

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Fourth Quarter 2023: *God's Mission—My Mission*
Lesson 12 “Esther and Mordecai”

Read for this week's study

Daniel 1:1–12; Daniel 6:1–9; Esther 2:1–10, 20; Esther 3:1–15; Esther 4:1–14; Esther 9:1–12.

Memory Text

“ ‘I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth’ ”
(Isa. 49:6, NRSV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Captive in Foreign Culture
- III. In a Foreign Court
- IV. Mordecai's Faithful Witness
- V. For Such a Time as This
- VI. The Miracle of Purim
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “In its own unique way, the story [of Esther] shows how God's people, even in foreign environments, can witness for truth.” (Sabbath Afternoon)
2. “None of us, for instance, lives in an Adventist country where the principles of our faith are, to some degree, the law of the land. But before being deported, the Jewish people had been living in their own country, where the principles of their faith were also enshrined in the law of the land.” (Sunday's lesson) If you lived in an Adventist country, which aspect of your faith would be easier? Which would be more difficult?
3. What can we learn from biblical accounts about the challenges God's people face living in a foreign culture (Daniel 1:1–12; 3:1–12; 6:1–9)? How do you decide where you draw the line?
4. Monday's lesson discusses why Mordecai would command Esther not to reveal her nationality and faith and when it could be prudent to not be overt about our faith (Esther 2:10, 20). Is that the biggest ethical dilemma of the book for you?

5. Tuesday's lesson assumes that the reason Mordecai did not bow down to Haman is because bowing down to a person is a terrible sin, like idolatry. Thus, Mordecai becomes a "faithful witness" and a hero who saves (with Esther's help) the nation (cf. 3:4). And the reason for his persecution (cf. 3:8), and the persecution of his whole nation, is because he is different, which is then connected with Revelation 13. Are there any other reasons why Mordecai would refuse to bow down (Genesis 18:2; 48:12; 50:18; 39:10)?
6. Wednesday's lesson quotes Mordecai's famous words: "Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" "Though the Jews acted in their own behalf, prayer was central to their response. What obvious lesson can we take from this?"
7. Thursday's lesson concludes the study by focusing on God's deliverance of Jews, even though God's name does not appear in the book of Esther. " 'Many people of other nationalities became Jews' (Esther 8:17). This is a great example of how the Lord was able to work to bring lost souls to a knowledge of Him."
8. Before we conclude the quarter on mission, we should speak about shadow mission. Your shadow mission is your calling which gets hijacked by our ego and/or our past wounds. Something which is dark or selfish. Vashti has courage to challenge the shadow mission of Ahasuerus and Mordecai challenges the shadow missions of Haman and Esther. Haman will not challenge the shadow mission of Ahasuerus and Zeresh will not challenge Haman, to their own detriment. What is your shadow mission? Who is Mordecai in your life? Who loves you enough to challenge you when you are ready to settle for your shadow mission?
9. How do we read the book of Esther after the Holocaust? Can the persecuted again become persecutors? How do changing circumstances change the struggles we experience and the ethical issues we perceive? What challenges do we need to deal with in the 21st century that Adventist pioneers or Esther did not have to?
10. "Time and time again the temptation came to Jesus from many directions to choose some less costly way of fulfilling His calling than the way of suffering and death. But He resisted it." (F. F. Bruce) Jesus faced the temptation to be the Messiah without hunger, without pain and without opposition. But to the end, He resisted His shadow mission to wear a crown without the cross.
11. "It just so happened that..." God's presence is ambiguous in the book, just as in our lives. Most of the time, we experience God indirectly through fortuitous coincidences, rather than through miracles and direct speech.
12. Just like in the book of Esther, God is still at work. God is at work for you and for our community. And because God is at work for you, there is no need to get seduced by a shadow mission! In retrospect, where in your life do you see God at work? Our lives, and our missions are part of a much bigger mission that is continuing behind the scenes. We just need a larger perspective on what God is doing.

