

The Book of Esther – Part Two

January 10, 2010

Adapted from John Herbert's Notes; Presented by Ralph Alley

1). Esther 1:1

Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus (this was the Ahasuerus who reigned over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, from India to Ethiopia), 2 in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the citadel, 3 that in the third year of his reign he made a feast for all his officials and servants-the powers of Persia and Media, the nobles, and the princes of the provinces being before him).

a). In our study last week, we mentioned that there are two books in the Bible named after women – one being Ruth and the other Esther.

b). Although the Book of Ruth and the Book of Esther are separated historically by some seven hundred years, they both deal with exactly the same period of future time. They deal with the period of time that precedes the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom, which is the same period of time covered in the first 20 chapters of the Book of Revelation.

c). The Book of Ruth presents this period of time exclusively from the perspective of the Church; more specifically, it deals with it from the perspective of the Bride, with respect to the redemption of the inheritance –

Ruth 4:1

Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there; and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz had spoken came by. So Boaz said, "Come aside, friend, sit down here." So he came aside and sat down. 2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down. 3 Then he said to the close relative, "Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, sold the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech. 4 "And I thought to inform you, saying, 'Buy it back in the presence of the inhabitants and the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if you will not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know; for there is no one but

you to redeem it, and I am next after you.'" And he said, "I will redeem it." 5 Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also buy it from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance." 6 And the close relative said, "I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I ruin my own inheritance. You redeem my right of redemption for yourself, for I cannot redeem it."

d). Now the Book of Esther presents this same period of time (that which precedes the institution of the Millennial Kingdom) from the perspective of Israel, with respect to the time of Jacob's trouble and the restoration of the nation that follows that time -

Esther 7:3

Then Queen Esther answered and said, "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. 4 "For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. Had we been sold as male and female slaves, I would have held my tongue, although the enemy could never compensate for the king's loss."

And-

Esther 10:3

For Mordecai the Jew was second to King Ahasuerus, and was great among the Jews and well received by the multitude of his brethren, seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his countrymen.

e). And we had also seen last week that this is the same period of time that we find in the Book of Daniel, that which is known as Daniel's seventieth week -

Daniel 9:24

"Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy. 25 "Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times. 26 "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined.

i/ As we studied this, we learned that God had allotted a specific period of time in order to bring Israel to the place of repentance, as a prelude to the ushering in of the Millennial Kingdom -

ii/ So the 70 weeks, or more accurately the 70 periods of 7 years each, is equal to 490 years (70 weeks = 70 X 7 = 490)

iii/ Then after 7 weeks and 62 weeks (69 weeks), from the decree to restore and build Jerusalem, Messiah the Prince would be cut off, which takes us to the point of Christ's crucifixion.

iv/ So a quick math lesson would show us that 69 weeks (69 "sevens" = 69 x 7) = 483 years. Since 490 years is needed for the end of transgression and the beginning of the kingdom of righteousness, but after 483 years Messiah the Prince was cut off, that would leave just 7 years, or 1 "week", left to deal with.

v/ All of this takes us to the 7 years of the tribulation, a period of time that Scripture also calls "the time of Jacob's trouble" -

Jeremiah 30:7

Alas! For that day is great, So that none is like it; And it is the time of Jacob's trouble, But he shall be saved out of it.

2). Now at this point it is necessary to do a bit of review and set a context for God's dealings with the nation of Israel. Let's remember that God had made irrevocable promises to Abraham concerning his descendants who would come through Isaac and Jacob –

Genesis 22:16

"By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son - 17 "blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

a). The fulfillment of these promises can only come through the seed of Abraham. With regards to possessing the gates of their enemies *in the heavens and on the earth*, the 'stars of the heaven' refers to the Church, specifically those constituting the Bride, who will one day possess the gate of their enemy in the heavenly realm. The Church, through their positional standing in Christ, are counted as Abraham's seed –

Galatians 3:29

And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

b). And with regards to 'the sand on the seashore,' the gate of the enemy in the earthly realm will be possessed by the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – the nation of Israel.

c). And the realization and fulfillment of these promises brings us right back to that which we have just looked at regarding that period of time just prior to the institution of the Thousand Year Reign of Christ.

