

Bible Study Lesson Summary, Oct. 25, 2020

Today's lesson includes Days 222-228 on your reading guide.

THE BOOK OF ESTHER

Est. D: Esther risks personal danger and goes in to the king. He allows it.

Est. 5: Queen Esther invites the king and Haman to a banquet.

Est. 6: Esther reminds the king that he has never rewarded Mordecai for saving him.

Est. 7: Haman is revealed to be the problem. The king has him hanged. This foreshadows the death of another betrayer, Judas.

Est. 8: Esther then approaches the king to stop the decree to kill the Jews. He says he can't, for his people see him as god and god's word is set or it starts to be seen as worthless.

Est. E: The letter goes out with the words from the king: "You will do well, then, to ignore the letter sent by Haman, son of Hammedatha, for he who composed it has been hanged..."

(Chapter 8) In vs. 17, "And many of the peoples of the land embraced Judaism, for they were seized with a fear of the Jews."

Est. 9: Instead he sends out a letter allowing the Jews to fight back against anyone and their families who try to kill them and then suggests that it might be wiser for his own soldiers to disregard the first decree. This is all a sign of mercy. The Jews did fight back and win. Vs. 16, "They killed seventy-five thousand of their foes, without engaging in plunder..."

Est. 10: Mordecai is made next in rank to the king. He is a Christ figure in all that he did; saving some, teaching against evil, interceding for the people, with the help of a woman, and then sitting at the right hand of the king.

Est. F: Mordecai's dream is fulfilled in his mind. Esther is the spring that grew into a river and he and Haman were the dragons. The bigger picture is the foreshadowing of Mary's battle with the dragon, which is defeated with the help of baptism into her Son.

THE FIRST BOOK OF MACCABEES

We have just finished three novelettes. They are stories that can't seem to be tracked in history. Because of their content, there might be a couple reasons for this. One is that story-tellers embellish to make points that tell the real story even though they are lose with the facts. Nobody wants their nation to remember the beheading of their main general. Another is that historians tend to erase the memory of things they don't want to have people remember. With personal stories like these that means there might not be any corroborating outside evidence. The mixture of times and mistakes in the context of the story may also mean that the author was purposefully trying to make the story timeless.

But the Books of Maccabees are different. They can be placed in history. We have lots of other material to verify the truth of the setting of these stories. So even though there might not be anything on the Maccabee family from outside sources it is very likely that they were real. These two books are not in Protestant Bibles, because they were not in the Palestinian Canon, but were in the exiled Jewish Canon that was around areas of Greece and Turkey. They are very important to the story of the New Testament. They bring out the idea of Purgatory, which seems to have been starting to develop at this time which was later than 200 B.C.

1Mc. 1: It is about 169 B.C. and the Israelites have been back in their land for about 3 centuries. All has not gone well. They have been conquered several times. Now the Jews are making an alliance with the Gentiles, which will basically make their following of the Law of Moses extinct. Vs. 15, "They covered over the mark of their circumcision and abandoned the holy covenant; they allied themselves with the Gentiles and sold themselves to wrongdoing." Antiochus, a Greek king, misleads the Jews into trusting him. In vs. 30-31, he won their trust but then destroyed Jerusalem and built a new version of it. In vs. 43, "and many Israelites were in favor of his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the Sabbath." Anyone who didn't was killed.

1Mc. 2: Mattathias and his sons fought back. Soldiers were sent to kill them. They attacked one group on the Sabbath. Because of God's law they would not fight back on the Sabbath so they all died. So Mattathias and his friends heard about it and came to a decision as seen in vs. 41: "Let us fight against anyone who attacks us on the Sabbath, so that we may not all die as our kinsmen died in the hiding places." Notice that Jesus saved and healed people on the Sabbath. This is also very significant, for it sets up the Church's understanding that they can make another alteration, to change the Sabbath or the Lord's Day to Sunday. Mattathias died of old age and the boys take over.

1Mc. 3: One son, Judas Maccabeus, became the leader and had some victories.

1Mc. 4: Judas wins more battles and purifies the sanctuary on Zion and rededicates it, finds good priests and in vs. 56 celebrates the feast of Hanukkah for the first time.

1Mc. 5: The rededication angers the Gentiles, who attack but are defeated. But two Jewish "hero wanna-be's", Joseph and Azariah said: "Let us also make a name for ourselves by going out and fighting against the Gentiles around us." They were beaten and vs. 64 explains their defeat; "But they did not belong to the family of those men to whom it was granted to achieve

Israel's salvation." This would be like a person taking on the devil without the power of Christ's priesthood behind them. They will lose. Protestant ministers don't attempt exorcisms. They refer that to Catholic priests.

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

Ecc. 6: But even the blessing of God in this way doesn't mean much, for vs. 12 says, "For who knows what is good for a man in life, the limited days of his vain life? Because—who is there to tell a man what will come after him under the sun?" He again needs the Gospel.

