he could have prevented it had they only listened to him, but they don't listen to him. Those are some of the themes.

John Bytheway: 00:25:16

I like that backdrop of emotion and feelings about it. In the Come Follow Me manual, it begins, "When the Lord first called Jeremiah to be a prophet, he told him that his mission would be to root out and to pull down. And in Jerusalem, there was plenty of wickedness to root out and pull down. But this was only part of Jeremiah's mission. He was also called to build and to plant. What could be built or planted in the desolate ruins left by Israel's rebellion? Similarly, when sin or adversity have left our lives in ruins, how can we rebuild and plant again?" And then it tells us the answer lies in the branch of righteousness, the promised Messiah. With all of that that you're talking about, there's an answer.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:26:06

Chapter 8, verse 22, is there no balm in Gilead? There was a certain healing oil. Gilead was on the east side of the Jordan

River. "Is there no physician there? Why, then, is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:26:32

That's a question, I suppose, we get asked of all of our own challenges. We do have a physician and there is a balm in Gilead. And Jeremiah, his prophecies of the branch, Jeremiah does not speak as much messianically as Isaiah does. Isaiah's the big messianic prophet. But you do have little moments in it like this and other places.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:27:00

Our major image of understanding the Savior and what He did for us is a lawyer metaphor. The Eastern Orthodox, it is a physician metaphor. In Western Christianity, I can't remember if we did this once before, sin is broken law. And I'm going to be tried before the bar of God, and I need a lawyer, I need a defense attorney, I need somebody to plead for me. And Jesus becomes the advocate with the Father.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:27:34

But Jesus also is the great physician. In Russian orthodoxy, for instance, it's the physician image of Christ. We are created in the image of God, and that image, when we sin, is marred. We're sick, we're diseased, we have a wound, and we need the wound to be healed. I don't need a lawyer when I'm wounded. Alma says, "Do you have the image of Christ engraven in your countenance?" That's very Eastern Christianity. And Christ's job is not to plead for the Father or to take the punishment for me, his job is to heal me, to close up the wound, to end the disease.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:28:18

That's why he heals so many lepers, to give that idea. The leper comes to Jesus in Mark 1, and he says, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou can make me clean." And Jesus, moved with compassion, touched him and said, "I will. Be thou clean." And that's what we all do. We all come to Jesus. I go to him every day and say, "Master, if thou wilt, thou can make me clean." And he, filled with compassion, touches us all and says, "I will. Be thou clean." There is a balm in Gilead; it's mercy, it is forgiveness, it is compassion. And there is a physician there. If my health is not recovered, it's because I've not availed myself of that physician and that healing.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:29:12

If you want to jump to Lamentations for a second, you get that hope and longing, sorrow, but always hope. All the prophets always give hope, always hope. I go to the third chapter of Lamentations. Now, these are beautiful verses; I wish we looked at them more. I'm going to start in verse 21. He mourns in chapter one and two of Lamentations, and now he says in his mourning, in his sorrow, in the ruins of Jerusalem, "This I recall

to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not."

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:30:06

Some of them are already in Babylon. I got Daniel, Ezekiel, the three brothers, they were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were part of Zedekiah's family. They're safe in... We hate to say safe in Babylon, but they're going to come out of Babylon. And he says, "We're not all consumed. And some of them stay in the land of Israel. His compassions fail not. They are new every morning." I can't tell you how much that's comforting to me, that every morning his mercy and compassion is renewed. "Great is thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, sayeth my soul, therefore will I hope in him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for him to the soul that seeketh Him. It is good that a man should both hope," and I love the second part, "and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. It's every morning it's renewed, and I just wait for him." I seek him. I hope in him. He has healing. He's the balm of Gilead. He's the physician who will close up my wound and make the image of God that's in my countenance shine out again.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:31:34

And then I'm going to skip a few verses. Verse 31, "For the Lord will not cast off forever. But though he cause grief..." Sometimes he lets the consequences of our actions fall upon us. "Yet will he have compassion," according to the multitude of his mercies, "for he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of man." He doesn't want to see us sorrowful, he wants us joyful. But we make decisions that bring unhappy consequences on us. And Jeremiah becomes a wonderful personification of God because Jeremiah, he's never happy in their downfall. He never says, "I told you so, you guys. I told you so. I'm glad this happened to you." "He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men."

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:32:40

And then I skip again a little bit, what does happen in our lives, in verse 39, "Wherefore doth a living man complain a man for the punishment of his sins?" It's the American way to blame somebody else. It is the modern way. All these bad things, I'm having trouble. Now, a lot of challenges in our life come because this is life. Life is opposition. "It is better for us to pass through sorrow," Eve says, "that we may learn." We're going to learn from things. We're down here to learn, but we complain about it.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:33:18

And after that beautiful talk in Lamentations about mercy and God forgiving and they're renewed and the multitude of his mercies... And he doesn't want to cause grief. He doesn't afflict willingly, but we do sometimes pay the price of our own

decisions, and then we complain about them. "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins."

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:33:41

And then Isaiah Jeremiah gives this counsel. Instead of complaining, "Let us search and try our ways and turn again to the Lord." Let's figure out what went wrong and why and change and turn. And I don't need to make excuses and I don't need to complain, I just go to the Lord, and he forgives.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:34:08

And then I'd go right across the column in Lamentations to the 58 verse, Jeremiah now praise, "Oh Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul. Thou hast redeemed my life." If I will not complain, I'll search, try my ways, turn, know how merciful He is, sometimes wait quietly for His salvation, hope in Him, He will. Now I do have the image of the pleader. I do have the lawyer image. "Plead the cause of my soul He will redeem my life." Jeremiah does have a lot of beautiful things to say. And I didn't know if last week you were going to talk about is there a balm in Gilead.

Hank Smith: 00:35:01

We didn't, no.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:35:02

Like I say, it's in spiritual, very beautiful, soft, so that's part of that spirit I guess in the land over the rainbow, there is the dream that I dare to dream, that I can be forgiven, that I can be healed of whatever is probably really does come true, really does. Jeremiah is a prophet full of hope. And he had a lot of pain in his life.

John Bytheway: 00:35:37

Wow. You spoke of a physician metaphor and a lawyer metaphor, a healer and an advocate. Those are coming from different, did you say eastern Christianity? Is that just we use them both?

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:35:50

Well, we use them both. They're all justified. Different religions have what I call different connecting places, different parables that hit them stronger, different miracles that hit them stronger. You can't explain the redemption of Christ without metaphorical language; you just can't do it. As Frederick Ferrari said, it's wrapped in a mystery and a shroud. We're just not going to understand it. We have faith in it, we'll believe that it works.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:36:21

And so people try to explain it, and one of the ways they explain it, and Jesus himself does it, he uses metaphorical language. And western Christianity gravitated to the lawyer, and Protestantism gravitated to the lawyer image. There's a

judgment. We break laws, there's a punishment of fix to the law. We will be before the bar of God. You see all that legal language, and so I need someone, plead for me.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:36:50

And I get that in Lamentations. He says, "You've pleaded the causes of my soul." But we also get the physician in Jeremiah is there, and it's one of the most beautiful in all the Old Testament of the healer image of Christ. Is there no balm in Gilead? There is a medicine, there is a soothing. And balm soothes it. That image of balm, it's a soothing thing. Is there no physician here? There is a physician. Jeremiah will call him the Branch, capital B because he's an offshoot of David's house. And that image of a family tree, and that off of David's house, a branch, you will have hope in the branch, capital B, that will come from David. The Branch is going to have the balm of Gilead, the Branch is going to be filled with mercy, the Branch is going to plead the causes of our soul. The Branch's mercies are renewed every morning, and so, Don't lament too deeply, Jeremiah says to us. Don't stay in a state of sorrow, because there's always hope something.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:38:11

And for the Jewish people, for Israel and for us, we can apply Jeremiah to the restoration. There's ways we can apply it. But it's part of the power of Jeremiah and all the prophets. You're going to get it in all the prophets. There is an over the rainbow land for all of us.

