

LESSON 13 - Esther

LOGOS

A General and Light Survey of the Bible

By Dr. Steven Wood

(REVISED) TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Lesson 1:	Overview
Lesson 2:	Genesis
Lesson 3:	Exodus
Lesson 4:	Leviticus
Lesson 5:	Numbers
Lesson 6:	Deuteronomy
Lesson 7:	Joshua
Lesson 8:	Judges, Ruth
Lesson 9:	1st & 2nd Samuel
Lesson 10:	1st & 2nd Kings
Lesson 11:	1st & 2nd Chronicles
Lesson 12:	Ezra, Nehemiah
Lesson 13:	Esther
May 1, 2024:	Job
May 8, 2024:	Psalms
May 15, 2024:	Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs
May 22, 2024:	Isaiah
May 29, 2024:	Jeremiah, Lamentations

--- SUMMER ---

September 4, 2024:	Ezekiel
September 11, 2024:	Daniel
September 18, 2024:	Hosea, Joel, Amos
September 25, 2024:	Obadian, Jonah, Micah
October 2, 2024:	Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah
October 9, 2024:	Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
October 16, 2024:	INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT
October 23, 2024:	The Synoptics (Matthew, Mark, Luke)
October 30, 2024:	John
November 6, 2024:	Acts
November 13, 2024:	Romans
November 20, 2024:	1st & 2nd Corinthians
November 27, 2024:	Galatians

--- ADVENT / CHRISTMAS ---

January 8, 2025:	Ephesians
January 15, 2025:	Colossians
January 22, 2025:	1st & 2nd Thessalonians
January 29, 2025:	1st & 2nd Timothy
February 5, 2025:	Titus, Philemon
February 12, 2025:	Hebrews
February 19, 2025:	James
February 26, 2025:	1st & 2nd Peter, Jude
March 5, 2025:	<i>Ash Wednesday</i>
March 12, 2025:	1st, 2nd, 3rd John
March 19, 2025:	Revelation

Lesson 13

ESTHER

- While Ezra and Nehemiah deal with the remnant that returned to Jerusalem and Judah, Esther has to do with those who stayed in Babylon/Persia. The number who stayed was far greater than the number who returned.
- The setting is *Shushan*, which is Susa, the capital of Persia (Esther 1:2; Nehemiah 1:1).
- The overarching theme is God's providential care for his people.

OUTLINE

- Xerxes
 - ... ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush (Ethiopia) from 485-465 BC.
 - In some writings he is known as Ahasuerus, the Greek form of his Persian name.
- Queen Vashti is deposed.
 - The name 'Vashti' means *beautiful woman*.
 - ...in the third year of his reign... Xerxes gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials... For a full 180 days he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty. When these days were over, the king gave a banquet, lasting seven days... By the king's command each guest was allowed to drink with no restrictions... Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the royal palace... (1:3-9).
 - On the seventh day, when King Xerxes was drunk ...he commanded his servants ...to bring ...Queen Vashti, wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to the people and nobles, for she was lovely to look at... But... Queen Vashti refused to come. Then the king became furious and burned with anger... he spoke with the wise men... "According to law, what must be done to Queen Vashti?" ...They replied, "Queen Vashti has done wrong, not only against the king but also against all the nobles and the peoples of all the provinces... For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women... Therefore, if it pleases the king, let him issue a royal decree and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed, that Vashti is never again to enter the presence of King Xerxes. Also let the king give her royal position to someone else who is better than her. Then when the king's edict is proclaimed throughout all his vast realm, all the women will respect their husbands, from the least to the greatest." ...so the king... sent dispatches to all parts of the kingdom... proclaiming that every man should be ruler over his own household... (1:10-22)
- Esther becomes queen.
 - Then the king's personal attendants proposed, "Let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king... bring all these

beautiful young women into the harem at the citadel of Susa... and let beauty treatments be given to them. Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti.” This advice appealed to the king, and he followed it. (2:2-4)

