

EGW Notes - Lesson 12

Esther and Mordecai



Sabbath Afternoon, December 16

Under the favor shown them by Cyrus, nearly fifty thousand of the children of the captivity had taken advantage of the decree permitting their return. These, however, in comparison with the hundreds of thousands scattered throughout the provinces of Medo-Persia, were but a mere remnant. The great majority of the Israelites had chosen to remain in the land of their exile rather than undergo the hardships of the return journey and the re-establishment of their desolated cities and homes.

A score or more of years passed by, when a second decree, quite as favorable as the first, was issued by Darius Hystaspes, the monarch then ruling. Thus did God in mercy provide another opportunity for the Jews in the Medo-Persian realm to return to the land of their fathers. The Lord foresaw the troublous times that were to follow during the reign of Xerxes,—the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther,—and He not only wrought a change

of feeling in the hearts of men in authority, but also inspired Zechariah to plead with the exiles to return.—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 598.

Christians are Christ's jewels. They are to shine brightly for Him, shedding forth the light of His loveliness. Their luster depends on the polishing they receive. They may choose to be polished or to remain unpolished. But everyone who is pronounced worthy of a place in the Lord's temple must submit to the polishing process. Without the polishing that the Lord gives they can reflect no more light than a common pebble. . . .

The divine Worker spends little time on worthless material. Only the precious jewels does He polish after the similitude of a palace, cutting away all the rough edges. This process is severe and trying; it hurts human pride. Christ cuts deep into the experience that man in his self-sufficiency has regarded as complete, and takes away self- uplifting from the character. He cuts away the surplus surface, and putting the stone to the polishing wheel, presses it close, that all roughness may be worn away. Then, holding the jewel up to the light, the Master sees in it a reflection of Himself, and He pronounces it worthy of a place in His casket.

“In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, . . . and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts.” Blessed be the experience, however severe, that gives new value to the stone, and causes it to shine with living brightness.—Ellen G. White *Comments*, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1177.

God in His great love is seeking to develop in us the precious graces of His Spirit. He permits us to encounter obstacles, persecution, and hardships, not as a curse, but as the greatest blessing of our lives. Every temptation resisted, every trial bravely borne, gives us a new experience and advances us in the work of character building. The soul that through divine power resists temptation reveals to the world and to the heavenly universe the efficiency of the grace of Christ.—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 117.

Sunday, December 17

Captive in a Foreign Culture

God proves his people in this world. This is the fitting up place to appear in his presence. Here, in this world, in these last days, individuals will show what power affects their hearts and controls their actions. If it is the power of divine truth, it will lead to good works. It will elevate the receiver, and make him noble-hearted and generous, like his divine Lord. . . .

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Professors of religion are [often] not willing to closely examine themselves to see whether they are in the faith, and it is a fearful fact that many are leaning on a false hope. Some lean upon an old experience they had years ago; but when brought down to this heart-searching time, when all should have a daily experience, they have nothing to relate. They seem to think a profession of the truth will save them. When those sins which God hates are subdued, Jesus will come in and sup

with you and you with him. You will then draw divine strength from Jesus, and you will grow up in him, and be able with holy triumph to say, Blessed be God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, pp. 226, 227.

[All] should stand in a position where their hearts may be wholly the Lord's; where they are honoring God with their strength. God will then honor them by giving them knowledge and wisdom. Thus did Daniel in the courts of Babylon, standing true to principle amid the corruptions of the heathen. "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank."

Daniel and his companions knew not what would be the result of their decision; they knew not but that it would cost them their lives; but they determined to keep the straight path of strict temperance even when in the courts of licentious Babylon.

By the example of Daniel and his fellows in Babylon, we see that it is impossible to reach the standard which that Lord would have His children reach, and practise an easy, accommodating kind of religion that leaves principle out, and is controlled by circumstances.—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 174.

Christ told His disciples that in the world they should have tribulation. They would be brought before kings and rulers for His sake; all manner of evil would be spoken against them falsely, and those who destroyed their lives would think they did God service. And all, in

every age, who have lived godly lives have suffered persecution in some form. They have suffered every indignity, outrage, and cruelty which Satan could move upon minds to invent.