John Bytheway: 00:38:29

I'm thinking of, used to confuse me as a kid, the Book of Mormon saying that says, "All is well in Zion." And we will now sing Come, Come, Ye Saints and really sell it in the last verse. And it just used to confuse me as a kid until I could see what you're talking about. There was an all is well, and should we die before our journeys through. There was an eternal the song was asking us to have. We are in the midst of we're burying people every morning on the plains and we're trying to say, "All is well," because we have the expectation of redemption in God and forgiveness and healing. But boy, right now we're really in a hard place. It took me a while to see, oh, I see what the Book of Mormon is saying when you're in temporal security, don't go around saying, "Oh, all is well, all is well in Zion." But on the plains, what they were singing was this mixture of deep trials, but there's hope in the midst of all of this.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:39:32

We have to learn to live with a bit of ambiguity and paradox. All of our lives have that mixture. There is sorrow, but there is always the hope. And sometimes the Lord does say, Well, I..." He speaks pretty strong in Jeremiah occasionally, but there's that softness that surfaces again and again and again.

- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:39:58 If you look at that painting, it's in the Come Follow Me manual, this painting is in the Reich Museum in Amsterdam. Just Google Rembrandt, Jeremiah mourning over. In the original painting, it's not very big, you can see that that lighting that's coming from the left is from the fires of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is being burned as Jeremiah sits there. And actually, in a very good quality copy of that painting, on the left hand side you can actually see in miniature on the left Jerusalem burning and a tiny, tiny little figure with his hands over his eyes, which is Zedekiah, fleeing, mourning also or he's going to have his eyes put out by the Babylonians.
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:40:52 And you look at the face of Jeremiah in that. Rembrandt just had a power of capturing the emotion of scriptural stories. He catches a beautiful painting of Bathsheba, when she gets the letter from David saying to come and see me and she knows what's going to happen, just he does one of Delilah just as they're coming in to capture Samson. And she has this look on her face of what have I done? Then he does another painting that has a look of exaltation. He just had a power.
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:41:23 And I can't think of an artist who captures Jeremiah in paint quite like that painting does if you get a really good copy and you realize that he is sitting in front of the destruction of Jerusalem. And does he look happy? No. Is this a I told you so? Is this a you guys should have listened to me?
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:41:49 The Babylonians, when they take over, because they know he's been trying to get the Jews not to rebel, they reward him. There's a miniature little verse we might miss. It's in Jeremiah 40 when they've taken them captive, most people, but they've left some. I'm in chapter 39 now, 11 and 12. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to the captain of the guard. "Take him, look well to him, do him no harm, but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee." Jeremiah is in good stead with the Babylonians because he had counsel, don't rebel.
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:42:33 He's not taken into captive. He stays. He's given the choice. You can go where you want. And he's in prison. He chooses to stay with his people. And Rembrandt catches that moment. He's loosed, he's out of the prison where he is been held during the siege of Jerusalem. And he is told in chapter 40, verse 4, "I loose thee this day from the chains which were upon thine hand. If it seemed good unto thee, come with me into Babylon." Daniel's there, Ezekiel's there. "I will look well unto thee. But if it seem ill unto thee to come with me into Babylon, forbear, behold all the land is before thee, whether it seemeth good and convenient for thee to go thither, go."

- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:43:20 And then this tiny little idea at the bottom of verse 5: "The captain of the guard gave him victuals," food, "and a reward and let him go." Now, that's the verse that Rembrandt decided to paint. The fires light in his face from the destruction of Jerusalem. Zedekiah, tiny little figure off in the left with his eyes put out going into captivity. And can you see in that painting the reward the Babylonians gave him? All that little pile of welt there sitting. He's leaning on a book. Rembrandt loved books. He loved to put especially scriptures in his paintings. You'll see him leaning. He's got the reward. Does he look happy to have it? No. He is filled with sorrow. And you sense that sorrow.
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:44:15 And in that, Jeremiah becomes, as I say, a personification of God for us. Chapter 13, verse 17, for instance: "If you will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride. And mine eyes shall weep sore and run down with tears because the Lord's flock is carried away captive."
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:44:45 Now, that's not only the mourning of Jeremiah, that is also the mourning of God and the Savior. If I go to Jeremiah 17, verse 16, "As for me, I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee. I've not given up." He says, "I'm not going to talk about God anymore. That's it." But it was like a fire in the bones. I'm guessing you talked about that last week.
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:45:16 Verse 16, "As for me, I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee, neither have I desired the woeful day thou knowest." I didn't want this. I'm not happy with my reward from the Babylonians. I'm not glad I'm right. I mourn and I weep over you. Sometimes humanity, we're glad. Well, you deserve it. Not Jeremiah or God.
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:45:44 You go to Lamentations and you get that same thing in Lamentations chapter 1, verse 16 after he talks about the destruction of Jerusalem. Again in that painting, the fire's lighting Jeremiah's face. Verse 12, "Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by?" Can you see people passing by looking at Jeremiah there in that painting? "Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is done unto me."
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:46:25 Then I jump down a little bit again. He talks about what the Lord has allowed to happen to his people. Verse 16, "For these things I weep. Mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me. My children are desolate because the enemy prevaieth." And that's not just Jeremiah, that's Jeremiah's God. That's how he feels. It's not joyful to be right. God has no joy in it. And Rembrandt

captures that. I'm really glad they put that painting in there. Rembrandt was a master at capturing the moment of a scripture.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:47:15 And for me, Over the Rainbow in music somehow captures the power of Jeremiah and many of the prophets. And Rembrandt's painting really, really captures the spirit of lamentations. You look at, you see it and you understand, here's my rewards, my people are walking by, I'm weeping. They're not going to listen to him, they're going to come to him again and ask him for counsel. He's going to give it. But he's Cassandra; nobody ever believes him in the latter part of Jeremiah's life.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:47:51 Later on, there'll be a rebellion. The Babylonians put a man named Gedaliah in charge of the residue they've left. Not everybody's taken captive. And a man named Ishmael murders, assassinates Gedaliah. This is a real political book.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:48:09 A man named Yohanan now comes and chases Ishmael off the throne. But they're all afraid now. "My gosh, we killed the governor the Babylonians appointed. Now what do we do? They're going to come and kill us all. Let's go to Jeremiah and ask Jeremiah what we should do." And you'd think, okay, but now they're going to listen to him. Aren't they going to listen now? But he's Cassandra, he's Uncle Verlin and waving his hands down at the bottom of the hill.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:48:38 And they say, "What should we do?" And he says, "Stay here. Don't go to Egypt. Stay here and you'll be all right." You didn't kill Gedaliah, Ishmael killed him. Stay here." And then Jeremiah says, "But I know you're not going to listen to me. You asked me for counsel. You're not going to listen to me." Which is exactly what happens. These are in the latter chapters of Jeremiah. I'm not reading them to you, but you can read that story in the latter chapters of Jeremiah. And they come to him and they say, "God didn't tell you tell us not to go to Egypt. We are going to Egypt, and you're coming with us." And so they take him to Egypt. And tradition has that he is killed in Egypt. They never learn to listen to him, even when he has been right so many times.

John Bytheway: 00:49:31 What I appreciate what you've done here is I feel like, for so much of my life trying to learn the gospel, I've just heard the phrase the Babylonian captivity. This sounds like the moment, the most crucial moments of that captivity. Where it began.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:49:50 This is where it begins. Yeah. And what we usually think of as a bad thing, and if you are using Babylon as an image of the

world, which people do, you are taken captive. They've been worshipping the gods of the world so the world takes them captive. That's what happens to you. You worship the gods of the world, the world takes you captive. You get lost in the world, and you're taken captive.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:50:13

But at the moment of the captivity, the Lord's chosen prophet is telling them, "Submit to the Babylonians, and it'll be all right to you. Submit to the Babylonians, and they won't destroy your temple." They've taken some captive. Eventually they'll come back. It's Jeremiah who says in 70 years they'll come back. But they don't listen.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:50:44

You do have another theme through here. When you look at a single prophet's book or writing or life, sometimes you're looking for repetition. Now, when you see repetition, that is a little flag waving that this is important. I want you to get it. Let me give you some repetitions about prophets. Since we're in 30, let's go to Jeremiah 32, verse 33, and then I'll back you up a little bit on this. Jeremiah 32, 33, "They have turned unto me the back and not the face, though I taught them rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instructions." The idea is that prophets are always ahead of the times. Prophets never go with the times, not because they're behind the times, as a lot of people want to think they are, but because they're ahead of the times. They are seers. Here he is saying, "I teach them, rising up early."

