

**Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes**  
**Third Quarter 2015: *Missionaries***  
**Lesson 6 “*Esther and Mordecai*”**

**Read for this week’s study**

Esther 1–10; 1 Corinthians 9:19–23; John 4:1–26; Acts 17:26; Matthew 22:21; Romans 1:18–20.

**Memory Text**

“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” (Esther 4:14, NIV).

**Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide**

- I. Introduction
- II. Esther in Persia
- III. Esther in the Court of the King
- IV. “For Such a Time As This” (*Esther 2:19–5:8*)
- V. Mordecai and Haman
- VI. When Some Gentiles Became Jews
- VII. Further Study

**Questions and Notes for Consideration**

**Moderator: Daniel Duda**

1. “Though not your ‘typical’ missionary story, the narrative of Esther and Mordecai does present some interesting principles that can help us to understand what it means to witness in peculiar circumstances.” (Sabbath afternoon) What are the principles found in the book of Esther?
2. “[Esther] was lifted from obscurity and groomed to carry out a highly specialized mission. It required of her the risky strategy of working, at first, undercover. Later she had to make a perilous full disclosure of her ethnicity and faith.” (Sabbath afternoon) When does our witnessing require us to work undercover? What dangers do you see in treating the Bible stories as a manual on topics such as witnessing? What is the purpose of the book of Esther in the Hebrew canon?
3. “Whatever her [Vashti’s] response, she faced the 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.” (Sunday’s lesson)  
Knowing what happened to Vashti, do you think that Esther exhibited the conduct of “a principled women”?

4. “So far in the story the real heroine is Vashti, who then disappears from history. Her modesty and stand on principle opened the way for Esther. In some cases, though, principled stands don’t always lead to an obvious good. In the end, why should we take principled stands, even if we don’t know the outcome of our actions?” (Sunday’s lesson)
5. “Have you ever been in a situation in which you deemed it prudent not to say too much about your faith or your beliefs? What reasons did you have? As you look back now, what might you have done differently, if anything?” (Monday’s lesson) The lesson compares Mordecai’s charge to Esther not to reveal her nationality and family background with the fact that Jesus did not reveal to the Jews that He was the Messiah (and did to the Samaritan woman).
6. “A study of women’s work in connection with the cause of God in Old Testament times will teach us lessons that will enable us to meet emergencies in the work today. We may not be brought into such a critical and prominent place as were the people of God in the time of Esther; but often converted women can act an important part in more humble positions.”—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1140.
7. In a day when even some Christians imply that women are to be relegated to the sidelines while the real action belongs to men, and a woman’s role is to be a decoration of men’s work, and truly pious women should not even try to achieve something in the society, it is supremely ironic that one of the greatest heroes of the Bible is a woman who rejects the stereotype of beauty queen and uses all her courage, initiative and emotional intelligence to resist evil and work for good. She refuses the role of a Cinderella and thus saves all the men in the story.
8. The Book of Esther is a classic example of how our true mission in life can easily degenerate into a shadow mission, which is very close to the real mission, yet is self-serving, meeting our own needs. What is the shadow mission of the king, Esther, Haman, Zeresh? What about our own shadow missions, both individual and corporate?
9. While often in the Bible God is portrayed as directly involved in human history, intervening in it, actively participating, in the book of Esther, God’s name is not even mentioned! The book of Esther presents a different model of God’s working in human affairs. “It just so happens that...” ...there is a vacancy for a queen; ...Esther, a Jew, enters a beauty contest and wins the competition; ...Her uncle, Mordecai discovers a plot against the king; ...he is not rewarded; ...The king cannot sleep the night before Haman wants to kill Mordecai; ...Of all the places in the chronicles, the king is read the section mentioning Mordecai’s brave deed; ...Haman comes in the morning to the king... etc. Which “it just so happens that. . .” incidents do you see in your life at different times and stages? What does this tell us about God?