d). For the last 2000 years (2 days), the Holy Spirit has been searching for a bride for God's Son from amongst Christians. This is in the antitype of that seen in Genesis Chapter 24 regarding Abraham's oldest servant being sent to find a bride for Isaac, the son of promise. At the end of this search, at the completion of the 2000 years allotted for it, all Christians from this whole period will be resurrected / raptured to the Judgment Seat of Christ. At this Judgment (the threshing floor), the Bride for the Son, the Kinsman-Redeemer, will be revealed through the testing of works. This will result in the redemption of the inheritance, and the consort queen with her King possessing the gate of the enemy as they replace Satan and the fallen angels in the heavenly realm of the Kingdom.

e). And as we have seen, this revealing of the Bride also triggers the events of the time of Jacob's trouble.

f). Because of centuries of national disobedience and unfaithfulness, the nation of Israel must come to the place of repentance (which will also include repentance for the slaying of their Brother) *before* they can possess the gate of the enemy on earth. And the nation of Israel can only come into possession of the gate of their enemy on the earth through the overthrow of Gentile world power. Israel cannot be placed at the head of the nations until this occurs.

g). And only then, with Abraham's descendants in the gate of the enemy in the heavens and on the earth, will the nations of the earth be blessed according to God's promise.

3). And so to bring about repentance on the part of Israel, God will scatter them amongst the Gentile nations and use those same Gentile nations, through unbelievable persecution, to bring Israel to the place where they have to cry out to the God of their fathers. This is the way He did it in the past, and this is the way He will do it in the future.

a). We see this in the type picture in Jonah, where we see Jonah being delivered into severe judgment for his disobedience-

Jonah 1:11

Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?" -for the sea was growing more tempestuous. 12 And he said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me."

And then we see the severe torment bringing about Jonah's repentance-

b). Jonah 2:1

Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish's belly. 2 And he said: "I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction, And He answered me. "Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, And You heard my voice. 3 For You cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas, And the floods surrounded me; All Your billows and Your waves passed over me. 4 Then I said, 'I have been cast out of Your sight; Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.' 5 The waters surrounded me, even to my soul; The deep closed around me; Weeds were wrapped around my head. 6 I went down to the moorings of the mountains; The earth with its bars closed behind me forever; Yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD, my God. 7 "When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; And my prayer went up to You, Into Your holy temple. 8 "Those who regard worthless idols Forsake their own Mercy. 9 But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD." 10 ¶ So the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

In the story of Jonah, the "sea" represents the Gentile nations and Jonah represents the nation of Israel. Jonah/Israel is disobedient, not doing what God said to do in regards to preaching His message to the lost. And because of their disobedience, the seas/Gentiles are in an uproar. When Jonah/Israel is cast into the sea/Gentiles, the uproar of the Gentiles towards Israel is silenced, but we see that Jonah/Israel undergoes severe torment in order to bring about repentance. And as we see in the story of Jonah, there is indeed repentance.

c). We can also see this in the type picture presented in the Book of Exodus. We see Israel in Egypt, a type of the world, as slaves of the Gentile world power of that day. First we see the affliction upon Israel –

Exodus 1:8

Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. 9 And he said to his people, "Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; 10 "come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land." 11 Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses.

And then we see God hearing their cries and delivering them –

d). Exodus 3:7

And the LORD said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. 8 "So I have come down to deliver them out of the and of the Egyptians,

4). And then throughout Israel's history, we see this same thing happen (in part) through the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. But of course, ultimate fulfillment awaits a future day. Right now we see Israel present in their land again, which is causing serious raging amongst the Gentiles toward Israel (as the "sea" was raging against Jonah when he was set apart from it), because they are in the land in *disobedience to God's purpose* for them – they are in the land in *un-repentance* (just like Jonah). So they will again be scattered amongst the Gentiles, just as is contained in the prophetic word –

Jeremiah 9:16

"I will scatter them also among the Gentiles, whom neither they nor their fathers have known. And I will send a sword after them until I have consumed them."

a). And yet despite the intensity and ferocity of the persecution that awaits them, God will not allow them to be destroyed –

Ezekiel 11:16

"Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Although I have cast them far off among the Gentiles, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet I shall be a little sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone."'

b). This is pictured for us in the burning bush that was not consumed in –

Exodus 3:2

And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed.

c). And again pictured for us with Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego in –

Daniel 3:24

Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." 25 "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

d). And spoken of by Christ in –

Mark 13:19

"For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. 20 "And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days.