- A little background - Mordecai, Esther’s uncle.
 - *...a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin...*
 - *...who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, among those taken captive with Jehoiachin king of Judah.*
 - *...had a cousin named Hadassah, (Esther) whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother... (2:5-7)*
 - *He advised Esther not to reveal her nationality and family background.*
- The beauty contest. *...many young women were brought to the citadel of Susa... Esther also was taken to the king’s palace and entrusted to Hegai, who had charge of the harem. She pleased him and won his favor. ...he provided her with her beauty treatments and special food... assigned to her seven female attendants... and moved her... into the best place in the harem. Esther had not revealed her nationality and family background... Before a young woman’s turn came to go in to King Xerxes, she had to complete twelve months of beauty treatments... Esther won the favor of everyone who saw her... the king was attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women, and she won his favor... So, he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. (2:8-17)*
- Meanwhile, an assassination plot. *During the time Mordecai was sitting at the king’s gate, Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s officers who guarded the doorway, became angry and conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king, giving credit to Mordecai. And when the report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were impaled on poles. (2:21-23)*
- Haman – the villain.
 - A promotion. *...King Xerxes honored Haman... giving him a seat of honor higher than that of all the other nobles. All the royal officials at the king’s gate knelt down and paid honor to Haman, for the king had commanded this concerning him. But Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor. (3:1-2)*
 - *When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged... having learned who Mordecai’s people were... he looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai’s people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes. (3:5-6)*
 - The plot to kill all the Jews. *...Haman said to King Xerxes, “There is a certain people dispersed among the peoples in all the*

provinces of your kingdom who keep themselves separate. Their customs are different from those of all other people, and they do not obey the king's laws; it is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them... let a decree be issued to destroy them... So, the king took his signet ring from his finger and gave it to Haman... "do with the people as you please." ...Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews—young and old, women and children—on a single day... A copy of the text of the edict was to be issued as law in every province and made known to the people of every nationality so they would be ready for that day. (3:8-14)

- Mordecai seeks Esther's help. *When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly... In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and ashes. When Esther's... attendants... told her about Mordecai, she was in great distress... Then Esther summoned Hathak... and ordered him to find out what was troubling Mordecai... Mordecai told him everything that had happened... and gave him a copy of the... edict for their annihilation... and he told him to instruct her to go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people... Then she instructed him to say to Mordecai, "All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that they be put to death unless the king extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives..." Mordecai... sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."* (4)
- Esther lays a trap for Haman.
 - *On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace... The king was sitting on his royal throne... When he saw Queen Esther... he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand... Then the king asked, "...What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you."* Esther replied, *"...let the king, together with Haman, come*

today to a banquet I have prepared for him.” ...So, the king and Haman went to the banquet Esther had prepared. As they were drinking wine, the king again asked Esther, “Now what is your petition?” Esther replied, “If the king regards me with favor... let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them. Then I will answer the king’s question.” (5:1-8)

- Haman went out that day happy and in high spirits... Calling together his friends and Zeresh, his wife, Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honored him... “And that’s not all... I’m the only person Queen Esther invited to accompany the king to the banquet she gave. And she has invited me along with the king tomorrow. But all this gives me no satisfaction as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king’s gate.” His wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, “Have a pole set up, reaching to a height of fifty cubits (about 75 feet), and ask the king in the morning to have Mordecai impaled on it... This suggestion delighted Haman, and he had the pole set up. (5:9-14)
- That night the king could not sleep; so, he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him. It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh... who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. “What honor and recognition has Mordecai received for this?” the king asked. “Nothing has been done for him,” his attendants answered... Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the palace to speak to the king about impaling Mordecai on the pole he had set up for him... the king asked him, “What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?” Now Haman thought to himself, “Who is there that the king would rather honor than me?” So, he answered, “...have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden... Let them robe the man the king delights to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city streets... “Go at once,” the king commanded Haman. “Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew...” So, Haman... robed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city streets... Then Haman rushed home... and told Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him. His advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him... While they were still talking with him, the king’s men arrived and hurried Haman away to the banquet Esther had prepared. (6)
- The other shoe drops. So, the king and Haman went to Queen Esther’s banquet... the king again asked, “Queen