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:51:58

Let's see how many times we can find that phrase. If I go all the way back to chapter 7 of Jeremiah, verse 13, you'll see it. "I speak unto you, rising up early and speaking, but she heard not." Now we go to verse 25 in Jeremiah 7: "Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt, unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants, the prophets daily, rising up early and sending them." That's the third time he says it. Let me go to chapter 25 of Jeremiah. I don't want to beat this too much to death, but it's sometimes good to see it. 25:4, "The Lord has sent unto you all his servants, the prophets, rising early and sending them, but ye have not hearkened nor inclined your ear to hear." now I go to chapter 26, just a few pages away, verse 5, "To hearken to the words of my servants, the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early and sending them, but ye have not hearkened." Well, I turn a few pages to chapter 29 now, verse 19. "They have not hearkened my words," say at the Lord, "which I send unto them by my servants, the prophets, rising up early and sending them, but ye would not hear."

- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:53:47 And then finally, after it's all over and he's been right about absolutely everything and they're asking him about going to Egypt. And they're not going to follow, they're not going to listen to him this time either because, like I say, he's Cassandra. And so in 44, Jeremiah 44, they've just accused him. "God didn't tell you to tell us not to go to Egypt." Verse four, chapter 44, "How be it I send unto you all my servants, the prophets, rising early in sending them, saying, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate." But you see that, that's a powerful theme in Jeremiah. It's a theme that we need to think about in our own lives. You see that in, for instance, the word of wisdom where the Lord says, "I warn you and forewarn you. I'm giving you the word of wisdom before alcoholism and drugs and all these problems are going to really be a problem for you."
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:54:46 The '50s was the best time of the last century. In 1950. Well, what a lovely time. Morally, ethically was a great time. That's David O. McKay's prophet, and what's he saying in the '50s constantly? He's talking about the family, the family, the family, the family. And sometimes saying, "What do you mean the family? This is Leave it to Beaver, Father Knows Best decade. What is this massive emphasis on the family that David O. McKay is giving? And then what happens? The '60s hit, and the '60s, we wipe out American morality pretty much from the ground up. They're always ahead.
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:55:23 President Kimball, what's his great message? Lengthen your stride, missionary, missionary. His great vision of how the gospel's going to be spread throughout the world. And that's in the 1970s. And then what happens in 1989? The Berlin wall comes down, and all of a sudden massive areas of the world all ready for the preaching of the gospel.
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:55:45 Even COVID, for heaven's sakes, we could say before we had to Zoom our classes. And what's the great message of President Nelson? It's home centered, church supported. Now, he gave that before COVID. And what happened in COVID? Well in COVID, it's home centered, church supported. And we could do that with every prophet. We could talk about when the seminary program started and family home evening and all. They're always rising up early, and they're ahead of the times.
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:56:30 If I just picked up the proclamation on the family, in light of Jeremiah, given back in President Hinckley's time, it ends with a warning, ends with a warning. It has all this emphasis on society and marriage and children and the roles. And then in the very last part, with Jeremiah in mind, with Cassandra in mind, with my uncle waving his hands at the bottom of the hill and me

running down the hill on my horse, certainly going to roll it, they say, "We warn that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring or fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God." That's a warning to individuals.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:57:30

Then they give a societal warning. You can almost say it's a political warning. Jeremiah is a very political prophet. He's in politics. I don't want to talk about politics a great deal, but his message and the latter part is about who to make an alliance with, how to solve a political challenge of his day. That's the big part of his latter part. Further, we warn them back in the proclamation, "Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets." That's a sobering, sobering thing to read about. And I have to say, with the idea of prophets rising up early, what is it that they see? We certainly see the family and traditional values attacked a great deal.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 00:58:37

I just picked this up on the way, I didn't know if we'd get to this. I never know where we're going to go totally. Can I bring a little Confucius in here? We've got Yip Harburg, so might as well put a little Confucius in here. Confucius is the main prophet of China. And notice what he warns. This is six centuries before Christ. "The ancients, who wish to bring order to their states, would first regulate their families. And those who wish to regulate their families would first cultivate their own personal lives. And those who wish to cultivate their own personal lives would rectify their minds," they would control their thinking, "and make their intention sincere. And those who wish to rectify their minds would extend their knowledge." And that's a step by step situation. And then he says, "Only when the personal life is cultivated, the family will be regulated. And when the family is regulated, the state will be in order. And when the state is in order, there will be peace throughout the world." That's as prophetic a vision as anybody can get by the greatest sage or thinker in Chinese history. The state will take care of itself if the family is solid. And so I look at the proclamation all about family and the emphasis on family in the Latter-Day Saint church, and my testimony level goes really high. They see something.

John Bytheway: 01:00:31

Please join us for part two of this podcast.



John Bytheway:	00:01	Welcome to part two of Dr. S. Michael Wilcox. Jeremiah chapters 30 through 36 and the Book of Lamentations.
John Bytheway:	00:10	You mentioned Zedekiah. Could you tell our audience who Zedekiah is and why they've probably heard that name before?
Hank Smith:	00:17	Yeah, let's make that Book of Mormon connection there.
Dr. S. Michael Wilcox:	00:21	Okay. Yeah, Zedekiah. And then I'll do another connection for you in the Book of Mormon. Zedekiah is a name we know. And number one, it's fairly easy to pronounce in terms of kings of Judah. Because he's the king when Lehi is prophesying. So the Book of Mormon begins in Jeremiah. So the world of Jeremiah is Lehi's world; it's Laman and Lemuel's world; it's Nephi and Sam's world, and Sariah.
Dr. S. Michael Wilcox:	00:47	Again, we go to the politics. Jeremiah wasn't treated very well. If we just talk about his life, he's put in the stocks. We already know that; you talked about that last time. In chapters 11 and 12 of Jeremiah, there's a plot to assassinate him because, politically, he's not giving the message the king and the court want to hear. Now, the king at the time is a man named Jehoiakim, with a K. He's not too fond of Jeremiah, and in 11 and 12 there's a plot against his life. And he goes to the Lord complaining about, and the Lord says, "Well, for heaven sakes, if you can't handle this, let me tell you something even worse. Your own family's plotting against you." It's hard for him. He's accused of treason in chapter 37. He's walking out of Jerusalem, because nobody's listening to him, so he walks out of Jerusalem. They accuse him of treason and throw him in a dungeon. I do want to look at that. I don't know if we want to do it now, when he's in the dungeon.
Dr. S. Michael Wilcox:	01:55	So Jehoiakim doesn't listen to Jeremiah, and the Babylonians come the first time, and they kill Jehoiakim and throw his body out of the walls of Jerusalem. And they pick his son to be the new ruler, a puppet king. And the son's name is Jehoiachin, C-H-I-N.

- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 02:18 And then the King of Babylon says, "Oh my gosh, I killed his father. Maybe he'll rebel against me. Maybe that's not a good idea. I better go back and put somebody else in charge." And so they go back, and Jehoiachin, instead of fighting, doesn't want his people... He's a good man, doesn't want his people to be destroyed. So he opens the gates of Jerusalem, lets the Babylonians in, and he's taken into captivity with his mother.
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 02:43 And now the Babylonians choose another member of the royal family named Zedekiah to be the ruler. So Zedek- he's 21. He's a young man. He is really a puppet of the Babylonians; he's supposed to rule for them. He's a weak person. He vacillates between Jeremiah's words and the false prophets' words. And I think we ought to do something about the false prophets here for just a second. He vacillates between the two of them.
- John Bytheway: 03:17 Chapter 37, verse one. King Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, reigned instead of Jehoiachin.
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 03:24 Yeah, you'll see that. And this is in Josephus; it's not in Jeremiah. Josephus makes a little plainer. If you read the story of Jeremiah in Josephus, and Zedekiah and Jehoikim, this whole period, Ezekiel is prophesying at the same time Jeremiah is in Babylon. He's prophesying. He's been taken captive; he's a young man when he goes. And he prophesies that Zedekiah will never see Babylon. Jeremiah prophesies that Zedekiah will be taken captive into Babylon. He tells that to him face up. Sometimes Zedekiah secretly asks Jeremiah for counsel because he's afraid of the other powers that be. Politics always does that. And Zedekiah goes to Jeremiah and says, "Well, tell me the truth." And he says, "If you don't submit to the Babylonians, they're going to take you captive." And Zedekiah says, "Well, don't tell anybody else you told me that." Zedekiah will save Jeremiah's life.
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 04:38 So we have two prophets: Ezekiel saying Zedekiah will never see Babylon, and Jeremiah saying he'll be taken captive. And this confuses Zedekiah, and he says, "Well, you're contradicting yourselves, so you can't be true prophets." And so he listens to the false advisors. Now how does that fulfill? Well, they put out his eyes.
- Hank Smith: 05:01 So he can't see Babylon.
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 05:03 So he never sees Babylon. Ezekiel is correct. He is carried away captive into Babylon. Jeremiah is correct. See how that works? Maybe we could do something on these other counselors, because there's a great message in Jeremiah about false

prophets, and it'll help us understand false prophets today. But let's go to chapter 38 for a second.

Hank Smith: 05:31

And Mike, by the time Zedekiah's eyes are put out, Lehi's left.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 05:37

Lehi's gone by that time. He has. Here's Laman and Lemuel. Can you see the spirit of their times? "Prophets are wrong." Nobody believed Jeremiah. So Laman and Lemuel are in the group that are not believers. They're not believers. Lehi believes Jeremiah. Nephi believes Jeremiah. Now Nephi prefers Isaiah.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 06:03

So in chapter 38, Jeremiah's prophesying that the city will be destroyed, the temple burned, and they'll all be taken captive if they don't submit to the Babylonians. Some have already been taken captive. Now that's what you could say in a political world. You could accuse Jeremiah of treason, and that's what they accuse him of. Verse four, chapter 38, the bottom part: "This man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt." Oh, how many times do people accuse prophets of that? "You're not seeking our welfare, but our hurt."

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 06:47

But prophets are never thinking about themselves. They're always focused on the people. Then Zedekiah king said, "Behold, he is in your hand, for the king is not he that can do anything against you." I haven't got any power. You're going to do what you want anyway. They took Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon of these people, which was in the court of the prison. They let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire. So Jeremiah sunk in the mire. Can you picture that? There is a spot in Caiaphas-

Hank Smith: 07:23

Caiaphas's palace. Yeah.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 07:25

Palace where you can go down in the cistern and look up and see the hole, and you can visualize Jeremiah being lowered down the hole into the cistern. In Joseph's account, it's almost neck deep in mud and water. And they know he's going to die there. And so now we have a little hero named Ebedmelek, an Ethiopian who goes to Zedekiah and pleads for him and says, "They've put him in the mire; he's going to die there." And the king gives Ebedmelek a little contingent of guards, and they lower, in verse 11, old cast clouts and rotten rags by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah. And they say, "Put them under your arms, and we'll pull you up," because he's weak. And then verse 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 until the Babylonians."

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 08:34

When the siege and Jerusalem falls and Jeremiah's let out of the prison. He's not down in the mud, he's let out of the prison. And this is when the captain of the guard says, "Now what do you want to do?" Part of me says, "Oh my gosh, I'm tired of these people. Take me to Babylon. Life's got to be better. Ezekiel's over there, and Daniel's over there." But his call is here, with these people. So he stays, and he mourns with them, and he continues to counsel with them, even though they never believe him. But look at what they do to him. Look at how they treat him. The stocks, plots against his life, in the mud in the dungeon, accused of treason.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 09:18

There's a point in Jeremiah's life where he says, "Look, people, can you just do one thing right? God will save you if you'll just follow one counsel. One thing. I'm going to pick one thing in the law of Moses for you to do." And what is the one thing that they're supposed to do? It's in chapter 34. There was a law in the law of Moses where every seven years you released your servants. I hate to use the word slave, but all contracts, all debts, all servitude, ended. All apprenticeships, maybe we would say. Every seven years was called the year of release. And so in chapter 34, Jeremiah says, "Look, just do one thing right. Do one thing in the law of Moses: release the servants." That's chapter 34 of Jeremiah. "Follow that one thing. Can you just do that one thing?" And so they do. Verse nine of 34, "Every man should let his manservant and every man his maidservant, being a Hebrew or Hebrewess, go free, that none should serve himself of them, to wit, of a Jew, his brother." Release the bondage. End slavery.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 10:36

Now they do. In verse 10, bottom, "Then they obeyed and let them go." But then they have second thoughts. "But afterwards they turned and caused the servants and the handmaids whom they had let go free to return, and brought them into subjection for servants and for handmaids again." I can just see Jeremiah throwing up his hands and saying, "You can't do even one thing! Give God some reason to still bless and be with you." Samson kept his hair long, and notice in that story, God honors Samson. If God can find an excuse to honor us and bless us, he will.

Hank Smith: 11:18

He will.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 11:20

So, poor Jeremiah. He's got all of this. There is another theme here, deals with false prophets. 28 is about a man named Hananiah. And prophets used to do visuals in those days, and so Jeremiah puts a yoke on his shoulders and walks around Jerusalem with a yoke, suggesting the Israelites are going to go into bondage. And some of them have already gone in. So now

here comes Hananiah, chapter 28. And Hananiah says, "In a couple of years, all those who are in bondage are going to come out of bondage." God said, verse four, "I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon." I like Jeremiah's a little bit sarcastic in verse six. Hananiah prophesies, "Babylonians, don't listen to Jeremiah; listen to me. These bad things aren't going to happen." Jeremiah says in verse six, "Amen." Can you hear him say that?

Hank Smith: 12:26

Sure.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 12:26

Okay. "Amen. Sure. Love it. I hope you're right. Amen. The Lord do so. The Lord perform my words, which thou hast prophesied, to bring again the vessels of the Lord's house and all that are carried away captive. Amen." And then Hananiah, in his own display, breaks the yoke off Jeremiah visually. And Jeremiah comes back later, says, "Well, you can break a wooden yoke, but not an iron yoke, and the iron yoke is going to come." That's in verse 13.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 13:00

In chapter 29 verses eight and nine, he speaks of the prophets prophesying falsely. It's all through Jeremiah. You're going to see this conflict between the true prophet and the false prophets. Chapter 23 of Jeremiah, he talks quite a bit about people listening to the wrong voices. Verse 25 of Jeremiah 23, "I have heard what the prophet said. They prophesy lies in my name, saying, 'I have dreamed, I have dreamed.' How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? They are prophets of the deceit of their own heart." They want God to say what they think. Verse 27, "which think to cause my people to forget my name." That's one of the things a false prophet does: tries to get us to forget God's name. Verse 28, "What is the chaff to the wheat?" Sometimes we have to learn to distinguish, in the voices we listen to, what is truly wheat and what is chaff.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 14:16

Verse 30, "'I am against the prophets,' saith the Lord, 'that steal my words, everyone from his neighbor.'" They're taking the true words I want them to listen to, and stealing is a nice image. Verse 32, "'I am against them that prophesy false dreams,' saith the Lord, 'and do tell them and cause my people to err by their lies and by their lightness,'" their disregarding of Jeremiah's words. "'I sent them not, nor commanded them. Therefore they shall not profit this people at all.'" We have to learn to listen.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 14:59

Now, the nice thing about Jeremiah in the idea of false prophets, and I just showed you a few spots, is that we have a tendency to think of false prophets in the context of religion.

Much of Jeremiah's message, it's not a religious message. It is, but it's politics. This is society. It's a little different. And sometimes we talk about the prophecy is that in the latter days, that even the very elect might be deceived. Now, I don't think the members of the church are going to be deceived by somebody claiming to speak for God, but they might be deceived by other kinds of... If we broaden prophets up to mean more than just religious people claiming to speak for God. Does that make sense?