5). And it is within the setting of Israel being scattered into the Gentile nations that the events of the Book of Esther unfold.

a). As we saw in our opening scripture, Esther is set during the days of Ahasuerus, who reigned over 127 provinces, from India to Ethiopia. He was the king of the worldwide Gentile power of that day; he was the ruler over the kingdom of the Medes and the Persians. Today we know this particular area as Iran.

c). Before 1935 Iran was known as Persia, reflecting the racial identity and history of the people who inhabited the land. These people were the descendants of the ancient Persians from the time of Darius the Great and Ahasuerus. King Ahasuerus is also known by the name Xerxes. This is the same Xerxes known for his ongoing wars with Greece and Sparta, probably the most famous battle of which took place at the pass at Thermopylae (think of the movie "300").

d). The name change of Persia to Iran in 1935 took place to reflect another racial characteristic of the Persian people - that of 'Aryan' descent. The name 'Iran' is a derivative of 'Aryan,' which is a group of tribes within the Indo-European language group within that part of the world who would be distinct from the Semitic (which includes Arabic, Hebrew, and Aramaic) tribes of the Middle East.

e). Obviously, the whole notion of a distinct Aryan people based on a language grouping is nebulous to say the least.

f). However, it is interesting to note that Nazi Germany in the 1930's also laid claim to an Aryan race within the Germanic peoples. And it was to effect the dominance of this supposed 'super race' that the 'final solution' to the 'Jewish problem' was set in motion by the 'Third Reich' - a third reign or third empire that was to last 1000 years.

g). This of course is not scripture - it's just interesting.

h). Modern day Iran only covers a small part of the territory that was under subjection to Ahasuerus during his reign.

6). Now the kingdom of Ahasuerus (that of the Medes and Persians) is that which conquered the Babylonian Empire around 539 BC and is the subject of the second part of the image seen in Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel Chapter two.

(Keep in mind that the order of worldwide kingdoms is this: Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon and his empire can be considered the first worldwide power in the Book of Daniel. Babylon was conquered by the Medes & Persians (Ahasuerus' kingdom). The Medes & Persians were conquered by Greece under Alexander the Great. The Greeks were conquered by the Romans.)

a). And so we will need to stop right here and look at this image in Daniel because it is pertinent to our understanding of the events in Esther.

7). Let's first read the account of Nebuchadnezzar's dream -

Daniel 2:31

"You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. 32 "This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, 33 "its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. 34 "You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. 35 "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. 36 "This is the dream.

a). And now let's read the interpretation of the dream -

Daniel 2:36

Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. 37 "You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; 38 "and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all you are this head of gold. 39 "But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. 40 "And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others. 41 "Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. 42 "And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. 43 "As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. 44 "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. 45 "Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold-the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure."

b). Now there are certain things we should note here. First, in verse 31 we see that the image is standing before the king – that is to say, *it is standing in Babylon*. Remembering this will be helpful to us when we get to the fourth part of the image.

c). The head of gold is the Babylonian Empire of Nebuchadnezzar, into which the Jewish people had been carried as captives, as we have already noted, because of their disobedience and unfaithfulness.

d). According to the scripture, the Babylonian Empire would be conquered by another empire... an empire represented by the chest and arms of silver. This is actually an event that is recorded for us in scripture in the days of Nebuchadnezzar's son, Belshazzar —

Daniel 5:24

"Then the fingers of the hand were sent from Him, and this writing was written.²⁵ "And this is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. ²⁶ "This is the interpretation of each word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; ²⁷ "TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; ²⁸ "PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." ²⁹ Then Belshazzar gave the command, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a chain of gold around his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. ³⁰ That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. ³¹ And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

e). It is within this part of the image – the chest and arms of silver, the Medo-Persian Empire, that we find Esther.