10. You have a mission that matters! In the dark world do not allow the society to determine your role, or the dark forces to tempt you into your shadow mission. What you do is important. 'Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?' (4:14)

### Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

When the Bible was translated into the language of the people, the great Reformation occurred. The world has never been the same since. And part of the Bible that has had this tremendous influence is the book of Esther. So you see, the children of Abraham were instrumental in providing us with the Bible, not so much in writing it as being involved in the experiences which are recorded in Scripture. Experiences within which God sought to reveal Himself to angels and to men. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Esther & Job, recorded March, 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)

We have sometimes suggested the only way to stay under grace is to keep the law all the time. Then so long as you're keeping it perfectly, you're under grace? Something in there doesn't make sense, does it? The graciousness of God is shown particularly in His looking after us when we certainly don't deserve it at all. And I think in the book of Esther we have a marvelous demonstration of God going to these complicated lengths to look after the people who didn't have enough faith to go home. And He looks very good in the book of Esther.

Now, to the Jew it had a special meaning. The Feast of Purim, the Feast of Lots, which is celebrated to this day, goes back to the book of Esther, and so the book of Esther is important historically even to the modern Jew. This is where that feast came from. But when you come to that feast, what is it they celebrated? Wasn't it the two days when they killed so many of their enemies? How do you like that part of the story? They were given permission to protect themselves, and they couldn't kill enough the first day, so they asked for permission to kill some more the second day. They didn't ask for more time to give Bible studies. They asked for more time to kill their enemies. Well, it sounds familiar, doesn't it? When Joshua was running out of daylight, he says, "Lord, I need more light." To share the light with these folk? No, to kill them. How did you react to that part of the story at the end, all that killing? Does that say anything to us about God?

Well, someone has already mentioned, were they supposed to be there in the first place? So they were in a difficult and complicated situation of their own making. Number one, should they have gone to Babylon in the first place? Why did God give them up to Babylonian captivity? Wasn't it because of hundreds of years of stubbornly resisting the messages of the prophets that we read at the end of 2 Chronicles? So number one, they shouldn't have been there in the first place. Number two, should they have *still* been there? No, the seventy years were up. They should have gone home. On two counts they shouldn't have been there. So truly that predicament was of their own making, and yet God came to help them. But when we're in a predicament of our own making, God may have to stoop very low to meet us where we are and employ methods that are far short of the ideal. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Esther & Job, recorded March, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

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Now, the Jews did respond rather remarkably, I think. Weren't they given permission not only to kill, but to take the plunder? Doesn't it say that near the end? Look at the edict in Esther 8:9 and following, when the king called the secretaries and he wrote out the edict, and they were given permission in verse 11. The Jews were given permission "in every city to gather and defend their lives, to destroy, to slay, and to annihilate any armed force of any people or province that might attack them, with their children and women, **and to plunder their goods**, upon one day throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar."

But if you look down; let's read verse 15:

Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal robes of blue and white, with a great golden crown and a mantle of fine linen and purple, while the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced. The Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor. [That's a rare day for them]. And in every province and in every city, wherever the king's command and his edict came, there was gladness and joy among the Jews, a feast and a holiday. And many from the peoples of the country declared themselves Jews [why?]; for the fear of the Jews had fallen upon them.

Not the best reason, is it? But they thought they might escape, so then when the day came, they went out to fight, and they did kill. They killed hundreds of people, but look at verse 15: "but they laid no hands on the plunder."

They were given another day to fight, but they laid no hands on the plunder. It was different, wasn't it? Why didn't the king just give an order rescinding the permission to destroy the Jews? Of course, could you do that? The law of the Medes and Persians is not to be changed. That was another part of the predicament. So having issued the edict that the Jews could be killed under Haman's influence, the best thing the king could say was, "Well, I give you permission to defend yourselves." Which they did. And to show it wasn't merely vengeance, they did not touch the plunder. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Esther & Job, recorded March, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

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It seems to me, that apart from this great controversy over the character of God and the need for evidence of the kind of Person God is, which is shown most eloquently in His treatment of misbehaving people, we really don't have much need for a lot of this record. Esther would just be the source of the Feast of Purim. I think there's much more to it than that. And we know, of course, because we know the rest of the Bible, God is building up to a great climax when someday, instead of working through prophets and leaders, scribes like Ezra, and administrators like Nehemiah, He sends His Son, who dies with how many converts? By the standards of the local conference, not enough to even merit His ordination to the ministry.