John Bytheway: 15:52

Yeah. Who's a thought leader in your mind? I think one of our guests said that. Hank. A thought leader. Who are you listening to these days?

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 16:00

Yeah. Now, into the Book of Mormon here. 1 Nephi 22, verse 23. He's speaking of churches, but I want to use churches loosely. I think President Kimball said, "Whatever is more important to you than God is your God." So let's see what churches are mentioned that Nephi warns about in 1 Nephi 22:23. He says, "The time speedily shall come that all churches which are built up to get gain." Church number one, the church of getting gain. And I'm not talking about that in terms of a religion; let's broaden it. We're pulling the idea of prophets. We're putting them more in a Jeremiah world, where everything they're counseling is not godly. In this case, it's political. And I don't mean to say it as a pawn, but there are prophets in the church of getting gain.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 17:01

"And all those who are built up to get power over the flesh." The second church is the church of power over the flesh. Now that can be anybody from a political leader who's dictatorially controlling people, or something like drugs or pornography.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 17:20

"Those who are built up to become popular in the eyes of the world." That's a very hard church for us to sometimes reject today. The church of popularity, of worldly popularity. And the church of worldly popularity has prophets who might steal, in Jeremiah's words, "steal my words, everyone from his neighbor." I just love the wording of false prophets in Jeremiah 23, which might cause his people to forget his name because what is being taught is not popular. The church of popularity.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 18:00

The fourth church, "Those who seek the lusts of the flesh." The church of lust.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 18:08

And then finally the fifth church, "The things of the world." If I look at that verse not in terms of religious people doing that, but I'm going to put it in Jeremiah's world. There are voices,

there are people that we probably... They themselves would not say they're a prophet, that cause the Lord's people to forget his name, that are giving people chaff instead of wheat, that are stealing God's words, every man from his neighbor, that cause people to err, and that treat the things of God as lightness, and that will not profit the people. Those phrases in Jeremiah chapter 23.

John Bytheway: 18:54

I think Stephen Robinson talked about, when he did that whole thing on 1 Nephi 13 and 14, about an immense assembly of people. He used the Greek great and abominable church of the devil, disassociated evil of all kinds, not a church like a building with a steeple. So I like that. The church of get gain, the church of... What would you call it? Social, political correctness.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 19:20

Well false prophets, you will find them today in the media, in politics, activists, conspiracy theorists, celebrities, experts. Broaden the idea of that. We just have to watch a little bit that the Hananiahs aren't coming and those phrases in Jeremiah 23 are not happening to us. There are good political leaders and activists, and there's positive things, but we have to be just a little bit careful. That's all.

Hank Smith: 20:02

I have a statement here from President Nelson. It's from 2019, but it sounds like it could come straight out of Jeremiah. This is September of 2019. He says, "Sometimes we as leaders of the church are criticized for holding firm to the laws of God, defending the Savior's doctrine, and resisting the social pressures of our day. But our commission as ordained apostles is to go into all the world to preach his gospel unto every creature. That means we are commanded to teach truth. In doing so, sometimes we are accused of being uncaring as we teach the father's requirements for exaltation in the celestial kingdom. But wouldn't it be far more uncaring for us to not tell the truth, not teach what God has revealed? It is precisely because we do care deeply about all of God's children that we proclaim his truth. We may not always tell people what they want to hear. Prophets are rarely popular." You can almost hear that coming straight out of Jeremiah.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 21:02

Yeah, well that's a great statement that gives that impression. I like chapter 12, just as a thought, and then maybe should go to 31. And I think one of the one assigned in Jeremiah is when they cut up his words and burn it. One time he goes before Jehoiakim, and he doesn't like what he's hearing, and he says, "Burn his words." Jeremiah just writes them again. I like just this little thought in chapter 12 of Jeremiah. Prophets don't always have all the answers. Prophets themselves have questions. They

wrestle just like we do. They're doing the best they can. They question God. And so here he is. This is when he's being told that his own family's plotting to assassinate him. In chapter 12 verse one, "Righteous art thou, oh Lord, when I plead with thee. I know I'm pleading with a righteous judge, yet let me talk with thee of thy judgements. Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously? Thou hast planted them; yea, they have taken root, they grow, they bring forth fruit." He just can't understand why.

Hank Smith: 22:31

Why do the wicked prosper so much?

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 22:33

David asks that question. Habakkuk's going to ask that question. Joseph Smith asked that question. Shakespeare asked that question. It's just nice to know that even prophets don't always feel they have all the answers. And the nice thing about the whole Old Testament is that they give us a God that you can talk to fairly flat out, casual, bluntly. "I know you're righteous, God, but it looks pretty bad to us down here. Let me talk about your judgments a little bit." It's Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof. The face of God that the Jews, that the Old Testament gives us is a God you can talk to, you can engage with. "Isn't it bad enough, Lord, you gave me five daughters? Do you have to make my horse lame?" That's Tevye in Fiddler on... He's a very human God, and you sense that in the prophets, this ability to engage God in conversation when you don't understand everything.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 23:34

Well, let's talk about the hope of Jeremiah and the message that you really get in 31 and 32 and 33 of the return. They're going to be taken captive, but this is a merciful God. We did talk about that earlier. All through Jeremiah, you're going to see the gathering, the return. "I'm going to bring them back. I'm going to bring them back. I'm going to bring them back." You see it dozens of places. You'll certainly see it in the ones that, Come Follow Me, the chapters suggested that you really look at.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 24:13

And as all Old Testament prophets have multiple fulfillments, so does this one. So chapter 31, verse three. This is a very tender chapter. "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me saying, 'Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.'" It's very powerful to really realize God loves us. Isaiah says that, "You are precious to me, and I have loved you."

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 24:48

There's a beautiful story of Maya Angelo, who had a very hard, difficult life. And she was once asked by a friend of hers in a meeting to read a little paragraph that ended with, "God loves

me." And so she read it the first time, "God loves me." And this man that she really admired said, "No, Maya, read it again. You didn't read it." And so she reads. And she reads it a number of times and tries to get the emphasis right. So she says, "GOD loves me." And he says, "No, Maya, you're not reading it." And she says, "God LOVES me." And he said, "Maya, read it." And she's almost in tears. And finally it hits her, and she says, "God loves ME. ME." And he said, "That's right, Maya. That's right." Changes her whole life.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 25:53

And so in a difficult world, a Jeremiah, an Old Testament world, it's always important to know that, verse three, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love. With loving kindness have I drawn thee." And then he talks about all the hope. "I'm going to gather you again." You'll notice in 31 that he's talking about both Israel and Judah. Israel's already gone. The Assyrians took them. In chapter 31, verses really 1 through 22, you'll notice it's Israel. That's the northern kingdom. They're already carried captive. And the emphasis is on Ephraim. So for instance, verse 20, again, notice the tenderness and the hope. 31:20, "'Is Ephraim, my dear son, is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still. Therefore my bowels are troubled for him. I will surely have mercy upon him,' saith the Lord."

Hank Smith: 27:01

So Mike, Ephraim is the northern kingdom?

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 27:04

Yeah. Northern kingdom, yeah.

Hank Smith: 27:06

This was a hundred years ago, and the Lord is saying, "I haven't forgotten."

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 27:09

"I haven't forgotten." Yeah. Or sometimes we think he's forgotten because it takes a while. Remember Jeremiah in Lamentations says, "You got to wait patiently." In verse 23, he starts, "The land of Judah." Can you see the emphasis on Judah in verse 23? Judah, verse 24. Verse 27, both of them, "the house of Israel and the house of Judah." So this chapter, verse 31, "the House of Israel and the house of Judah." So this chapter is hope for all of them. And what's going to happen? "I'm going to bring them again."

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 27:48

And there are four ways that you can read chapter 31. There's maybe five or six. But the idea of returning. So verse six, "There shall be a day that the watchman upon Mount Ephraim shall cry, "Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion under the Lord our God.'" Verse eight, "I will bring them from the north country and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the

blind and the lame and the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together. A great company shall return thither." "I will cause them," verse nine, "to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way. I am a father to Israel. Ephraim is my first born."

