

## ESTHER: A REVIEW

As the book of Ruth shows us a different view of life among the Jews during the period of the Judges, so Esther shows us a different view of life among the Jews during the time of the return to and the restoration of the land of Palestine. The events of this book take place in the land of Persia and primarily in the courts of the king of that country. The central figure of the book is Esther and secondary space is devoted to Mordecai, the man who raised her and taught her. The Jews are in a position of possibly being exterminated in the provinces of the king. Because of such a threat, it is quite natural to note that they were afraid and were mourning these affairs. Esther, who replaced the former queen, was in a position to be of influence for her people...and she used that position even though she might lose her life. This tells us something very important about the character of Esther. Imagine the devotion that she must have had for her people to be willing to die in order to try to help them. She informed the king of the plot to slay the Jews and through her position and her closeness to the king, the threat of extermination dimmed and the Jews once again had their hopes. Throughout all of this short book, we must never cease to be impressed for the provisions which God makes for his people. Mordecai said that God may have placed Esther in such a position "for such a time as this". Her life therefore corresponds with that of Joseph who saved his family from extinction and famine hundreds of years earlier. We must also note the bad effects that fame and popularity brought to Haman. Because of his promotions in the court of Ahasuerus, Haman became quite proud and boastful and arrogant. Such provides us with an example of what not to be in our own lives. We must always seek to do what we can for God's glory and not our own. The fact that God will take care of his people is seen not only in his general providence for the Jews in Persia, but it is also seen in the fact that Mordecai's faithfulness to the will of God was rewarded. Regardless of how bad things seem to be, God is always in control.

## JOB

This book deals with one of the most important themes in the Bible and in human existence today, the problem of pain, suffering, and evil. When the events of this book took place are not known, but then the time of the book is not near as important as the context. Job is seen to be a wealthy man. He is tempted by Satan, yet in the midst of all of the temptation he does not give up his faith. Through the example set here we all are encouraged to remain steadfast in our faith come what may.

## CHAPTER ONE

1. In the opening verses to the chapter we are informed of the great wealth that Job possesses and of his uprightness in the sight of the Lord (vs.1-5).
2. The second section depicts Satan seeking to obtain permission from the Lord to tempt Job. Note that the Lord stated that there was none like Job in the earth, but that Satan indicated that Job only served the Lord for the possessions that he had. He quite plainly stated that if Job were afflicted he would turn from God. The Lord told Satan that he (i.e. Satan) had all of Job's possessions in his power to do as he would, only he was prohibited from actually and physically afflicting Job himself. In this we learn that I Corinthians 10:13 is true. God did not allow Satan to tempt Job without limitations; there were restrictions.
3. The concluding part of the chapter (vs.13-22) shows the actual losses that Job incurred. He lost his family and his possessions. Upon learning of this he went into a period of mourning, but in all of this "Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." Note that in verse 21 Job expresses a thought that was not true...he said that the "Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away". God did not take Job's possessions, but rather it was Satan who had done so. This expression is often used in our lives when someone dies. We often say "when it's time, it's time" and other such expressions as if fate controls our lives. We must realize that things occur in our lives that are not part of God's will. If a man killed himself would we say "God took him from us"? No, we would not. This man was responsible for the act, which act went against God's will. Should we say "God took them" when teenagers are drinking and driving and some of them are killed in an automobile accident? Again, the answer is no. These people brought their deaths upon themselves. God was not responsible. We must also note,

however, that Job expressed a positive attitude when he realize that he came into this world with nothing, and with nothing he would leave the world. This thought is further explained in I Timothy 6. Once, shortly after the death of Elvis Presley, several gospel preachers were standing and talking when a young boy came by and asked them how much Elvis Presley left in his estate. The preachers were trying to estimate the value of all of Mr. Presley's possessions; his cars, homes, etc, in order to come up with a figure that totaled everything. In the midst of their figuring the little boy quite simply said, "He left it all". No truer words could be spoken. When we die not one shred of physical possessions goes with us beyond the grave. It all remains in this temporal world. What we have to be concerned with is our souls. That aspect will be with us throughout the rest of time and on into eternity.