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Now, as we look at the story of Esther, do you see anything about God that is important to know? He has been accused of being arbitrary, vengeful, exacting, unforgiving and severe. What do you think of God's treatment of those who didn't care enough to go home to Palestine? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Esther and Job, recorded January 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/25MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/26MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

These things were not written merely that we might read and wonder, but that the same faith which wrought in God's servants of old might work in us. In no less marked a manner than He wrought then will He work now wherever there are hearts of faith to be channels of His power. {CG 43.1}

In giving light to His people anciently, God did not work exclusively through any one class. Daniel was a prince of Judah. Isaiah also was of the royal line. David was a shepherd boy, Amos a herdsman, Zechariah a captive from Babylon, Elisha a tiller of the soil. The Lord raised up as His representatives prophets and princes, the noble and the lowly, and taught them the truths to be given to the world. {MH 148.1}

Daniel and his companions were captives in a strange land, but God suffered not the envy and hatred of their enemies to prevail against them. The righteous have ever obtained help from above. How often have the enemies of God united their strength and wisdom to destroy the character and influence of a few simple persons who trusted in God. But because the Lord was for them, none could prevail against them. {2T 139.2}

As in the days of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, so in the closing period of earth's history the Lord will work mightily in behalf of those who stand steadfastly for the right. He who walked with the Hebrew worthies in the fiery furnace will be with His followers wherever they are. His abiding presence will comfort and sustain. In the midst of the time of trouble—trouble such as has not been since there was a nation—His chosen ones will stand unmoved. Satan with all the hosts of evil cannot destroy the weakest of God's saints. Angels that excel in strength will protect them, and in their behalf Jehovah will reveal Himself as a "God of gods," able to save to the uttermost those who have put their trust in Him. {PK 513.1}

Heaven is very near those who suffer for righteousness' sake. Christ identifies His interests with the interests of His faithful people; He suffers in the person of His saints, and whoever touches His chosen ones touches Him. The power that is near to deliver from physical harm or distress is also near to save from the greater evil, making it possible for the servant of God to maintain his integrity under all circumstances, and to triumph through divine grace. {PK 545.3}

As the Lord co-operated with Daniel and his fellows, so He will co-operate with all who strive to do His will. And by the impartation of His Spirit He will strengthen every true purpose, every noble resolution. Those who walk in the path of obedience will encounter many hindrances. Strong, subtle influences may bind them to the world; but the Lord is able to render futile every agency that works for the defeat of His chosen ones; in His strength they may overcome every temptation, conquer every difficulty. {PK 487.1}

God brought Daniel and his associates into connection with the great men of Babylon, that in the midst of a nation of idolaters they might represent His character. How did they become fitted for a position of so great trust and honor? It was faithfulness in little things that gave complexion to their whole life. They honored God in the smallest duties, as well as in the larger responsibilities. {PK 487.2}

Prayer is heaven's ordained means of success in the conflict with sin and the development of Christian character. The divine influences that come in answer to the prayer of faith will accomplish in the soul of the suppliant all for which he pleads. For the pardon of sin, for the Holy Spirit, for a Christlike temper, for wisdom and strength to do His work, for any gift He has promised, we may ask; and the promise is, "Ye shall receive." {AA 564.1}

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. {DA 668.3}

Christ does not bid His followers strive to shine. He says, *Let your light shine*. If you have received the grace of God, the light is in you. Remove the obstructions, and the Lord's glory will be revealed. The light will shine forth to penetrate and dispel the darkness. You cannot help shining within the range of your influence. {COL 420.1}

The revelation of His own glory in the form of humanity will bring heaven so near to men that the beauty adorning the inner temple will be seen in every soul in whom the Saviour dwells. Men will be captivated by the glory of an abiding Christ. . . {COL 420.2}

The humblest and poorest of the disciples of Jesus can be a blessing to others. They may not realize that they are doing any special good, but by their unconscious influence they may start waves of blessings that will widen and deepen, and the blessed results they may never know till the day of final reward. They are not required to weary themselves with anxiety about success.

They have only to go forward quietly, doing faithfully the work God's providence assigns, and their life will not be in vain. Their own souls will be growing more and more into the likeness of Christ; they are workers together with God in this life, and are thus fitting for the higher work and the unshadowed joy of the life to come (*Signs of the Times*, Aug. 6, 1902). {LHU 276.6}

The people of God will not be free from suffering; but while persecuted and distressed, while they endure privation and suffer for want of food they will not be left to perish. That God who cared for Elijah will not pass by one of His self-sacrificing children. He who numbers the hairs of their head will care for them, and in time of famine they shall be satisfied. While the wicked are dying from hunger and pestilence, angels will shield the righteous and supply their wants. To him that "walketh righteously" is the promise: "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." Isaiah 33:15, 16; 41:17. {GC 629.2}

We know that in sadness and grief we feel very frail, but we know that Jesus is right by our side to sympathize with us, and He will help us. We can commune with our best Friend; He is right by our side. We need not go into the heavens to bring Him down, for He is right by us to help us. {CTr 42.4}

Press close to Jesus, and place your hand in His, and He will firmly hold your hand, and never let go of the soul who maintains his faith in Him. . . . {UL 42.3}