f). Now please note that in the days of the Babylonian Empire, this Empire was the world power of its day and is a picture for us of Gentile world power as it exists even until this day. We should remember that the 'times of the Gentiles' begins with Nebuchadnezzar.

g). So then, the Babylonian Empire is conquered *in Babylon* by the Medes and Persians, who then become the world power of their day. And they continued to rule *from Babylon* (remember, the figure in the dream is standing in Babylon) just as Nebuchadnezzar had done.

h). The third part of the image, represented by the belly and thighs of brass, points to the conquest of the Medo-Persian Empire by Alexander the Great. Please note that Alexander the Great also conquered this empire *in Babylon*

and then established his center of world power *in Babylon*, ruling from that same location. On Alexander's death, the empire was divided amongst his four generals and then just faded from the scene.

i). What we see is that for the first three parts of this image, Babylon is the center of world power. And so, if it is true for the first three parts of the image, it must hold true for the fourth part of the image, the legs of iron and the feet partly of iron and of clay.

Remember, the image is standing in Babylon.

j). Rome, the next world power, did not conquer the Grecian Empire. The Grecian Empire just faded from dominance. And, the Roman Empire did not have as its center the city of Babylon. It was centered in Rome. And the same holds true for every world power since then. Therefore, the Roman Empire is not and cannot be the fourth part of the image in the dream.

k). Just as we saw with Daniel's seventy weeks, where there is a time gap of 2000 years between the 69th week and the 70th week that is not recorded in Daniel, so with Daniel's image. There is an unrecorded time gap between the third and fourth part of the image, leaving the fourth part of the image to be established as a world power in Babylon at a time that remains yet future. And yet from God's perspective, because it strictly concerns Israel, the fourth part of the image (yet future) is seen as following on directly from the third part of the image.

l). Why is there no mention of this time gap? For the same reason that it's missing for the 70 weeks. **This concerns Israel alone.** And this concerns solely God's dealing with the nation out amongst the Gentiles nations, when Gentile world power is centered in Babylon, in order to bring about repentance before the establishment of Israel at the head of the nations within the Millennial Kingdom.

m). Because of what is involved here, the fourth part of the image must coincide with the same time frame represented by Daniel's seventieth week. These two must run concurrently.

n). The fourth part of the image – the fourth kingdom with its center for world power in Babylon – will be the kingdom of Antichrist, which will begin its reign of power during that 70th week, the time of the Tribulation. This is described in the Book of Revelation –

Revelation 13:1

Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. 2 Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. 3 And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. 4 So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" 5 And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. 6 Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. 7 It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.

o). And within the image itself, we see this kingdom pictured within the first 3 ½ years (42 months) and the last 3 ½ years (42 months) of the time of Jacob's trouble. And what does 3 ½ years + 3 ½ years equal? SEVEN YEARS.

8). Let's read again from Daniel concerning this fourth kingdom –

Daniel 2:40

"And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others. 41

"Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. 42

"And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. 43 "As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. 44 "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

9). And it is in this final stage of the fourth kingdom that we see Divine intervention, bringing about the complete overthrow of Gentile world power *for all time* (verse 44). Note that striking the feet causes the whole image to be destroyed, and the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom (the kingdom which the God of heaven sets up, the kingdom which shall never be destroyed).

a). And continuing in Daniel, we read in verse 45—

"Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold - the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure."

Note how clear God is about this. This "will come to pass," "for this dream is certain and its interpretation is sure." There should be no doubt in our minds about the coming establishment of Christ's kingdom.

And we can see mention of this same thing in -

Luke 21:25

"And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 26 men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. 27 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

And recorded in the Book of Revelation -

Revelation 11:15

Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

10). And so it is the events surrounding this fourth part of Daniel's image, located within the time frame of Daniel's seventieth week, that are presented for us typologically within the Book of Esther.

a). Esther deals with the fourth part of Daniel's image while itself being located historically within the second part of that same image.

11). In since we have in these last two weeks established the historical setting for Esther and laid as foundation its scriptural context, we are now ready to begin on the book itself next week. God willing.

Let's pray.