

“The Story” Study – Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, Malachi

Class 11: Chapters 20-21

Chapter 20: The Queen of Beauty and Courage

1. DVD – Session 20
2. Chapter 20 Highlights: This chapter is a summary of the book of Esther, which includes a plan to exterminate all the Jews in the world; therefore, God had to intervene in order to keep His promise to send the Savior into the world through the nation of Israel.
 - a. We are studying through the second half of the book of Esther this coming Sunday (5/29), so join us or see the study sheets on the “Bible Studies” section of our website.
 - b. This is a summary of Esther:
 - i. The time period is in the 470’s BC; the king was Xerxes, a.k.a. Ahasuerus.
 - ii. When Queen Vashti refused to obey the king, she was deposed; then a search for a new queen resulted in Hadassah, a.k.a. Esther, who was a Jew – though that was not even known to the king – became the new queen.
 - iii. Mordecai, a relative of Esther, took action to spare the life of the king; nothing was done at that time to honor him, but, later, Haman had to honor him.
 - iv. Haman, an apparent descendant of the Amalekite king Agag (1 Samuel 15), became a very important man under Xerxes; however, Mordecai was not willing to bow down and honor him. That led Haman to hate Mordecai, which eventually led to an order by the king to “**destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews – young and old, women and children – on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month**” (280).
 - v. When Mordecai learned of the plan, he asked Esther to go to the king; however, there was a law that no one could approach the king without being summoned, not even the queen. For those who did so, if the king did not extend his scepter, they would be put to death. Then Mordecai communicated to Esther: “**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 royal position for such a time as this?**” (4:13-14).
 - vi. After three days and nights of fasting by Esther and others, she did approach the king and was welcomed. Finally Esther made it known to the king that Haman intended to kill her and all of her people, so Haman was put to death.
 - vii. Then official letters were distributed to all people that the Jews had the right to defend themselves against anyone trying to destroy them; then, when that day came: “**The Jews struck down all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them...**” (287). “**They killed seventy-five thousand...**” (288).

Chapter 21: Rebuilding the Walls

1. DVD – Session 21
2. Chapter 21 Highlights: This chapter includes Ezra going to Jerusalem to teach the people, Nehemiah leading the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, and the LORD speaking through Malachi to call the people to repent; it also concludes the Old Testament part of The Story.
 - a. Ezra:
 - i. Ezra, a priest in the line of Aaron, and several thousand others left Babylon – about 50 years after King Cyrus released Zerubbabel and about 50,000 others – to establish the worship at the temple in Jerusalem and teach the people.
 - ii. It took four months to make the journey from Babylon to Jerusalem.
 - iii. The king told Ezra: “...you have no authority to impose taxes, tribute or duty on any of the priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, temple servants or other workers at this house of God” (Ezra 7:24 NIV). Maybe that is part of the reason why clergy have a different tax status in America today.
 - b. Nehemiah:
 - i. About thirteen years after Ezra went to Jerusalem, Nehemiah, the cupbearer of the king, heard that the walls of Jerusalem and her gates had not yet been repaired. That news highly concerned him; therefore, with permission from the king and the needed supplies, he went to Jerusalem.
 - ii. Nehemiah was used by the LORD to assess the situation; then he rallied the people to build the wall. There was much opposition but the LORD blessed them, so the wall was completed in fifty-two days!
 - iii. After the wall was completed, Ezra gathered the people and read the Book of the Law to them, “He read it aloud from daybreak till noon... in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law. ⁴ Ezra the scribe stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion.... They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read” (Neh. 8:3, 4, 8 NIV).
 - c. Malachi:
 - i. The people went through the right motions toward the LORD, but it was half-hearted; they sacrificed animals that were blind, lame, or diseased; they were unfaithful in their marriages and divorced their wives; and they robbed from God by not giving a full tithe. The people wanted the LORD to bless them, but they did not want to rightly honor Him in their lives. How are we that way today? _____
 - ii. The OT concludes with these words, “...I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful (μεγάλην--great καὶ ἐπιφανῆ--glorious) day of the LORD comes” (Mal. 4:5 NIV).
3. Assignment: Read chapters 22-23, the next class is on Thursday, June 2 at 7:30.