

Monday - Week Thirty

Lesson Eighty-Seven: Esther, Queen of Persia

Read: The Book of Esther

Summary: God kept His people safe from attack through a beautiful Jewish woman and a bold Jewish man.

Background and Comments

- The word “God” does not appear in the book of Esther (or any other name for God)! Does this mean that God is not “in” this account? No, the author of Esther no doubt wanted to teach us that God was behind everything that happened in this book. All of the little details, the events that could have easily not happened, were God’s doing.
- Haman’s attack could have killed nearly all the Jews in the empire (including those who had just returned to Jerusalem). This would have put the promise of the Savior in danger (the long promised Messiah would be born from Abraham’s line).
- Esther did not try to attack Haman head on; he might have been able to lie his way out of the situation. Instead she caught him off guard when his defenses were not up.

Lessons for Today

- King Xerxes was a male chauvinist when he ordered Queen Vashti to dance for his drunken guests. How much different are the words God addresses to Christian husbands, “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the Church.”
- Notice that Esther told Mordecai to pray all along with the other Jews in Susa (the capital city). In the face of overwhelming odds prayer is always our best answer.
- Haman had bad luck. The king couldn’t sleep one night and ended up hearing about Mordecai’s exploits. He slipped on a rug and ended up in Esther’s lap; the king thought he was trying to force himself on Esther. Of course this was not bad luck. God was directing even the details of Esther and Mordecai’s life. What details has God directed lately in your life?

Read: Psalm 125; James 1.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, help me to see Your hand even in the “little things” of life. Thank You for Your constant direction and protection. Use this fact to encourage me in my daily life. Knowing that You are at work in all things reassures me that I can do great things with Your help. I ask this in the name of Jesus; Amen.

Tuesday - Week Thirty

Lesson Eighty-eight: Ezra and Nehemiah

Read: Ezra 7-10; Nehemiah 1-8

Summary: Ezra and Nehemiah led groups of Israelites back to Jerusalem. Both of them were very concerned about doing God's will.

Background and Comments

- Ezra wanted to make sure that there were enough temple helpers so that the worship would work the way God outlined in the Bible. His concern for the fine points of God's law shows us what kind of a man he was.
- Nehemiah led the third emigration of exiles to Jerusalem (Ezra led the second). Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem with a specific purpose in mind: rebuilding the walls of the city. Without these walls the Israelites were sitting ducks for their enemies. Nehemiah's single minded determination impresses us.
- The Israelites had learned their lesson. The captivity had taught them how important it was to follow God's Word. In the following few hundred years they fell into a different trap. They followed the outward elements of their religion (sacrifices, etc.) but their hearts were not in their worship.

Lessons for Today

- Ezra became upset that the nobles and priests in Jerusalem had failed to follow God's law. The nobles had participated in heathen practices. The priests had even fallen into forms of heathenism. Notice that Ezra didn't shy away from confronting powerful people. He knew that success depended on God's blessings, not on happy nobles or priests.
- The Samaritans opposed Nehemiah's good work. Unfortunately quite a few people still try to oppose good works. When is the last time someone tried to stop you from doing something God-pleasing? Have you failed to encourage someone as they were attempting to please God?
- Nehemiah finished the temple in record time. Nehemiah dreamed big dreams, put them into God's hands, worked hard and accomplished much. Are you putting that philosophy into practice in your life?

Read: Psalm 126; James 2.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, work in my life as You worked in the lives of the Israelites. Thank You for Your love. In Jesus' name; Amen.

Wednesday - Week Thirty

Catechism Review

Read Questions 251-257

1. Describe the difference between objective and subjective justification.

2. Has God forgiven the sins of unbelievers? Explain.

3. Faith is necessary for us to go to heaven; without it Jesus' work doesn't help us at all. Some churches use the phrase: "All you have to do is believe." How is that different than the first sentences of this question?

4. God has called us to share the Word of God with other people. Explain: when we witness to others we are more like reporters than salespeople.

How will that practically impact your witnessing?

5. Why is the Biblical doctrine of objective justification so important when you are going through tough times?

Read: Psalm 127; James 3.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for the work Jesus did for me. Amen.

Thursday - Week Thirty

Lesson Eighty-nine: Old Testament Wrap-up

God's Heroes: The Old Testament is full of heroes of the faith. For each of the following people write down one thing you can learn from them

1. Adam
2. Noah
3. Abraham
4. Sarah
5. Rebekah
6. Jacob
7. Joseph
8. Deborah
9. Samson
10. David
11. Solomon
12. Jeremiah
13. Nehemiah

Read: Psalm 128; James 4.

Friday - Week Thirty

John - Lesson One: Introduction to John

1. John is a unique book of the Bible because the author clearly spells out his purpose for writing. What is the purpose of this Gospel? (John 20:31)
2. Keep this purpose in mind as you study the book. John chose to leave out many events recorded by Matthew, Mark and Luke. He also included things the others omitted. John's Gospel was specifically designed to lead people to a stronger faith. Read John 20:31 again; what is the key to having a stronger faith?
3. John 21:20-24 tells us that "the disciple whom Jesus loved" wrote this Gospel. By process of elimination, this disciple must be John. John was a follower of John the Baptist (John 1:19-42 and Mark 1:14-20). Those early days of listening to John the Baptist prepared St. John for his life's work. John could have ignored the prophet in the wilderness and put all his time into his father's fishing business. Thank God he chose to dedicate his life to his God rather than to the god of money. What are you dedicating your life to?
4. Acts 4:13 tells us that Peter and John were "ordinary, unschooled men". How could John have gotten so wise?
5. Jesus nicknamed James and John the Sons of Thunder. Why (Luke 9:51-56)?

By the time John wrote his first letter how had He changed? (I John 3:11-24)

How is this encouraging for us?

Read: Psalm 129; James 5.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, bless my study of the book of John. Amen.