## CHAPTER TWO

1. In this chapter we learn that Satan returned before the Lord. Note that God said that Job held fast to his integrity even though he was moved against him without cause. Satan sought to further test Job by afflicting him physically. He falsely asserted that a man would do anything (including cursing God) in order to save his physical life (cf. Mt. 10:28). Again, God allowed Satan to do as requested but with limitations. Satan could afflict him physically, but he was not allowed to take his life from him (vs. 6). Satan afflicted Job with boils and sores all over his body. (vs. 1-8)
2. In verses 9-10 we are made aware of the attitude of Job's wife. She told Job to curse God and die. Job referred to her as being like the foolish women. Then we notice that Job stated something else which was not quite up to par. He said that God sent good things and evil things. It is true that God is the giver of all the good that we receive (James 1:17), but it is not true that God is responsible for the evil that comes upon us in our lives. Evil is a result of 1) the influence of Satan, 2) the sins of others and the consequences which come upon them and sometimes us, and 3) our own sins and the resulting consequences. God allows sin and evil in the sense that he does not simply wipe all of them away, but this does not entail God's responsibility for them. Up to a certain point parents are responsible for their children, but there comes a time when a child grows up and becomes responsible for his own behavior. To say that a parent brought evil upon a child when it was the grown child's own sinful behaviour which brought the "evil" is absurd. Likewise, it is foolish to charge God with the evil that we sometimes bring upon ourselves. In the case of Job, however, we are informed of something quite different. The affliction came not because of sin, but rather because of righteousness (II Tim. 3:12). We must be cautioned to remember that there is no direct link between the amount of suffering that a person endures and the righteousness of that person. Evil people suffer and good people suffer. The Bible is full of examples of both cases. We can not infer from suffering the state of righteousness/unrighteousness in the life of any person. Even after this we learn that Job did not sin with his lips.
3. In the last part of the chapter (vs. 11-13) we learn that three of Job's friends come to mourn with him.

## CHAPTER THREE

This entire chapter depicts Job as regretting the day on which he was born. Note vs. 11 where he asks why he did not die as a child. Throughout this chapter (and others) we note that if these events would have happened (e.g. death at birth, etc.), then Job would not be presently in suffering. From this we must learn to accept the situation that we are in and learn to live with it. That can be a tall order, but there is no way that we can go back into time and change the course of events. When they have transpired we must learn to adjust to them and go on living.

## CHAPTER FOUR

In this chapter Eliphaz (one of Job's friends) rebukes Job. He says that the righteous and the innocent are never cut off, therefore Job must be neither. He says that Job was always comforting others when times of distress came, but now he must be comforted. In his "vision", Eliphaz indicates that all men sin and that Job's current situation is probably just the result of some sin.

CHAPTER FIVE

Eliphaz continues his discussion about Job's situation. In this chapter he again implies that Job's distress is his own fault. He asks if affliction and trouble just arise for no reason at all, and then goes on to say that God is sending this chastening in the life of Job (vs.17). In the midst of the chapter he discusses some important things about turning to God and how God protects those that are his.

CHAPTER SIX

1. In the first half of this chapter (vs.1-13) Job justifies his complaints about the suffering that he is in. He continues to ask that his life might be taken in order to avoid the suffering. He says that then we would have relief (vs.10).
2. The last half of the chapter (vs.14-30) depicts Job reproaching his friends. The purpose of friends is to encourage one another and not to discourage them says Job. He states that his friends had not dealt with him fairly, and he asks that they begin to do so.

CHAPTER SEVEN

In this chapter Job seems to be addressing the Lord rather than his three friends. The vivid description of his pain and suffering is enlightening. Note the way that he describes himself as being always in torment and without rest, even when he sleeps he is tormented. In the chapter Job emphasizes the shortness of life (vs.1). Note that he says that he is tried every moment (vs.18). Though we are tried throughout life by what we do, we must not think that God constantly throws temptations at us just to try us unceasingly. Job says that he is only a target that God throws temptations and trials at, but this is not true. Job seeks for the forgiveness of his sin, and though he sinned in his life, his current situation was not the result of sin.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Another of Job's friends addresses the situation. Bildad affirms that God is just, and like Eliphaz, he states that the pure and upright would not suffer as Job is suffering (vs.6ff). God does not afflict perfect men, nor does he help the evil doers states Bildad. But Bildad, misunderstood the true situation. Some evil people do prosper. Some good people do suffer. There is no direct correlation between the intensity of suffering and physical reward to righteousness. He, too, fails to see that.

