



## Biblical Missionaries 3Q 2015 Lesson 6 Esther and Mordecai

### SABBATH

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Read the first three paragraphs, "Esther was used..." What do you think of the idea of Esther's faithfulness?

We are looking at it from thousands of years downstream, through the perspective of history. Try for a moment to put yourself as one of her contemporaries, would you have viewed her as being faithful?

What does it mean to be faithful? Faithful to what or to whom?

- Were Esther and her uncle Mordecai following the Lord's directions for their lives?
- From the book Prophets and Kings we have this commentary:

Under the favor shown them by Cyrus, nearly fifty thousand of the children of the captivity had taken advantage of the decree permitting their return. These, however, in comparison with the hundreds of thousands scattered throughout the provinces of Medo-Persia, were but a mere remnant. **The great majority of the Israelites had chosen to remain in the land of their exile** rather than undergo the hardships of the return journey and the re-establishment of their desolated cities and homes. {PK 598.1}

A score or more of years passed by, when a second decree, quite as favorable as the first, was issued by Darius Hystaspes, the monarch then ruling. **Thus did God in mercy provide another opportunity for the Jews in the Medo-Persian realm to return to the land of their fathers.** The Lord foresaw the troublous times that were to follow during the reign of Xerxes,--the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther,--and He not only wrought a change of feeling in the hearts of men in authority, but also inspired Zechariah to plead with the exiles to return. {PK 598.2}

"Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north," was the message given the scattered tribes of Israel who had become settled in many lands far from their former home. "I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the Lord. Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon. For thus saith the Lord of hosts; After the glory hath He sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye. For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me." Zechariah 2:6-9.... {PK 599.1}

It was those "whose spirit God had raised" (Ezra 1:5) who had returned under the decree of Cyrus. **But God ceased not to plead with those who voluntarily remained in the land of**



**their exile**, and through manifold agencies He made it possible for them also to return. **The large number, however, of those who failed to respond to the decree of Cyrus, remained unimpressible to later influences; and even when Zechariah warned them to flee from Babylon without further delay, they did not heed the invitation.** {PK 599.3}

- Which group of Jews did Esther and Mordecai fall into, those who faithfully returned to Israel or those who remained “unimpressed”?
- So, were Esther and Mordecai obedient to God’s plan, going where He instructed or not?
- Did God cast them off or turn His back on them?
- Did Esther and Mordecai, and the rest of the Jews who remained, suffer hardship and difficulty they might have avoided, had they followed God’s plan from the beginning?

How would you define faithful? The lesson states she worked “undercover”

- Do we view acting in ways to deceive as being faithful?
- Does working undercover meaning purposely choosing to mislead?
- And, BEFORE Esther became queen, what did the interview process with the king entail?

Before each young woman was taken to the king’s bed, she was given the prescribed twelve months of beauty treatments—six months with oil of myrrh, followed by six months with special perfumes and ointments.<sup>13</sup> When it was time for her to go to the king’s palace, she was given her choice of whatever clothing or jewelry she wanted to take from the harem.<sup>14</sup> That evening she was taken to the king’s private rooms, and the next morning she was brought to the second harem,\* where the king’s wives lived. There she would be under the care of Shaashgaz, the king’s eunuch in charge of the concubines. She would never go to the king again unless he had especially enjoyed her and requested her by name.

<sup>15</sup> Esther was the daughter of Abihail, who was Mordecai’s uncle. (Mordecai had adopted his younger cousin Esther.) When it was Esther’s turn to go to the king, she accepted the advice of Hegai, the eunuch in charge of the harem. She asked for nothing except what he suggested, and she was admired by everyone who saw her. Esther 2:12-15

If Esther was your daughter would you have advised her to tell the king, we can only talk, but for the rest, we must wait until marriage?

Or, was it part of her “undercover” work to do this, obviously no Persian woman would object, so if she objected she would reveal her beliefs were based on something other than the pagan gods of Persia.

So, how was Esther faithful?

So what did she do? She put her life on the line to save others. She was safe in her position; she could continue to hide who she was, but she instead chose to risk her own life in order to try and save others. This was an act of love, this act, more than anything else, modeled, revealed,



demonstrated, God's character of love and thus was faithful to God and His kingdom of love.

This is the faithfulness we see in Rahab—who is in the hall of faith because even though she hid spies and lied, her heart action was one of self-sacrificial love. She wasn't lying to protect herself, or thinking of herself, she was protecting others to the best of her ability from evil forces.