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 28:38

Verse 13, that beautiful verse, "'Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance and the young men and the old together. They'll dance, and I will turn their mourning into joy and will comfort them and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul," a beautiful verb, "satisfy the soul of the priests with fatness. And my people shall be satisfied with my goodness," saith the Lord."

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 29:08

You're going to get that all through Jeremiah. The return, the hope. "I'm going to bring them all back." Both Israel and Judah. One of the ways we interpret that is they do come back. Number one, they return from Babylonian captivity when the Persians conquer Babylon. I can read these and say that's when they were fulfilled. I can read it in an immediate redeem.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 29:32

The second way I can read it is long term. I can read it in actual, since Jeremiah such a political book, the actual establishment of the modern state of Israel. Now if I go to verse six, "There shall be a day that the watchman upon the mount shall cry, 'Arise ye. Let us go up to Zion.'" And I'll tell you there, verse 21, "Set thee up waymarks. Make thee high heat. Set thine heart toward the highway. Even the way which though wentest, turn again, oh virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities." Now that's in a very literal way going to be fulfilled with the return of the Jewish people.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 30:25

And we really don't have time to do much about the story of Theodor Herzl. But if I were to say, you want an example of a watchman saying, "Arise and go to Zion, and set your heart to the highway," it's a Hungarian Jew in the late 1800s named Theodor Herzl. He's the father of the modern state of Israel. He will eventually move to Vienna, and he will, at a time when anti-Semitism is born in Europe, where they're not against them because of their religion, they're against them because their ethnicity. Antisemitism isn't, "I don't like your religion;" it's "I don't like you because of your race, your ethnic qualities." And it's growing all over Europe.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 31:13

And at this time in Europe, late 1800s, it's a time when most Jews believe in assimilation. Just be good Germans, good French, good Hungarians. This is post-Enlightenment. The answer to what was called the Jewish problem is, "Be good

citizens and good religious people." And especially in Western Europe, they really believe in assimilation. In Eastern Europe, they believe in, "The Messiah will lead us back." And nobody's really thinking about establishing a political solution to the Jewish question. And Theodor Herzl sees the rise of antisemitism in the mayor of Vienna, who's a populist leader. Populist leaders like the rally, and they like to turn people against each other. And he sees that pogroms are starting in Russia. Wagner writes a little tract about the bad influence of Jewish thinking on music. There's just a lot of things going on in Europe.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 32:22

And Theodor Herzl says, "The only solution to the Jewish question is an establishment of a modern state of Israel." And he writes a little pamphlet called *Der Judenstaat*, The Jewish State, which becomes the Bible of what's called Zionism. And almost singlehandedly... It's a wonderful story. Again, I don't have time to go into it. But when I read, "The watchman will cry, 'Arise, go up to Zion and set your heart on the highway,'" it's hard for me not to think of Theodor Herzl, who will say to the Jewish people of Europe, "Not only is it desirable to establish a Jewish state, but it is practical, and it's going to happen. And the Jews who will it, will have their own state."

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 33:16

Now, I know all this is a controversial thing. We got problems in the Middle East. But Theodor Herzl, in a second fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy, will be the single voice that really he's called the father of the modern state of Israel. He will talk to the kaiser, the sultan of Turkey. He will offer to pay all the Turkish debts if Turkey, which is controlling Palestine in the late 1800s, early 1900s, will give the Jews place in Palestine for a state. And he will raise the idea that the solution to Jewish persecution in Europe and Russia is a political solution. He will bring it to the attention of the world. And in a Congress... I'll just do this and then I'll go on to the next one.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 34:09

He'll have the first Jewish Congress pushing for the European powers, Middle Eastern powers, to establish a land in Palestine for a homeland for the Jews. 1897, the first Jewish Congress is in Basel, Switzerland. When it's done, he says this: "Were I to sum up the Basel Congress in a word, which I shall guard against pronouncing publicly, it would be this. At Basel, I founded the Jewish state. If I said this out loud today, I would be answered by universal laughter. Perhaps in five years, certainly in 50, everyone will know it. The Jewish people who will it, will have their state." You and I who go to Israel a lot and love Israel and the Jewish people, the Palestinians also, the Muslims. I feel very sad about that. That was 1897. What year was Palestine by the

United Nations partitioned? 1947, exactly 50 years from the Basel Conference, and the state of Israel will be announced by David Ben-Gurion in May of 1948.

- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 35:35 It's hard for me not to read Jeremiah and say a second fulfillment of his prophecies. "There will be watchmen who will cry, 'Rise up. Let us go to Zion. Set your heart on the highways.'" I can read those and think of many people, but certainly Theodor Herzl who writes the little book The Jewish State and makes the possibility of a homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine a political reality, and calls it to the attention of the world, and his faith in it. He is the prophet of Zionism.
- Hank Smith: 36:24 It's time to go home.
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 36:26 Yeah, it's time to go home. And they go.
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 36:27 Now I can read these prophecies a third way. I can read them in the terms of Latter-day Saint that the church today is fulfilling their own gathering of Israel. So I can look, for instance, in verse 31, start there. Now I'm thinking of me. I'm thinking of Joseph Smith. I'm thinking of the restoration. I'm not thinking of Theodor Herzl and the state of Israel. I'm not thinking of Nehemiah and Ezra coming back. I'm thinking of Joseph and Brigham and you and I. "'Behold the day's come,' saith the Lord, 'that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which covenant they break, although I was a husband unto them. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel.'"
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 37:28 We have patriarchal blessings to tell us we're being attached. We need to look at Old Testament prophecies as though they are written of us. "'I will make the house of... after those days,' saith the Lord. 'I will put my law in their inward parts.'" I will put in the heart of Michael Wilcox my law. It'll be in his heart, "and I'll write it in their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people, and they shall teach no more every man is neighbor and every man is brother saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them." From the primary child to the president of the church. Everybody will know him.
- Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 38:25 "I will forgive their iniquity. I will remember their sin no more." We can spend a whole time talking about that beautiful promise of Jeremiah. "I will remember their sin no more." Joseph Smith's

going to put that in the Doctrine and Covenants. We worship not only a forgiving God, we worship a forgetting God.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 38:47

And so I can read those verses and say, "He's talking about me and my life and my time." And if I'm Jewish, I can read it, "He's talking about Herzl and 1947 and my time." And if I'm Ezra and Nehemiah, I can say, "He's talking about 70 years after the Babylonian captivity." And all through Jeremiah, and we want to read all the Old Testament prophets in those multiple levels of reading them.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 39:18

And now if I can maybe just conclude, be a little bit personal. It's sad you only get five times in Isaiah. Poor Jeremiah. Nobody listened to him in his day, and unfortunately nobody listens to him today. It's sad. Isaiah still gets the flags and the attention, and poor Jeremiah. I can hear the Lord say in that assignment time, "You'll get a book in the Old Testament, but not many people are going to read it."

Hank Smith: 39:51

"It's right next to Isaiah." Yeah.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 39:54

"It's right next to Isaiah. You're going to be in a tough neighborhood to compete with." But I use this as an illustration. Hopefully it may be of comfort to people, but also as a way of saying you never know where God or the Holy Ghost is going to find the verse you need in your life at critical points. And that is one of the reasons we want to be familiar, as much as we can, with all of them. Because the verse you need may be in Habakkuk. It may not be in Alma. It may not be in section 88. The verse you need for your life may be in Lamentations. It might be where it is. And so that's why I want to make sure I'm familiar with all of them.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 40:55

So let me just share this personal situation. I think most people know my wife passed away 12 years ago of cancer, and that really changed my life. I have learned there is a love we call longing. And that's a good love to feel. There is a love in marriage we call appreciation, and there's a love we call affection, and there's a love between husband and wife we call passion. And there's empathy, and there's forgiveness, and all those we can share when they're alive. But when they're gone, the only love, other than memory of those that I have, is longing. I long for her. And longing is a good thing. The only thing I want God to give me when I die is Laurie. That's all I want. Now, I want my family there. For me, celestial glory is a relationship. It's not a place. It's not radiating light from my soul. It's a being. It's a relationship.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 42:13