CHAPTER NINE

Job acknowledges that God is just in this chapter. He speaks about the power of God and mentions several different manifestations of that power. He mentions that man is not able to judge God or question the actions of God. He correctly states (vs.22) that God can allow evil to come upon the wicked and the righteous, but he does not state the role of Satan as he seeks to tempt the righteous. Again, he emphasizes the brevity of human life and again he emphasizes that man is not in the position to challenge God. In closing the chapter we learn that Job fears (i.e. respects) God.

CHAPTER TEN

Job continues to mourn about his condition. He questions the actions of his friends by asking if they are like God. They cannot see Job as God sees Job, therefore they cannot know the things they are asserting about Job. He wonders why God allows him to live and not die. He questions if God knows all about Job's physical condition. He again brings out the brevity of human life.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The third friend begins to reprove Job. Zophar says that Job is lying (vs.3) and said that if God would speak he would go along with what the friends of Job were saying. He questions Job's actions of justifying himself. He continues the same reasoning of Eliphaz and Bildad by saying that sin has brought this suffering upon Job, and he encourages Job to put away his sin.

CHAPTER TWELVE

In responding to his friends, Job lets them know that he understands the situation just as well as they do. He is not inferior to them in that regard. He accuses them of mocking him. He continues speaking and acknowledges the omnipotence of the Lord. (vs.7-25)

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Job continues to speak, and in this chapter he defends his integrity. Again he states that he knows just as much as his friends know. He is not inferior to them in that respect. He calls them forgers of lies and physicians of no value because they are not helping him in this situation. He asks them if they are in the place of God to know the situation fully. He calls for them to hold their peace while he discusses the situation.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

As Job continues his speech he further bewails the woes of life. Here he speaks of the shortness of life and the great amount of troubles that come during that brief time. He acknowledges that trees may continue to grow after being cut, but man does not live again after he is dead. He continues to mourn for his soul.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Eliphaz begins to speak again and as he speaks he reproves Job. He asks Job what he (i.e. Job) knows that they (his friends) do not know. He further asks Job if he was the first man born and if he were alive before the hills of God's creation. By asking such rhetorical questions, Eliphaz seeks to emphasize that Job is wrong in seeking to justify himself. He continues speaking and says that no man is righteous. God does not trust in any man. Though God does not trust (i.e. lean upon) man, it is not true that men cannot be righteous and just in the sight of God. The opening chapters of the book inform us that Job was right in the sight of God and that God was aware of Job's righteousness. Furthermore, we have the accounts of such men as Abraham, Noah, and Enoch who lived perfect (i.e. complete, mature) lives in the sight of God. Eliphaz's view of mankind is unbalanced and leaning in favor of man being a totally sinful creature.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Job again takes up the speaking role. He accuses his friends of being miserable comforters. He is right in so addressing them; they were of no real comfort to him. He told them that if the situation were reversed and they were the ones suffering that he would do his best to comfort them. He then continues to speak of the terrible suffering that he is having to endure. As the chapter closes he states that his witness is in heaven and that his record is on high. The last verse is another reference to the brevity of life.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Still speaking, Job continues to speak about the shortness of life and the greatness of sorrows during life. He chastises his friends and tells them that there is not one wise man among them. He closes by saying that there is almost no hope.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

This whole chapter tells us of Bildad speaking of the plight of those who are wicked.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Job begins to speak again. He criticizes his friends for being so cruel to him. He mourns the fact that everyone seems to have turned against him. He asks for pity on the part of his friends and he concludes the chapter by stating his faith. Note that he says that he knows his Redeemer lives, that he shall see God, and that he knew that there would be a judgment.

CHAPTER TWENTY

In this chapter Zophar continues to do what Bildad did in chapter eighteen. He informs Job of the ways of the wicked and the consequences that come upon them as a result of their evil ways.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Job answers those things set for by Zophar. He informs him that the wicked do indeed perish, but sometimes it is only ultimately that they receive their punishment. He provides examples of those who are wicked and prosper during the course of their physical lives. They do not lose their lives, their families, their flocks, etc. All of these things were lost by Job, but some who are wicked prosper in this lifetime. Job emphasizes that both the wicked and the righteous die (vs.22ff), He concludes by saying that his friends were comforting him in vain because their answers contained falsehoods. Job was

correct in this assessment.

#### CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

In this chapter Eliphaz accuses Job of sinning (vs.6ff). He repeats many of the comment already made about Job seeming setting himself up as an equal with God. In the last part of the chapter (vs.21-20) he calls upon Job to repent of his sins and "return to the Almighty" (vs.23). He assures him that if he would do so that God would provide for him.

#### CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Job affirms that God would help him in this matter (vs.6) and Job states that he would be delivered from his judge (i.e. God) if the matter were to be brought before him now. Beginning in vs.8ff, Job acknowledges the ways of the Lord. God knows the ways of men even though men do not know the ways of God.

#### CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Job continues to speak. In this chapter he discusses what seems to be the apparent indifference of God to the affairs of the wickedness, but he then explains that the wicked receive their just reward, if not in this life then in the life to come.

#### CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

In this brief chapter Bildad simply questions how a man can be justified in the sight of God. Again, it must be noted that the three friends of Job seemed to believe that man was exceedingly sinful and could not be justified in the sight of God.

#### CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Job reproved Bildad for his comments and sets forth an extended argument. In this chapter he praises God for his creation and the intricacies of that creation.

#### CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

In the initial section of this chapter Job continues his defense of his integrity and truthfulness. The last part of the chapter talks about the hopelessness of the hypocrite )

#### CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

As Job continues to speak he addresses the subject of wisdom. God's wisdom is seen manifested in his creation. His wisdom is not found in any specific place in that creation, that is to say man can not search for wisdom as he searches for some physical object. Nor can man purchase wisdom with any of God's creation. Wisdom comes from God. To fear the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.

#### CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

In this chapter Jobs talks about the way that things used to be. He speaks about his wealth, his prestige in his community, his help for all of those who needed such help, and the respect that people paid him for his wisdom.

#### CHAPTER THIRTY

Job then begins to discuss how all of that has changed. His wealth is gone and it is replaced with present poverty. He is no longer respected as he once was; he has become a legend. His suffering is now his fortune.

#### CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

In this chapter Job again speaks about his integrity. He said that if he has done any evil he deserves to receive just compensation for that evil. He stated that he did not despise anyone, he did not let anyone go hungry or naked, he did not lift up his hand against the fatherless, he did not trust in gold, he did not gloat over victories or personal possessions, and he did not mistreat the stranger. All of these are given to show that Job did not give up his integrity or his faith. His current suffering was not because of his evil lifestyle.

#### CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

Elihu appears and speaks against Job and his three friends. He is a younger man who listened to some of the conversations of the four men and who desired to comment about it. First, he said that old age does not necessitate wisdom. Second, he reproves the friends of Job because none of them answered the words of Job. )

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

Elihu next turns to address Job. He informs him that he (i.e. Job) was not righteous in the way he handled the situation. God calls men to repent, says Elihu, and that is what he encouraged Job to do.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

Elihu continues his speech to Job. He further criticizes Job's speeches. He then presents a defense of the justice of God, concluding that God cannot be unjust. He further talks about the omniscience of God. God knows the ways of all man. Man must give up his pride and submit to the will of God.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

As Elihu continues speaking he emphasizes that man is not God, nor is man in a position to know all that God does. In arguing along these lines he continues to reprove Job.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

As Elihu proceeded he showed that God is just. He does not keep the lives of the wicked. He provides for the poor. He makes known his wrath upon the hypocrite. Because of his justice, God would have taken care of Job if he (i.e. Job) would have remained righteous... but he did not. This was the reasoning of Elihu.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

In this the last chapter of Elihu's address he speaks about the works and the wisdom of God. He mentions numerous elements of the creation of God in order to show the wisdom of God. He then asks Job if he know all of these things as God knows them. The point is, of course, to show Job that God is far greater than he (i.e. Job).

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

In this chapter we learn that God begins to speak to Job. He presents challenges to Job in order to show his (i.e. Job's) ignorance and in order to show his (i.e. God's) wisdom. He asks Job if he (Job) knows who shut up the doors of the seas, or if he were there when the foundations of earth were laid? These questions and others were designed to show the magnificence and the grandeur of the wisdom of God.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

In this chapter God continues the same course of reasoning that we mentioned in the previous chapter. He continues to question Job about the intricacies of the creation.

CHAPTER FORTY

In the opening verses of this chapter we learn that Job is humbled. He said that he was vile in the sight of the Lord. The Lord then continued to make his power and wisdom known to Job.

