

RUTH

AND

ESTHER

By Charles Willis



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Readings

Ruth 1-2

Examine The Text

1. Why does Elimelech have his family living in Moab (1:1-2)?
2. Why was Naomi returning to Judah (1:1-6)?
3. Why did Naomi not want her daughter-in-laws to return with her (1:8-13)?
4. What was the difference in the attitudes of Orpah and Ruth (1:14-16)?
5. Naomi wanted her name changed. Give the meaning for "Naomi" and "Mara."
6. How did Ruth determine to support herself and Naomi in Bethlehem (2:2-3, 7; see also Leviticus 19:9-10 and Deuteronomy 24:20-22)?
7. What is said about Boaz (2:1, 20)?
8. What reassurances did Boaz give to Ruth (2:9)? How did Naomi agree with this (2:22)?
9. Why did Boaz desire to help Ruth (2:11-12)?
10. What is significant about the text saying she ate and was satisfied and had some left (2:14)?
11. How did Boaz's instructions help Ruth (2:15-16)?

Thought Questions

1. What attitude toward God's law is held by the sons of Elimelech (1:4)?
2. What did Ruth know about the Lord (1:16-17)?
3. What did Ruth learn about God and His people through the events of chapters 1 and 2?

Discussion Questions

1. What was Naomi's attitude toward God (1:13, 20-21; 2:20)? What did she know of God's greater plan in these events?
2. What was Ruth's commitment to Naomi (1:6-17) and what was she willing to give up to do this? (see also 2:11)

Readings

Ruth 3-4

Examine The Text

1. Why did Naomi recommend a secret meeting with Boaz at night at the threshing floor (3:2-3)?
2. Why did Ruth uncover Boaz's feet (3:4,7)?
3. What did Ruth mean when she said "spread your covering over your maid, for you are a close relative" (NAS, 3:9)?
4. What was Boaz's reply to Ruth's request (3:10-11)?
5. What redemption does Boaz refer to? (see Deut. 25:5-10)
6. Did Boaz have to defer to the "one who is closer"?
7. Why does Boaz bring up buying land (4:1-4)?
8. What was the close un-named relatives reply (4:4,6)?
9. Why was a sandal removed (4:8)?
10. Why did Boaz have this conversation before the city elders (4:1-2, 9-12)?

Thought Questions

1. Why did Boaz give Ruth six measures of Barley (3:15)? How much is this?
2. What is revealed about Boaz's character and attitude toward God's law?
3. Why is this short account included in Scripture?

Discussion Questions

1. What was Ruth's reputation? Was this altered by her mid-night meeting with Boaz (3:14)?
2. Explain the references to:
 - A. Rachel and Leah (3:11; Gen. 29:25-30)
 - B. The house of Perez (3:12, 18,22; Gen 38:29)

Readings

Esther 1-2

Examine The Text

1. Identify the time-frame of Esther's story in Israelite history (1:1-3; 2:5-6).
2. What event brought the wrath of the king to Vashti (1:10-12)?
3. Why did Ahasuerus see this as very serious (1:13-15)?
4. What was Memucan's concerns and suggestion (1:16-20)?
5. What was the plan to find Vashti's replacement (2:1-4)?
6. Why was Mordecai raising Esther (2:7)? How is his love for her demonstrated (2:11)?
7. What did Hegai think of Esther (2:8-9)?
8. After the virgin's first visit to the king, how did her status change (2:12-14)?
9. How long was Esther in the harem before being summoned to the king's chamber (2:16; 1:3)?
10. In celebration of Esther being crowned queen, what did Ahasuerus do (2:18)?
11. How did Mordecai save the king's life (2:21-23)?

Thought Questions

1. Do the concepts concerning Ahasuerus and Memucan agree or disagree with God's attitude about families? (see Eph. 5:22ff)
2. What was Ruth's attitude toward Mordecai (2:10, 20, 22)? How does this help young adults in maintaining a proper attitude toward parents?

Discussion Questions

1. Why did Mordecai instruct Esther to be silent about her nationality (2:10, 20)?
2. If Mordecai loved Esther, and the Lord, how could he assist her in becoming part of Ahasuerus' harem?