Now, Laurie and I loved the story of Jacob and Rachel. I used to call Laurie my Rachel. Jacob worked seven years for her. And there's a verse that says they seemed but a few days for the love he had to her. That beats Romeo and Juliet in Shakespeare in terms of power. They seemed but a few days. I can read that two ways. One, the time went quickly that he was waiting for her to marry her. Or I can read it, wow, you only had to work seven years for Rachel? You got a bargain. Because he's working for her.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 42:53

And when Laurie died, I told the Lord, I said, "Father in Heaven, I will give you the whole rest of my life. Whatever labor, whatever value, whatever I can I offer you. I will be your Jacob, he'll be my Laban, and I will do what I can in your kingdom in every way. I just want, when I die, for Laurie to be there, and for her to say yes again." Most important word I ever heard in my life was at an altar in the Alberta Temple when she simply said yes. I just want to hear her say yes again. That's that's all I want. When Laurie died a few months later, and I have this intense longing for her, I just want her. If I can't have Laurie, it doesn't matter where God puts me; I'll be in hell. Doesn't matter.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 43:59

I wanted what I call fleeces. Maybe you talked about that when you did Gideon. He just wants to wring the water out of the fleece because he just wants to know what he believes is going to happen. I just wanted reassurance she's still mine, that there is a Laurie and she's still my Laurie. I just want that. I'm like the man that said to Jesus, "I believe. Help thou mine unbelief." Because I just want to know.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 44:26

And I was going to Israel. She died in December, and I was going to Israel in March. And the spirit just kept saying, "Go to Rachel's tomb. Go to Rachel's tomb." Now, I've been to Israel 50 times. I had never been to Rachel's tomb. I love the story, but we always go to Bethlehem. There's just never time to go to Rachel's tomb. It's a cenotaph; we don't know that she's there anyway. I'd never been to Rachel's tomb. But I'd get this strong burning in me, "Go to Rachel's tomb." So when I got into Bethlehem, I had a guide, a good friend of mine, and some Palestinian friends that are there in Bethlehem. And I said, "I need to go to Rachel's tomb." They had a private car; they took me while the group was doing other things. And I went off alone with my guide and the driver.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 45:20

Now, Rachel's tomb is right by the security wall in Israel now; they built a big security wall. Jews want to visit. It's so close to the border, it's a dangerous place to go sometimes, so it's enshrined in concrete. And when I got there, I went into... It's a

cenotaph. The tomb is there. There was a lot of Orthodox Jews praying. And there's a big, beautiful black velvet cover over it that had Hebrew letters written on it. I don't read Hebrew; I don't know what the words are on the tomb.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 45:59

I went in there. I felt nothing. I reread the Genesis story of Jacob and Rachel. I kept waiting. I'm waiting for Laurie to appear and say, "Mike, I'm still yours, and I love you." I don't know why God is pushing me, "Go to Rachel's tomb. Go to Rachel's tomb." And nothing's happening. Nothing's happening in Rachel's tomb. I'm there for an hour. I'm waiting. I'm reading. I'm pondering. Nothing's happening.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 46:30

So I gave up. I left Rachel's tomb. I walked out where my guide in the car was waiting, and I looked over on the side. And there, next to the wall with all this concrete, the last place in the world you feel you're going to have a spiritual moment, because it's a contentious area, there's a little tiny garden. Teeny, small little spot where some flowers are planted. So I naturally looked at it. I went over there, and there on the wall above the flowers was a scripture from the book of Jeremiah, the 31st chapter verses 15 through 17. And it just happens to be in English as well as Hebrew. It just happens to be in English. And I stood there and I read these words. Now, remember the state that I'm in and what I'm hoping for.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 47:32

"Thus saith the Lord. A voice was heard in Ramah." Ramah is nearby. "Lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel weeping for her children, refuse to be comforted, for her children because they were not. Thus saith the Lord, 'Refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears, for thy work shall be rewarded,' saith the Lord. 'And they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end,' saith the Lord, 'that thy children shall come again to their own border.'"

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 48:27

Now, those are beautiful words. They're beautiful words for the Jewish people. That's why they put them there. Rachel weeping as the children of Israel leave Jerusalem, going into Babylonian captivity. And Jeremiah's quoting the Lord here. Most of chapter 31 is God's voice saying, "Don't weep. I know you're weeping as you go into captivity, but I'm going to bring you back."

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 48:57

But that's not how I'm reading it. I'm reading it that the Lord is saying, "Mike, I hear your lamentation. I hear your bitter weeping. You refuse to be comforted because your wife is not here. Refrain from weeping and your eyes from tears. I know what you've offered me, and your work will be rewarded, and

she will come again. And there is hope in your end." As I stood there crying, crying, the guide came over to me. He saw I was moved what I was reading, and he said, "Mike, those are the words on Rachel's tomb you saw in Hebrew." Those are the words on Rachel's tomb. Now, who knew that? My father in heaven knew it. Maybe Laurie knew it. I didn't know it. The last place I probably would've gone to for comfort, but God knew where the verse I needed was.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 50:24

And I believe that's true of all things. He knows where the verses are we need, and if we'll be as familiar as we can, he can direct us in his own way. And then the words of verse 13 will be true for all of us, whatever we face. "I will turn their mourning into joy and will comfort them and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And my people shall be satisfied with my goodness."

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 51:02

How can I not be satisfied with the Lord's goodness? With the very next verses that he gives as proof in my life personally of his goodness are the words I need, that I think of all the time when I get nervous that she's not there and she won't be mine? I hear the Lord say, "Don't weep, Mike. Your work will be rewarded. There's hope in your end." Every time I hear Somewhere Over the Rainbow, I think of my dream. Somewhere over the rainbow, skies are blue. Somewhere over the rainbow, Laurie is. And the dream that I dare to dream really will come true, and I'll be with her again.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 52:03

So I love Jeremiah for that purpose. So a lot of wonderful things in Jeremiah, but those verses are the ones that mean the most to me. And you probably didn't know, Hank, that Jeremiah 31 meant so much to me. Being able to share Jeremiah with you and with the people has been an honor and a privilege. There's a lot of wonderful things in Jeremiah.

Hank Smith: 52:30

Well, we loved having you, and I think you captured Jeremiah perfectly. John, don't you think?

John Bytheway: 52:37

Yeah, I can't imagine it Michael. Just hearing that story, I think I'm more in love with my wife right now. I can't imagine it, what you've been through. But what a personal message for you right there. That was beautiful.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 52:56

God is good. If I can end with one last Jeremiah, maybe this is a good one to end with. It's chapter 29. It's again that hope. Verse 11. Again, I make it very personal. Jeremiah 29:11 through 14-15. "'I know the thoughts that I think towards you,' saith the

Lord. 'Thoughts of peace and not of evil. To give you an expected end.'"

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 53:31

Again, you imagine how I feel when I read that. "I know the thoughts I think towards you, Michael, or whoever you are out there. I know the thoughts I think towards you. Thoughts of peace. I want you to have peace. Not of evil. To give you the end you want, to give you the expected end. Then shall you call upon me when you really know what kind of a God I am. Then shall you call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you,' saith the Lord, 'and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places whither I have driven you. And I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.'"

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 54:35

Again, the multiple meanings of that verse that I can read in terms of 70 years hence, establishment of the state of Israel, the restoration on the gathering, or me personally. But for me personally, verses 11 through 13 are very powerful. "I know the thoughts I think towards you, and they're thoughts of peace. And I'm going to give you your expected end. You call on me and pray, and I'll listen. And you'll find me when you search for me with all your heart. No matter wherever you are. House of Israel, wherever you are. In Denver or Frankfurt or Taipei or Rio de Janeiro, wherever you are. If you look for me, you're going to find me. My thoughts of you are thoughts of peace. And I'll give you what you want in the end." Because most of us don't want improper things. Most of us want what things will truly make us happy. God will give them to us if we'll wait patiently, as Jeremiah said. Just wait patiently.

Hank Smith: 55:49

And it will seem but a few days.

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox: 55:52

Yeah, time does go faster. I long for her. I do.

Hank Smith: 55:57

Thank you for being with us today. We want to thank Dr. Mike Wilcox for being with us today. We want to thank our executive producers, Steve and Shannon Sorensen, our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen. And we hope you'll join us next week on another episode of FollowHIM.