The precious Saviour will send help just when we need it. . . . The time of trouble is a fearful ordeal for God's people; but it is the time for every true believer to look up, and by faith he may see the bow of promise encircling him. {GC 633.1}

We may be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Receiving Christ, we are clothed with power. An indwelling Saviour makes His power our property. . . . Christ's presence in the heart is a vitalizing power, strengthening the entire being. {FLB 62.7}

Never feel that Christ is far away. He is always near. His loving presence surrounds you. {FLB 62.8}

As the wheellike complications were under the guidance of the hand beneath the wings of the cherubim, so the complicated play of human events is under divine control. Amidst the strife and tumult of nations He that sitteth above the cherubim still guides the affairs of this earth. {PK 536.1}

He who slumbers not, who is continually at work for the accomplishment of His designs, will carry forward His work. He will thwart the purposes of wicked men and will bring to confusion the counsels of those who plot mischief against His people. He who is the King, the Lord of hosts, sitteth between the cherubim, and amidst the strife and tumult of nations He guards His

children still. When the strongholds of kings shall be overthrown, when the arrows of wrath shall strike through the hearts of His enemies, His people will be safe in His hands. {PK 176.1}

Through sincere prayer we are brought into connection with the mind of the Infinite. We may have no remarkable evidence at the time that the face of our Redeemer is bending over us in compassion and love, but this is even so. We may not feel His visible touch, but His hand is upon us in love and pitying tenderness. {SC 96.3}

At all times and in all places, in all sorrows and in all afflictions, when the outlook seems dark and the future perplexing, and we feel helpless and alone, the Comforter will be sent in answer to the prayer of faith. Circumstances may separate us from every earthly friend; but no circumstance, no distance, can separate us from the heavenly Comforter. Wherever we are, wherever we may go, He is always at our right hand to support, sustain, uphold, and cheer. {DA 669.4}

[T]hose who follow Christ are ever safe under His watchcare. Angels that excel in strength are sent from heaven to protect them. The wicked one cannot break through the guard which God has stationed about His people.—GC 511-513, 516, 517. {TA 13.1}

The angels of God, thousands upon thousands, . . . guard us against evil and press back the powers of darkness that are seeking our destruction.—ML 171. {TA 16.3}

Angels of God are watching over us. Upon this earth there are thousands and tens of thousands of heavenly messengers commissioned by the Father to prevent Satan from obtaining any advantage over those who refuse to walk in the path of evil. And these angels who guard God's children on earth are in communication with the Father in heaven.—HP 99. {TA 16.4}

You are not alone in the warfare against wrong. Could the curtain be rolled back, you would see heavenly angels fighting with you. This they must do; it is their work to guard the youth. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of angels minister to the youth.—YI Jan. 1, 1903. {TA 19.2}

All heaven is interested in our salvation. The angels of God, thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand, are commissioned to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. They guard us against evil and press back the powers of darkness that are seeking our destruction. {6T 63.3}

Every weak, doubting, struggling soul who yields fully to the Lord is placed in direct touch with agencies that enable him to overcome. Heaven is near to him, and he has the support and help of angels of mercy in every time of trial and need. {AA 299.1}

The cloud that was a wall of darkness to the Egyptians was to the Hebrews a great flood of light, illuminating the whole camp, and shedding brightness upon the path before them. So the

dealings of Providence bring to the unbelieving, darkness and despair, while to the trusting soul they are full of light and peace. The path where God leads the way may lie through the desert or the sea, but it is a safe path. {PP 290.3}

But though the conflict is a ceaseless one, none are left to struggle alone. Angels help and protect those who walk humbly before God. Never will our Lord betray one who trusts in Him. As His children draw near to Him for protection from evil, in pity and love He lifts up for them a standard against the enemy. Touch them not, He says; for they are Mine. I have graven them upon the palms of My hands. {PK 570.4}

How graciously and tenderly our heavenly Father deals with His children! He preserves them from a thousand dangers to them unseen and guards them from the subtle arts of Satan, lest they should be destroyed. {3T 373.1}

I saw a covering that God was drawing over His people to protect them in the time of trouble; and every soul that was decided on the truth and was pure in heart was to be covered with the covering of the Almighty. {EW 43.2}

God has a deep and earnest love for every member of the human family; not one is forgotten, not one is left helpless and deceived to be overcome by the enemy. And if those who have enlisted in the army of Christ will put on the whole armor of God, and wear it, they will be proof against all the assaults of the enemy. Those who really desire to be taught of God, and to walk in His way, have the sure promise that if they feel their lack of wisdom and ask of God, He will give liberally, and upbraid not. {FE 299.2}