Esther, what is your petition?” ...Queen Esther answered, “...I and my people have been sold to be destroyed, killed and annihilated...” King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, “Who is he? ...who has dared to do such a thing?” Esther said, “...This vile Haman!” ...The king got up in a rage, left his wine and went out into the palace garden. But Haman, realizing that the king had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life. Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining. The king exclaimed, “Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?” As soon as the word left the king’s mouth, they covered Haman’s face. Then Harbona, one of the men attending the king, said, “A pole reaching to a height of fifty cubits (75 feet) stands by Haman’s house. He had it set up for Mordecai...” The king said, “Impale him on it!” So, they impaled Haman on the pole he had set up for Mordecai. (7)

- The Jews saved and Mordecai elevated.
 - *That same day King Xerxes gave Queen Esther the estate of Haman... And Mordecai came into the presence of the king, for Esther had told how he was related to her. The king took off his signet ring, which he had reclaimed from Haman, and presented it to Mordecai. And Esther appointed him over Haman’s estate. (8:1-2)*
 - *Esther again pleaded with the king... She begged him to put an end to the evil plan of Haman... Then the king extended the gold scepter to Esther... “Because Haman attacked the Jews, I have given his estate to Esther, and they have impaled him on the pole he set up. Now write another decree in the king’s name in behalf of the Jews as seems best to you, and seal it with the king’s signet ring—for no document written in the king’s name and sealed with his ring can be revoked.” ... Mordecai wrote in the name of King Xerxes, sealed the dispatches with the king’s signet ring, and sent them by mounted couriers, who rode fast horses especially bred for the king. The king’s edict granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves; to destroy, kill and annihilate the armed men of any nationality or province who might attack them... and to plunder the property of their enemies. ...In every province and in every city to which the edict of the king came, there was joy and gladness among the Jews, with feasting and celebrating.*
- Purim (pronounced poo-REEM) Established.
 - *On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, the edict commanded by the king was to be carried out. On this day the enemies of the Jews had hoped to over-*

power them, but now the tables were turned, and the Jews got the upper hand over those who hated them... No one could stand against them, because the people of all the other nationalities were afraid of them. And all the nobles of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, and the king's administrators helped the Jews, because fear of Mordecai had seized them. (9:1-3)

- *The Jews struck down all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them... the remainder of the Jews who were in the king's provinces also assembled to protect themselves and get relief from their enemies. They killed seventy-five thousand of them but did not lay their hands on the plunder... This happened on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, and on the fourteenth, they rested and made it a day of feasting and joy. The Jews in Susa, however, had assembled on the thirteenth and fourteenth, and then on the fifteenth they rested and made it a day of feasting and joy... Mordecai recorded these events, and he sent letters to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Xerxes, near and far, to have them celebrate annually the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar as the time when the Jews got relief from their enemies, and... when their sorrow was turned into joy... He wrote them to observe the days as days of feasting and joy and giving presents of food to one another and gifts to the poor..*

*NOTE: Modern Jews still celebrate the Feast of Purim in late winter or early spring with two days consisting of a reading of the book of Esther in the evening of each day, giving money gifts to at least two poor people, sending gifts of two kinds of food to at least one person, a festive Purim feast, which includes specific foods, as well as wine or other intoxicating beverages.

- *Mordecai the Jew was Jews and rank to King Xerxes, preeminent among the Jews, and held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews.*
- NOTE: Old Testament history begins in Genesis and closes after the accounts of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. The rest of the Old Testament is poetry and prophecy written during the events recorded in the historic books. Roughly 500 years passed between the return to Judah and the beginning of the New Testament, including "The Period of Silence," a period of about 400 years leading up to the birth of Christ.

NEXT WEEK: The Book of Job.