The world is as much opposed to genuine religion today as it ever has been.

The spirit of persecution will be aroused against the faithful ones, who make no concessions to the world, and will not be swayed by its opinions, its favor, or its opposition.—*My Life Today*, p. 69.

Monday, December 18

In a Foreign Court

Vashti did not carry out [the king's] orders, because she knew that wine had been freely used, and that Ahasuerus was under the influence of the intoxicating liquor. For her husband's sake as well as her own, she decided not to leave her position at the head of the women of the court.

There is little doubt that the king, when he afterward considered the matter, felt that Vashti deserved to be honored, rather than to be treated as she was. . . .

Through the experience that brought Esther to the Medo-Persian throne, God was working for the accomplishment of His purposes for His people. That which was done under the influence of much wine worked out for good to Israel.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible*

Commentary, vol. 3, p. 1139.

Through Esther the queen the Lord accomplished a mighty deliverance for His people. At a time when it seemed that no power could save them, Esther and the women associated with her, by fasting and prayer and prompt action, met the issue, and brought salvation to their people.

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 Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1140.

Those who keep in a prayerful frame of mind will be able to speak a word in season to those who are brought within the sphere of their influence; for God will give wisdom whereby they may serve the Lord Jesus. "When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee." Proverbs 2:10, 11. You will open your mouth with wisdom, and in your tongue will be the law of kindness.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 69.

Caiaphas, raising his right hand toward heaven, addressed Jesus in the form of a solemn oath: "I adjure

Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God.”

To this appeal Christ could not remain silent. There was a time to be silent, and a time to speak. He had not spoken until directly questioned. He knew that to answer now would make His death certain. But the appeal was made by the highest acknowledged authority of the nation, and in the name of the Most High. Christ would not fail to show proper respect for the law. More than this, His own relation to the Father was called in question. He must plainly declare His character and mission.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 706.

Tuesday, December 19

Mordecai's Faithful Witness

Through Haman the Agagite, an unscrupulous man high in authority in Medo-Persia, Satan worked at this time to counterwork the purposes of God. Haman cherished bitter malice against Mordecai, a Jew. Mordecai had done Haman no harm, but had simply refused to show him worshipful reverence. Scorning to “lay hands on Mordecai alone,” Haman plotted “to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai.” Esther 3:6.

Misled by the false statements of Haman, Xerxes was induced to issue a decree providing for the massacre of all the Jews “scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces” of the Medo-Persian kingdom. Verse 8. A certain day was appointed on which

the Jews were to be destroyed and their property confiscated. Little did the king realize the far-reaching results that would have accompanied the complete carrying out of this decree. Satan himself, the hidden instigator of the scheme, was trying to rid the earth of those who preserved the knowledge of the true God.—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 600.

Some, like Haman, forget all God's favors, because Mordecai is before them and is not disgraced; because their hearts are filled with enmity and hatred rather than love, the spirit of our dear Redeemer, who gave His precious life for His enemies. We profess to have the same Father, to be bound for the same immortal home, to enjoy the same solemn faith, and to believe the same testing message; and yet many are at strife with one another like quarrelsome children. . . .

Those who love God cannot harbor hatred or envy. . . . 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.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 222, 223.

The decree that will finally go forth against the remnant people of God will be very similar to that issued by Ahasuerus against the Jews. Today the enemies of the

true church see in the little company keeping the Sabbath commandment, a Mordecai at the gate. . . .

To secure popularity and patronage, legislators will yield to the demand for Sunday laws. But those who fear God, cannot accept an institution that violates a precept of the Decalogue. On this battlefield will be fought the last great conflict in the controversy between truth and error. And we are not left in doubt as to the issue. Today, as in the days of Esther and Mordecai, the Lord will vindicate His truth and His people.—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 605.