## **SUNDAY**

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The lesson asks us to read from the first chapter of Esther, the account of the king's party, drunkenness, requesting Queen Vashti to dance, her refusal and banishment.

In the first paragraph it states, "Whatever her response, she faced a dilemma of losing status, and her courageous choice to retain self-esteem in the face of an autocratic ruler's base desires prepares the reader to understand the power for good that a principled woman could exert, even in a male-dominated royal court."

What principle, according to the lesson, did the queen stand for? Herself – her pride, her reputation, her self-esteem—is that a godly principle?

Why do they validate this as noble? Is it noble to stand for one's pride, to refuse actions that would humiliate and demean us?

When Jesus was being mistreated, should he have stood on principle of retaining self-esteem and refused to be demeaned and lose status?

Why does the lesson validate this self-first principle? Because when one looks through the lens of imposed law, one focuses on the right behavior – since her behavior was "right" in refusing to indulge the lewd request, the authors sought a motivation that caused the behavior. In this case, it was self-esteem, pride. I think the authors are probably right in identifying pride as the reason for Vashti's refusal, however, is this to be validated as honorable?

Which is better to do the wrong action for the right reason or the right action for the wrong reason?

Just look at what God blessed – Vashti stands up for self and is desposed, Esther sacrifices self for others and is blessed. Rahab sacrifices self for others and is blessed. (Both Esther and Rahab did actions that are outside the 10 Commandments, but heart motive was right)

Jesus said in MT 5...

Much of the Christian world falls into the Vashti trap, looking through imposed law lens, they validate prideful, selfish behavior as honorable if it behaviorally follows within their rule set. These were the Pharisees in Christ's day. They would find honorable the son who donated his property to Corban, and refused to care for his family.



Of course, what God ultimately wants is maturity of character that is intelligent and understands His design and purposes so that the motives and behaviors are in perfect harmony. But in the maturing process, heart motive is what matters, not the specific behavior—so back to Vashti:

Could her refusal of the king have been an act of love—could Vashti have loved her husband and realized he had put himself in a compromising situation and she weighed which course would cause him the least eternal damage—refusing him and thus causing political embarrassment, or agreeing and adding the guilt of debasing his wife to his conscience?

Was it God's desire for these events to happen? Did God cause the king to get drunk and demand his wife dance? Did God cause Vashti to refuse?

- Were the king's motives in sending for Vashti motives of godly love?
- Was Vashti's refusal motivated by love?
- So, then, were these actions fruits of the Spirit of love?
- Who is the motivator toward selfishness?
- What happens when selfishness rules our decision-making?

Read bottom green section, "So far in the story..." Do you agree we should stand on principles? And is there a difference between principles and rules? But do the principles one is standing for matter?

- Do parents, of certain religious groups, who refuse to give their children life-saving medicine stand on principle? What principles?
- Do people who vandalize abortion clinics do so on principle? What principle?
- Do people who refuse to eat out on Sabbath stand on principle? What principle?

Here is a photograph of a sign in the window of a public restaurant, called Schilo, in San Antonio during the GC

The voucher is a piece of paper, purchased for \$10.00 that one would use on Sabbath and exchange for food. In principle, what is the difference from using the voucher on Sabbath, than using a piece of paper with a US President on it?



- Were the Jews who crucified Christ standing on principle? The principle of self-preservation?
- Will the persecuting powers who constitute the beast of Revelation and persecute God's children do so on principle? What principle?

Does our view of God and His law make a difference as to what principles we hold?



So, we do need to stand on principle—but do we need to identify upon which principles we are standing?

I was listening to Moody radio this week and they were discussing God’s character and they were making the point that most important thing in a person’s life is the view of God they hold.

They went on and talked about the parable of the landowner who hired workers at different times of the day. They explained it as God being able to do what He wants with His resources and how humans have selfish motives that interpret things through a “what is earned” mentality, and that with God we don’t earn anything.

Are there other ways to understand the parable? What difference when we understand the parable through design law, the reality to which the parable is actually pointing?

In the parable each of the workers received the same wage, a denarius. What does the coin represent? What is the reality? What is the wage that is paid by God to those who work in His field? A healed character, reconciliation with God and eternal life, it is not an arbitrary payment, it is design law payment, thus it is fair. And the opposite payment is likewise design law – as the Bible says, “the wages of sin is death.”