Readings

Esther 3-4

Examine The Text

1. Why did Haman decide to destroy all the Jews (3:6)?
2. What is “Pur, that is the lot” (3:7) that was cast before Haman from day to day and month to month?
3. What was Haman’s offer to the king (3:8-9)?
4. What was Ahasuerus’ reply (3:10-11)?
5. How was Haman’s plan to be carried out (3:12-15)?
6. What was the Jewish response to the king’s decree (4:1-3)? Include Ruth’s response (4:4).
7. How serious was Mordecai’s “order...to go to the king to implore his favor and to plead with him for her people” (4:8)?
8. To impress the need of her going to the king, what point did Mordecai make (4:13-14)?
9. What decision did Esther make about this situation (4:15-17)?

Thought Questions

1. Why did Mordecai use the excuse of “I am a Jew” for not bowing to Haman (3:4)?
2. How did Mordecai know about Haman’s pledge of money to the king (4:7)?
3. Why would Esther and her father’s house perish if deliverance came from another place (4:14)?

Discussion Questions

1. How aware was Ahasuerus of events in his empire (3:15; 4:5)?
2. Assuming Daniel was alive and working as an administrator in Babylon, discuss why Haman may have had additional reasons to hate the Jews.

Readings

Esther 5-6

Examine The Text

1. What is the significance of Ahasuerus extending the golden scepter to Esther (5:2; 4:11)?
2. What was Haman's mindset after the banquet (5:9-13)?
3. What was Haman's wife's suggestion (5:14)?
4. How did Ahasuerus learn of Mordechai's involvement in saving his life (6:1-12) and what was his response (6:3)?
5. Who did Haman think the king wanted to honor (6:6)? How did he suggest the king honor him (6:7-9)?
6. How did Haman react to the king's command to honor Mordechai (6:10-12)?
7. What political statement is being made in 6:13?

Thought Questions

1. What does Ahasuerus offer Ruth (5:3, 6)? Why does she not take advantage of this?
2. Was Ahasuerus aware of Haman's hatred of Mordecai? Was this why Mordechai was announced by Haman?
3. How did Haman prove himself a man driven by pride? What dangers about pride are we warned of in Scripture?

Discussion Questions

1. Why did Esther have two days of banqueting?
2. What would the citizens of Babylon have thought of Haman as he pronounced honor over Haman (6:11)?

Readings

Esther 7-8

Examine The Text

1. What request does Esther finally make of the king (7:3-4)?
2. What was immediately apparent to Haman (7:7-8)?
3. What is meant by “they covered Haman’s face” (7:8)?
4. How did Haman die (7:9-10)?
5. What is the significance of Mordecai receiving the signet ring of Ahasuerus (8:2)? Who did his status change (8:15)?
6. What was Esther’s additional request of the king (8:3-6)?
7. Since the decree could not be revoked (8:8), what plan was developed and issued (8:9-14)?
8. Why did the city of Susa like the new decree (8:15)?
9. How did other cities react to the new edict (8:16-17)?

Thought Questions

1. What is revealed of Ahasuerus’ knowledge of Haman’s actions in planning the death of the Jews (chapter 7)?
2. What “army of any people” was meant in the new decree (8:11)?
3. How does the general attitude of the people toward the Jews differ from Haman’s attitude? How “in touch” was Ahasuerus?

Discussion Questions

1. What dangers are faced by Esther in making her request in the presence of Haman and the king (7:1-6)?
2. Why was this decree limited to one day (8:12)?

Readings

Esther 9-10

Examine The Text

1. How successful were the Jews in the day of conflict (9:1-2)?
2. Who assisted the Jews (9:3)? Was this to be expected?
3. Out of all the inhabitants of Susa, how many were enemies of the Jews (9:6-10)?
4. What is revealed of the attitude of Ahasuerus (9:12-15)?
5. How many did the Jews kill in the provinces (9:16)? What does this reveal about the number of Jews in captivity?
6. What became of the next day, the 14th day of Adar (9:18-19)?
7. What did the Jews call this day and why (9:20-26)?
8. What did Mordecai's second letter decree (9:29-32)? By whose authority - Mordecai or Esther?
9. How was Mordecai "remembered" (10:2-3)?

Thought Questions

1. What was "the dread of Mordecai" (9:3-4)?
2. Why did the Jews not lay their hands on the plunder in Susa (9:10, 15-16)?
3. What book was the command written in (9:32)?

Discussion Questions

1. How is God's hand seen to be at work through Mordecai and Esther? Why is this an important historical moment?
2. Do the Jews of today celebrate Purim as stated in 9:27-28?