Ecc. 7: Trying to correct wrongs is not the answer for him, so in vs. 14 it says, "On a good day enjoy good things, and on an evil day consider: Both the one and the other God has made, so that man cannot find fault with him in anything." This could be the root of relativism if it were taken out of context.

Ecc. 8: It doesn't even matter if you are a king. Vs. 8, "There is no man who is master of the breath of life so as to retain it, and none has mastery of the day of death. There is no exemption from the struggle, nor are the wicked saved by their wickedness."

Ecc. 9: Vs. 3, "Among all the things that happen under the sun, this is the worst, that things turn out the same for all." Vs. 5, for "the dead no longer know anything. There is no further recompense for them..." Realize what life would have been like for the author without hope in some kind of justice from God or an after-life that separates the good and the bad.

Ecc. 10-11: A lot of this sounds like the Book of Wisdom but it is not to be taken in the same way. This is from someone who does not know the answers. He is wise but limited.

Ecc. 12: It is obvious that the author is looking for answers but finds none. After looking at all these depressing things he concludes in vs. 13-14: "The last word, when all is heard: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is man's all; because God will bring to judgment every work, with all its hidden qualities, whether good or bad."

Now maybe we can understand why it was so hard for the Chosen People to remain faithful to God. They didn't have the motivation that a well-founded faith in the resurrection gives.

THE GOSPEL OF ST. LUKE

Lk. 4:31-44: Jesus heads into the area that Peter would have come from, Capernaum. He does a few miracles, including curing Simon's mother-in-law. I don't know if that made Peter happy or not. Vs. 41 says, that the demons He exorcised were not allowed to tell that He was the Messiah.

Lk: 5: Notice that Simon's being called by Jesus is after the mother-in-law miracle. Simon is impressed by the big catch of fish, is then called, but is afraid. He understands that he is a sinner, and being close to one who does things that only God can do, scares him. This seems to be lost in our current culture. It has been decades since Whatever Became of Sin? was written by Karl Menninger (1973).

In vs. 12-16 he cures the leper but the leper isn't supposed to tell anyone. It didn't seem to matter, for there were too many witnesses. Most likely it would have to do with purity laws. Touching a leper means you have to stay away from people until you can prove you didn't get leprosy yourself. This is a foreshadowing of Covid-19 quarantining.

Vs. 17-26 have Jesus healing the paralytic. This story includes Jesus' words in vs. 20 and 23: "your sins are forgiven." He claims this power as the Son of Man, the amazing image from Ezekiel.

In vs. 27-32 Jesus explains he is here for the lost sheep, like Levi. Vs. 32, "Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do." Vs. 33-39 are starting a new era. The bridegroom has arrived and so no more fasting for now and that new ways of thinking will be important.

Lk. 6: This starts with battles with the Pharisees on two Sabbaths. The first ends with vs. 5: "Then he said to them, "The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath." The second one ends with vs. 11: "But they became enraged and discussed together what they might do to Jesus."

In vs. 12-16 he named his twelve apostles. It is like a father with 12 sons, think Jacob and the beginning of the tribes of Israel. Jesus is starting a new tribe of Israel, or extension of the kingdom of Israel.

In vs. 17-49 is an extended teaching with many lessons. Notice that he is not on a mountain, which would be a spot like God giving commandments to Moses. In vs. 20 it says: "And raising his eyes toward his disciples..." From this perspective they have to look at each other while listening to him. In the people around them and the ones they are looking at they will see the poor, the hungry, the weeping, and those who are usually excluded or insulted. They will also see the rich, the hungry, the laughers, and the well treated. So once he has their attention he tells them they must love each other, even their enemies. They can't be judgmental. He ends it with

a threat, that it isn't good enough to just say Lord, Lord. They have to do what he commands, for that will shore up their faith or connection with Him.

Lk. 7: This chapter starts with the healing of the Centurion's Slave. That is a double negative for the Jews, a real test of what Jesus just taught, for it is a Gentile slave of a Gentile. This is one of the reasons it is important to have these lessons beyond Sunday readings. You see the connection between the stories. Vs. 6 should sound familiar: "I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof." It is from Communion.

Vs. 11-17 are a powerful story of raising the dead, but it is also a story that shows empathy for Mary, who will have her son die and rise.

Vs. 18-23 shows that John the Baptist still wanted to make sure he was on the right track. We all have those moments of insecurity. Even though John had been insecure, Jesus praises him in vs. 24-35. Vs. 36-50 have another story that represents us. A sinful woman (may or may not be Mary Magdalene) who seeks forgiveness. Jesus uses the situation to teach about the gift of forgiveness from God. Vs. 49 brings up the big question: "Who is this who even forgives sins?" For the Jews believe only God can do that.