And yet when He died, He said, "Father, we've won!" Won what? "We've finished something. We've made something plain." And apart from the controversy over the character of God, I don't know what that would be. It was clarified to the universe that God was not the kind of person His enemies had made Him out to be. Look how Jesus behaved. But He didn't only behave like this during the three and a half years of His ministry. He was the One who led Israel. Who was in charge of looking after the Jews who didn't have enough faith to go home? Who worked in that remarkable way through Esther and through Mordecai and touched the heart of the king and won his favor toward the Jews? And that may be why He gave them the support that was given in the days of Ezra. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Esther & Job, recorded March, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

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### Further Study with Ellen White

Those who love God cannot harbor hatred or envy. When the heavenly principle of eternal love fills the heart, it will flow out to others, not merely because favors are received of them, but because love is the principle of action and modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, subdues enmity, and elevates and ennobles the affections. This love is not contracted so as merely to include “me and mine,” but is as broad as the world and as high as heaven, and is in harmony with that of the angel workers. This love cherished in the soul sweetens the entire life and sheds a refining influence on all around. Possessing it, we cannot but be happy, let fortune smile or frown. If we love God with all the heart, we must love His children also. This love is the spirit of God. It is the heavenly adorning that gives true nobility and dignity to the soul and assimilates our lives to that of the Master. No matter how many good qualities we may have, however honorable and refined we may consider ourselves, if the soul is not baptized with the heavenly grace of love to God and one another, we are deficient in true goodness and unfit for heaven, where all is love and unity. {4T 223.2}

Christ’s followers are to be more than a light in the midst of men. They are the light of the world. Jesus says to all who have named His name, You have given yourselves to Me, and I have given you to the world as My representatives. As the Father had sent Him into the world, so, He declares, “have I also sent them into the world.” John 17:18. As Christ is the channel for the revelation of the Father, so we are to be the channel for the revelation of Christ. While our Saviour is the great source of illumination, forget not, O Christian, that He is revealed through humanity. God’s blessings are bestowed through human instrumentality. Christ Himself came to the world as the Son of man. Humanity, united to the divine nature, must touch humanity. The church of Christ, every individual disciple of the Master, is heaven’s appointed channel for the revelation of God to men. Angels of glory wait to communicate through you heaven’s light and power to souls that are ready to perish. {MB 40.2}

But Jesus did not bid the disciples, “Strive to make your light shine;” He said, “Let it shine.” If Christ is dwelling in the heart, it is impossible to conceal the light of His presence. If those who profess to be followers of Christ are not the light of the world, it is because the vital power has left them; if they have no light to give, it is because they have no connection with the Source of light. {MB 41.1}

In all ages the “Spirit of Christ which was in them” (1 Peter 1:11) has made God’s true children the light of the people of their generation. Joseph was a light bearer in Egypt. In his purity and benevolence and filial love he represented Christ in the midst of a nation of idolaters. While the Israelites were on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land, the true-hearted among them were a light to the surrounding nations. Through them God was revealed to the world. From Daniel and his companions in Babylon, and from Mordecai in Persia, bright beams of light shone out amid the darkness of the kingly courts. In like manner the disciples of Christ are set as light

bearers on the way to heaven; through them the Father's mercy and goodness are made manifest to a world enshrouded in the darkness of misapprehension of God. By seeing their good works, others are led to glorify the Father who is above; for it is made manifest that there is a God on the throne of the universe whose character is worthy of praise and imitation. The divine love glowing in the heart, the Christlike harmony manifested in the life, are as a glimpse of heaven granted to men of the world, that they may appreciate its excellence. {MB 41.2}