Wednesday, December 20

For Such a Time as This

The crisis that Esther faced demanded quick, earnest action; but both she and Mordecai realized that unless God should work mightily in their behalf, their own efforts would be unavailing. So Esther took time for communion with God, the source of her strength. “Go,” she directed Mordecai, “gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.” Verse 16.

The events that followed in rapid succession,—the appearance of Esther before the king, the marked favor shown her, the banquets of the king and queen with Haman as the only guest, the troubled sleep of the king, the public honor shown Mordecai, and the humiliation

and fall of Haman upon the discovery of his wicked plot,—all these are parts of a familiar story. God wrought marvelously for His penitent people; and a counter decree issued by the king, allowing them to fight for their lives, was rapidly communicated to every part of the realm by mounted couriers, who were “hastened and pressed on by the king’s commandment.” “And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king’s commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.” Esther 8:14, 17.—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 601, 602.

[Daniel] still bows before his God, “his windows being open.” He considers supplication to God of so great importance that he would rather sacrifice his life than relinquish it. On account of his praying to God, he is cast into the lions’ den. Evil angels thus far accomplish their purpose. But Daniel continues to pray, even in the den of lions. Was he suffered to be consumed? Did God forget him there? Oh, no; Jesus, the mighty Commander of the hosts of heaven, sent His angel to close the mouths of those hungry lions that they should not hurt the praying man of God. . . . Satan and his angels were defeated and enraged. . . .

The prayer of faith is the great strength of the Christian and will assuredly prevail against Satan. This is why he insinuates that we have no need of prayer. The name of Jesus, our Advocate, he detests; and when we earnestly come to Him for help, Satan’s host is alarmed. It serves his purpose well if we neglect the exercise of

prayer, for then his lying wonders are more readily received.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 295.

Now and onward till the close of time the people of God should be more earnest, more wide-awake, not trusting in their own wisdom, but in the wisdom of their Leader. They should set aside days for fasting and prayer. Entire abstinence from food may not be required, but they should eat sparingly of the most simple food.—*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, pp. 187, 188.

Thursday, December 21

The Miracle of Purim

On the day appointed for their destruction, “the Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon all people.” Angels that excel in strength had been commissioned by God to protect His people while they “stood for their lives.” Esther 9:2, 16.—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 602.

God has revealed what is to take place in the last days, that His people may be prepared to stand against the tempest of opposition and wrath. Those who have been warned of the events before them are not to sit in calm expectation of the coming storm, comforting themselves that the Lord will shelter His faithful ones in the day of trouble. We are to be as men waiting for their Lord, not in idle expectancy, but in earnest work, with unwavering

faith. It is no time now to allow our minds to be engrossed with things of minor importance. While men are sleeping, Satan is actively arranging matters so that the Lord's people may not have mercy or justice. . . .

God has always wrought for His people in their greatest extremity, when there seemed the least hope that ruin could be averted. The designs of wicked men, the enemies of the church, are subject to His power and overruling providence. He can move upon the hearts of statesmen; the wrath of the turbulent and disaffected, the haters of God, His truth, and His people can be turned aside, even as the rivers of water are turned, if He orders it thus. Prayer moves the arm of Omnipotence. He who marshals the stars in order in the heavens, whose word controls the waves of the great deep, the same infinite Creator will work in behalf of His people if they call upon Him in faith. He will restrain the forces of darkness until the warning is given to the world and all who will heed it are prepared for the conflict.—
Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 452.

If there were more praying among us, more exercise of a living faith, and less dependence upon someone else to have an experience for us, we would be far in advance of where we are today in spiritual intelligence. What we need is a deep, individual heart and soul experience. Then we shall be able to tell what God is doing and how He is working. We need to have a living experience in the things of God; and we are not safe unless we have this. . . . If ever there was a time in our history when we needed to humble our individual souls before God, it is today. We need to come to God with faith in all that is

promised in the word, and then walk in all the light and power that God gives.—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 531.

Friday, December 22

For Further Reading

Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, “God’s Message for the Present Time,” pp. 95, 96;

Testimonies for the Church, “Preparation for the Final Crisis,” vol. 6, pp. 404–406.