Now, in the parable, who had the advantage, those who experienced God’s love and truth, converted, gave up fear and selfishness as their prime motive for life, and entered into the field of God’s service early in life like Daniel, or those who are like the thief on the cross, enter at the last hour?

It is only when we see through imposed law lenses, which is the payment of a coin, an arbitrarily determined compensation/reward, that an unfairness element enters.

Jesus told this parable to show them how their imposed law view fails, how thinking through that lens creates tension and factions and divides, and thus challenged them to rethink – God’s universe is somehow different than what we think.

Sadly, many Christians today still struggle to understand the reality of this parable as they are stuck in imposed law views.

## **MONDAY**

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The lesson focuses on Esther’s decision, based on Mordecai’s instruction, to conceal her Jewish identity? What do you think about this?

Is there a difference from withholding information and actively seeking to obstruct, obscure or intentionally mislead?



In this case, was it merely not disclosing, (like Christ did to His disciples, “I have much to tell you but you cant yet bear it”) or was it actively misleading?

From the SDA Bible commentary on Esther 2:7:

*'Ester.* This may possibly be a Persian loan word. It closely resembles *Stâreh*, a modern Persian name meaning “star.” This name is transliterated into Greek as *Aster* or *Esther* (LXX). The Greek root *aster* appears in such English words as “aster,” “star,” and “asteroid,” which means “starlike.” The Babylonian form of the word was *Ishtar*, which became *Ashtoreth* (plural *Ashtaroth*) and *Astartē* in Greek. In Babylon the planet Venus was deified as *Ishtar*. Mordecai’s selection of a Persian name may have been due to a desire to conceal Esther’s Jewish ancestry (v. 10).<sup>1</sup>

Is it sin to actively conceal information? What did Jesus mean when He said, “Don’t cast your pearls...”?

The lesson contrasts Jesus’ conversation with the woman at the well, where He openly disclosed that He was the Messiah, to His refusal to openly declare this to the Jewish leadership and asks why the difference – thoughts?

Was it about what Jesus understood the various persons would do with the information? In the case of the woman at the well Jesus knew she would use it to spread the gospel. But what would the Jewish leaders have done if Jesus had declared to them He was the Messiah? Would they not have used this to crucify Him for blasphemy?

But did Jesus ever seek to actively mislead people in regard to His identity? He might not have made a verbal declaration of His identity to some, but He also never sought to conceal His identity.

## **TUESDAY**

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Read first paragraph, “In Esther...” Do you agree with the lesson, Mordecai was following the commandment – the commandment says don’t do it, so I don’t do it?

It could be that; it could be Mordecai was only keeping a rule, level four and below action. But couldn’t it be much more?

- Couldn’t Mordecai be at level five development and have actually had a relationship with God and loved God and thus refused to betray that love relationship and refused to be disloyal to God?
- Couldn’t it be that Mordecai was at level six development and understood the law of

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<sup>1</sup> Nichol, F. D. (Ed.). (1977). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Vol. 3, p. 469). Review and Herald Publishing Association.



worship and that to worship any man would not only violate the law of love, but damage everyone involved and Mordecai would not collude with actions that would destroy himself and others?

- Couldn't it be that he was at level seven and understood God had a purpose and would work through the lives of those who trust Him to bring about great good if they stay faithful, and thus he chose not to bow as part of God's greater purpose?

Why do we always have to make it about rules and obeying rules?

What do you think of the famous words of Mordecai to Esther, "Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

The lesson asks: in what way does this apply to your life?

## **WEDNESDAY**

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Read bottom paragraph, "Though Mordecai..." What is the balance between loyalty to God and the state? Are they the same?

Are we to have loyalty to the state? Where does "render to Caesar what is Caesar's" begin and end?

Does the state have a claim on your heart? On your love? On your conscience?

What does it have a claim on? On your cooperation with its governance in harmony with God's design... so does the state have a claim on your cooperation with...

- Slavery
- Jim Crow laws
- taxes?
- What about when taxes are used by the state to fund activities against your conscience?

How do we find that balance between our loyalty and love for God and our country?

Have you ever travelled in a foreign country? While you were there did you enjoy it? Did you obey their laws? But did you care about their politics? Why or why not? If you didn't care about their politics was it because, even though you were in their country, you were not of their country?

Is this how we are to be as Christians, in the world, but not of the world? Do we get derailed when we get too emotionally tied to national identity?

Which government on earth represents God's government? So, good Christians are to be the best citizens, loyal to good living, obedient to laws for social order, safety, and functioning of society, but not burdened with trying to reform the government to become God's kingdom on earth.