John Bytheway: 56:17

We have an amazing production crew we want you to know about. David Perry, Lisa Spice, Jamie Nielsen, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, and Ariel Cuadra. Thank you to our amazing production team.



Hank Smith:	00:05	Hello, everyone. Welcome to another FollowHIM Favorites. My name is Hank Smith. I'm here with the amazing and incredible and perfect John Bytheway.
Hank Smith:	00:13	If you've been following FollowHIM Favorites this year, you know that we take a single question from each week's lesson and try to talk about it for FollowHIM Favorites. Well, John, the question for this week is from Jeremiah, Chapter 36. This is out of the "Come Follow Me" manual.
Hank Smith:	00:29	It says, "The Scriptures have power to turn me away from evil." And it talks about how Jeremiah was recording his prophecies in a roll of a book, on a scroll. And it says, "So it may be that they, the people, may return every man from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity."
Hank Smith:	00:47	So tell me, how did the scriptures turn someone away from evil? I want to read my scriptures, and I also want to turn away from evil. How do they have to do with each other?
John Bytheway:	00:57	I think sometimes it's not even exactly the words that we read. Some of these chapters in the Old Testament, as we're all learning are, you really have to slow down. They're hard to understand.
John Bytheway:	01:08	Have you ever heard that old saying, "If you want to talk to God, pray, if you want God to talk to you, read your Scriptures?" Just the fact that you are opening your heart to God by reading the Scriptures, that right there is going to bless you. We all know that when Satan tried to tempt the Savior, that the Savior answered each of those temptations with a verse of Scripture.
Hank Smith:	01:30	Yeah, he quoted Scripture.
John Bytheway:	01:32	Yeah. Sometimes those verses really will help us fight temptation. We'll remember things. But I think the very active just trying to have God in your life, it just gives you the Holy Ghost. It gives you the spirit of the Lord, and that will always help you.

John Bytheway:	01:46	Whether what you read necessarily is exactly what helps you, or the act of trying to understand what the Lord's trying to say to you, that itself will help you too. What do you think?
Hank Smith:	01:58	I think you're absolutely right. I did a talk one time, called Temptation Killers, and Temptation Killer Number One was the Scriptures. I used that example you used from Jesus' life, that he quotes Scripture in the face of temptation.
Hank Smith:	02:12	I encourage the audience to find temptation killing scriptures and memorize them, whatever those might be, like when Moses says, "Who art thou? I am a son of God."
John Bytheway:	02:22	That's a great one.
Hank Smith:	02:23	From the book of Ether. "And Moron did that which was wicked in the sight of the Lord." It helps you go, "I don't want to be like Moron. I don't want to do what's wicked in the sight of the Lord."
Hank Smith:	02:35	Or Joseph of Egypt, when he said, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" So find some temptation killers in your scriptures and memorize them.
Hank Smith:	02:43	I remember Elder Scott saying, "A memorized scripture can become like a close friend, there when you need it. In the time of need, it will show up next to you as a close friend." I always needed more friends in high school than I had. So that was really helpful, to have a couple close friends at my side.
Hank Smith:	03:00	And I think you were right about, that maybe it's not about understanding every word. But it's trying to get into that same spirit that the author had, when they wrote the Scripture. If you can try to get into that same feeling, I call it like being in the zone.
Hank Smith:	03:17	When you're reading your scriptures, and maybe you don't understand every word, but you're feeling something. I think that feeling can carry you through the next day of, "I want to keep this spirit."
John Bytheway:	03:28	Yeah. You'll remember Oliver Cowdery, in Section Six? Oliver Cowdery had to get a revelation to tell him that he'd already received a revelation, which tells us that sometimes you don't understand revelations, sometimes you don't understand the scriptures. But the very act that you were there, trying to understand, is a protection.

John Bytheway:	03:49	I love what you said, "Have some verses in your head that help you." Have some positive ones, too, not just that say, "Don't do that." But one of my favorites is First Corinthians 2:9. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God has prepared for them that love him."
John Bytheway:	04:06	It just says, "No matter how wonderful or beautiful you can imagine it, it's better what God has prepared for them that love him." That motivates me to love God. And part of loving God is, "If you love me, keep my commandments," so ...
Hank Smith:	04:19	Yeah, I think so. I think, the more you can get in tune with the Spirit, and that comes from reading scripture. Again, when I was first reading scripture, I remember, John, when I was young, it was mostly me just looking for good thoughts, good quotes.
Hank Smith:	04:33	I didn't really understand every verse or every word, but I would find a good phrase, and I would mark it. Usually, on every page, you could find a good phrase, a good quote, or a sermon in a sentence, as you like to call it.
Hank Smith:	04:45	As you do that, over and over and over, you're going to get more in tune with the Spirit. And as you get more in tune with the Spirit, believe it or not, sin is going to look less and less attractive to you. Remember what the people of King Benjamin said? "We have been changed by the Spirit. We have no more disposition to do evil."
Hank Smith:	05:03	It'll change the way you look at sin. You'll look at something and go, "You know what? That doesn't seem as good as it once did to me." And that's because of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost can actually do that for you.
Hank Smith:	05:14	So I would say, get into the Scriptures, look for those words and phrases. If you've never done it before, look for those power words and phrases. Keep doing it every day. And as you do, you'll become more aligned with the Spirit. You'll feel that attractiveness towards things that are really good and holy.
John Bytheway:	05:30	Yeah, I had a class from Gerald Lund, who was Elder Gerald Lund, a member of the Seventy for a time. And he talked about some of our approaches to try to get people to read the scriptures.
John Bytheway:	05:40	He said, "There's bribery, there's guilt, there's," he called it "the medicine approach." "You're not going to like this, but it's going to be good for you."

Hank Smith:	05:48	Yeah.
John Bytheway:	05:49	But the one thing, it just came to me, that I loved was, he called it, "There's another approach, and that is the approach the scriptures themselves use." And he called it promises.
John Bytheway:	06:00	I actually have a handout I give to some of my classes, and say, "Fill in the blank. What is the promise here of scripture study?" The fun thing that they all recognize, they're not, "Read the Scriptures, so some day in the next life, you'll have a reward."
John Bytheway:	06:13	It's right now type of things. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet." When I read the Scriptures, my path is lighted. I know better where I should be going, what I should be doing.
John Bytheway:	06:24	One that comes to mind, First Nephi 15:24. Nephi is explaining, to his brothers, Lehi's dream, Nephi's vision of Lehi's dream, right? What is that rod of iron? It's the word of God, "and whoso would hold fast unto it, they would never perish."
John Bytheway:	06:39	And never is a strong word, isn't it? "Neither could the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them." I mean, fiery darts. How'd you like people shooting arrows at you?
Hank Smith:	06:48	Yeah.
John Bytheway:	06:49	Would you like it any better if the arrows were on fire? But if you're holding on, you'll never perish. What a strong promise, and those can build us up.
John Bytheway:	07:02	Elder Lund's approach was, there are promises from scripture study, that instead of guilt, shame, bribery, medicine, there are promises, and look for those. Those are kind of fun, too.
Hank Smith:	07:14	Oftentimes, we say, "Read the scriptures, and it'll help you stay away from evil." And you might not understand it, but keep doing it.
Hank Smith:	07:21	It's like the farmer who plants a seed, the Savior says, and doesn't know how it works, but he keeps doing it. And he knows that at the end, it works. He eats.
Hank Smith:	07:31	So don't give up on it, even if you don't know exactly how it works. You'll learn more about how it works as you do it, as you keep at it, as you keep getting back into those Scriptures.

Hank Smith:	07:41	I would say, just add one more little thing, John, is that you can write your own scripture. As you pick up your pen, and ponder the things of God, and start to write in your journal, perhaps, that can become scripture for you.
Hank Smith:	07:52	It can become the things of your soul. So I'll add that in, too. Just think about writing your own.
Hank Smith:	07:57	Well, we hope you'll join us on our full podcast. We're with Dr. Michael Wilcox, who you will just absolutely love, for these sections. And then, join us next week, back here for another FollowHIM Favorites.