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

In this chapter the Lord draw one analogy between the power of the leviathan (part of the creation of God) and his own power. Just as David is not fully able to understand the ways and the workings of the leviathan, so neither can he fully understand the ways and the wisdom of the Lord.

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

In this the final chapter of the book Job acknowledges the greatness of God and submits to him. God blesses Job and expresses the fact that his wrath was kindled against the friends of Job. Job received a double portion of the possessions that he formerly had and he lived 140 years after this event.

JOB: A REVIEW!

Thorough discussion has not been given of the ideas and thoughts presented by each of the characters in the book of Job, but we have noticed several important things about the book. 1) Suffering sometimes comes to those who have not done any specific sin which results in the suffering. 2) The righteous suffer. 3) The unrighteous suffer. 4) Many people think that there is a direct correlation between the amount of suffering that a person experiences and the degree of righteousness which the person manifests in this life. 5) There is no direct correlation to the amount of suffering experienced in this life

and the righteousness of an individual. 6) Satan tempts the righteous. 7) Some people might serve the Lord for gain. 8) The truly righteous do not serve God for gain. 9) The Lord does not permit Satan to tempt us above that which we are able (I Corinthians 10:13). 10) The power of God is greater than the power of Satan. 11) Eternal life is greater than physical life. 12) Suffering has spiritual benefits. 13) God is above man. 14) Man cannot question, nor judge God. 15) Suffering makes us question many things. 16) God is just. 17) The creation of God shows the wisdom of God. 18) People do not always have the right answer to the problems of life. 19) God always has the answer for all problems. 20) Faith in God is often rewarded by physical blessings in this life. There are numerous other benefits that we can mention, but these will suffice to give us a deeper insight into the book of Job. For further study read the handouts distributed. This material is taken from the LIVING MESSAGES OF THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. It was the Spiritual Sword Lectureship of 1977.

## THE BOOK OF PSALMS

The book of Psalms was written by various authors. Almost half of them were penned by David the king. Each individual psalm is a unit in itself. Very few of the psalms are written in such a way that there is a continuous flow of thought or history through more than one of them. The psalms concern themselves with various subjects. Many were used in worship to God during the Old Testament times.

### PSALM 1

This psalm simply sets forth the differences between the righteous and the unrighteous. The righteous are characterized by studying the word of God and by a fruitful tree. The unrighteous are depicted as being like the chaff which the wind drives away. They shall not stand (endure) the judgment, but shall perish.

### PSALM 2

This psalm contrasts the ways of the heathen with the ways of the Lord. The rulers of the earth set themselves against the Lord, but the Lord's will shall prevail. Note the Messianic references in vs.2 to the Lord's anointed, in vs.6 to the king of Zion, in vs.8-9 to the rod of iron, and in vs. 12 to the Son.

### PSALM 3

This psalm was written by David and may have been penned while David was fleeing from Absalom his son (cf. II Samuel 15ff). In the psalm the writer informs us that the Lord is against his enemies, but he is a shield to those who cry unto him for his aid. God is the deliverer even in the midst of thousands of enemies. Salvation belongs to the Lord and his blessing upon his people. [NOTE: The word 'selah' which appears throughout the psalms is a Hebrew term whose meaning is somewhat uncertain. It may have been used as a signal in worship for voices to be lifted up.]

### PSALM 4

This psalm exhibits trust in the Lord. He (i.e. the Lord) responds to those who are godly in his sight, to those who call upon him. Prayer is exalted in this psalm (vs.4), and so is the offering of sacrifices (vs.5). Trust is to be placed in God and not in men. Trusting in God enables the writer to lay down in peace (a common theme in the psalms).

### PSALM 5

Psalm 5 is another prayer offered to God. In the prayer the psalmist exalts prayer and exhibits a constant prayerful attitude (vs.3). God is praised as a God who hates evil and rewards righteousness. The wicked's destruction is mentioned, but those who trust in the Lord will be able to rejoice in their blessings for the Lord protects them as a shield.

### PSALM 6

This psalm is a prayer for mercy and deliverance. Note the degree to which the psalmist (David) sorrows for his sins. He is in tears, he is groaning, he is in grief, and his eyes are sore from sorrow. He seeks to be separated from workers of iniquity and he expresses confidence that the Lord heard and received his prayer.