Instead, Christians focus on spreading the truth about God to remedy the sin-condition of every human being on planet earth.

## THURSDAY

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Read first paragraph, “No question...” What do you think about fear-based evangelism? How can fear be used appropriately in today’s society, and how is it misused?

- Should we be afraid to jump off the Empire State building?
- Is it wrong to teach our children to fear walking out into traffic?
- Should we be afraid of partaking illegal drugs—why? Because they are illegal and one might get arrested and prosecuted by the state? Or are we afraid of the damage the drugs will do to our brains and bodies?
- Can we present the gospel in a way that incites fear – but fear of what? Fear of unremedied sin, it sears the conscience, warps the character, destroys relationships, incites fear, guilt, shame, damages the health and results in pain, suffering and death! Why? Because sin is deviation from how God constructed life to operate and it is always damaging.
- But, what about when evangelism presents a message that causes people to be afraid of God? What happens when God is presented as the one who inflicts pain, suffering, death on law breakers? What happens when people are taught that sin is wrong because God gets angry and God keeps records to judge and inflict torture and suffering upon the unrepentant? **It might convert people to systems of religion, but such teaching does not bring people to love and trust God.** Instead, they live in fear of God and create false theologies to protect themselves from Him.

## FRIDAY

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Read top paragraph, “The decree...” Who do you think trampled the Sabbath commandment more, the Roman centurion who came to Jesus and asked to have his servant healed, but never kept a Sabbath, OR the Jews who put Christ on the Cross and wanted Him off by sunset in order to “keep” the Sabbath?

Which were the greatest Sabbath breakers and why?

Of what is the Sabbath a sign? Of God’s creatorship, which calls us back to be aware of what? How God’s universe runs, how it is designed and created to operate, back to His law, which is design law. Further, it is a sign that God is the One who makes us holy, or heals us, and restores us back to His original design, which again is design law.

The Sabbath is holy because it was made that way. No amount of sinful living on the Sabbath can change the holiness of the Sabbath. So, when the Commandment says: “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy...” It means, remember to keep yourselves holy, because the only way to keep the Sabbath holy is to be holy people, which means having been reborn to have the law of God written on the heart and mind.





The specific actions are not the primary issue; it is the heart/mind/character of the person that determines whether they are keeping the Sabbath holy.

The Sabbath was created in the midst of a war over God's trustworthiness, when God is being accused of ruling His universe with the same methods created beings use—imposed rules enforced with coercive pressure. The Sabbath is evidence this allegation is a lie, because during creation week of planet earth God is presenting truth in love and then steps back and rests His case giving all intelligences freedom to think for themselves. It is just the opposite of an imposed rule; it is the creation of perpetual freedom to think.

But the system of the beast is a system that operates like beasts operate, and how do beasts operate? By coercion, kill or be killed, survival-of-the-fittest. Thus human governments make laws, and use power to force compliance on pain and death. The mark of the beast is the mark of this type of governing, those who agree that God actually works this way and makes up rules and inflicts punishments mark themselves in their foreheads. Those who go along for advantage practicing methods of coercive pressure mark themselves in their hands as practicing the methods of the beast.

Sadly, many Christians are looking for a God to come and operate just like the beast, use power to coerce and pressure conformity and punish those who don't conform.

Read question 2, "Both ancient..." How did the canon come to be? Why are some books in and some books out? Did God choose which books are in and which are out? God inspired writers to write, but who selected which got in? Why do some Bibles include the Apocrypha and others do not?

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

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***The Remedy – Dr. Jennings' New Testament Paraphrase***– ALL GLITCHES NOW FIXED in the IOS Version! So please UPDATE to latest version.

**The Journal of the Watcher is now available as a movie in itunes for everyone without ios or android, you can now get it in itunes.**

**August 1:** Dr. Jennings will be speaking to the Petaluma, CA SDA church.

**September 9-10:** Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Baptist Boomer's Conference in San Antonio, TX.

**September 12:** Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Vallejo Dr., CA SDA church.

**September 23-26:** American Association of Christian Counselors World Convention at Gaylord Opryland Hotel, Nashville TN. Come and Reason will have a booth in the exhibit hall, and Dr. Jennings will be doing a preconference workshop and regular conference presentation, as well as commencement speaker for Light University graduation.

**October 24:** Dr. Jennings will be speaking in Puyallup, WA.