

Allusions, Images, and Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy Ruth and Esther

Lesson #11 for June 14, 2025

Scriptures: Ruth 1&2; Job 1:6-11; Matthew 4:8-9; Esther 3:1-14; 5:2; Revelation 12:14-17.

1. What do Ruth and Esther have to do with Bible prophecy? What other women were significant in contributing to the survival of Israel and the line of Jesus?

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] **We continue to explore stories that prefigure last-day events. By using real-life events and people, God helps us to see things from His perspective and helps us understand how to interpret the prophecies that come later, which are given to help strengthen our faith.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, June 7.^{†‡} [To prefigure means to show in advance.][‡]

2. It is interesting to notice that repeatedly in Scripture, the church is referred to as a *woman*. Sometimes, a *chaste and beautiful woman*; sometimes a *wicked prostitute*.
3. Many women have been named in Scripture as important in history and the line of Jesus.

[BSG:] The Bible is full of women who played significant roles in the Bible. **Eve**, whose name means “life,” for she was “the mother of all living,” was the one who transmitted the Messianic seed, which led to the birth of Jesus Christ, the Savior of humanity (*Gen. 3:15*). In the patriarchal period, such women as **Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah, as well as Tamar**, had a powerful impact on the course of salvation history. Their actions ensured the continuation of the Messianic line.

In the time of the Exodus, Israel owed its survival to women when Pharaoh decreed the killing of all the newborn male babies of Israel. The midwives (*Exod. 1:15–17*), and even the daughter of Pharaoh (*Exod. 2:5*) and other women (*Exod. 2:7*), are remembered in the Torah [*sic*], the Pentateuch, as those who were instrumental in saving Israel, often at the risk of their own lives. Later, **Deborah**, the prophetess who judged Israel, is referred to as the one who “arose” and saved Israel in war (*Judg. 5:7, NKJV*). **Rahab** saved the spies and thus helped save Israel in their fight against the Canaanites. According to Matthew’s genealogy (*Matt. 1:5*), **Rahab was the mother of Boaz who married Ruth and became an ancestor of the Messiah.** In this lesson, we will focus on two important women who gave their names to biblical books: **Ruth and Esther**. Despite the differences in times and settings of their stories, in some ways these two women exemplify the character of the many women who God appointed to help save Israel.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 145.^{†‡§} [Several women of “ill repute” are listed in the Bible including in the genealogy of Jesus.][‡]

4. In this lesson we will be focusing on the stories of Ruth and Esther and related topics.

[BSG:] **The history of ancient Israel may be said to be framed by the stories of Ruth and Esther.** Ruth belongs to “the days when the judges ruled” (*Ruth 1:1, NKJV*), during the earliest period of Israel, at a time when the Israelite tribes were still settling in the Promised Land. Esther belongs to the time of the Persian exile. Aspects of Israel’s history are sometimes linked with the voice of a woman, which is significant because, biblically, a woman often symbolizes a

church. One then may ask: In what way do these two women typify God's church, and what lessons may we, as God's last-day church, learn from them?—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 145-146.†§

Ruth or “the Power of Kindness” (and Related Issues) and Bible Prophecy

[BSG:] Critics of the Christian faith have often pointed to the brutal reality of living in this world as evidence that: (a) God does not exist, (b) He is powerless to intervene when bad things happen, or (c) He doesn't care when we hurt. Many of the stories of the Bible, however, provide abundant evidence that none of these assumptions are correct. True, God is allowing the human race to reap the consequences of rebellion against Him. But without violating our free will, He is always present, always working in human history, always moving us toward the ultimate resolution of the problems of sin and suffering. The story of Ruth provides one such example.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, June 8.‡

Ruth 1:1-5: ¹⁻² Long ago, in the days before Israel had a king, there was a famine in the land. So a man named Elimelech, who belonged to the clan of Ephrath and who lived in Bethlehem in Judah, went with his wife Naomi and their two sons Mahlon and Chilion to live for a while in the country of Moab. [Moab can be seen from Bethlehem by looking across the Jordan Valley.] While they were living there, ³Elimelech died, and Naomi was left alone with her two sons, ⁴who married Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. About ten years later ⁵Mahlon and Chilion also died, and Naomi was left all alone, without husband or sons [or a grandson].—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Ruth 1:1-5). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].†‡

[BSG:] There is irony to be found in the opening statement of this story: there was a famine that affected **Bethlehem, a town whose name means “house of bread.”** One is reminded of the abundance of Eden, where God told Adam and Eve, “ ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat’ ” (*Gen. 2:16, NKJV*). **The human race began its existence in abundance, under the care of a generous Creator, but then exchanged its role as caretakers of creation for the slavery of sin. “ ‘In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground,’ ” God told Adam (*Gen. 3:19, NKJV*).**

Like Naomi, we have been dispossessed from the inheritance that God originally planned for us to have, and our lives have become a hardship. Eden was given as a gift, but not unconditionally: humans were free to rebel, but that would mean they would have to take responsibility for their own well-being. Originally, we were meant to “subdue” the whole unfallen world under God's blessing, but now we are faced with the task of subduing a fallen one. Selfish human beings competing for scarce resources leads to much heartache and suffering.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, June 8.†‡

5. While the earth in general produces more than enough food to feed all living on this earth even now, the fact that some use a disproportionate amount of the goods as well as the lack of uniform distribution of food, leads others to starve. There have always been famines.

[BSG:] **Reading the story of Ruth through the lens of the plan of salvation**

during the end times is illuminating. The name of Ruth comes from a root meaning “friend, ally,” with the connotation of softness and freshness. The main theme of the book is kindness. There is no tension, no wicked person nor conflict nor criticism, nor even implicit bitterness in the beautiful and poetic story. Ruth is identified as a Moabite, a qualification that is used twice. The hero of the book is a foreign woman. The message of kindness that permeates the book is thus disconnected from any national belonging; kindness is universal and transcends the borders of all nations.

The story tells us that this Moabite was married to an Israelite husband who died; she decides, then, to follow her mother-in-law, Naomi, not only in her physical journey back to the land of Israel but also in her Israelite religion: “ ‘Wherever you go, . . . I will go; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die’ ” (*Ruth 1:16, 17, NKJV*). **The story begins, then, with an evangelistic success, although no report of the missiological strategy is given. Ruth was not converted by a sensational miracle in an evangelistic campaign. Ruth simply followed her mother-in-law out of love for her because she knew her and trusted her judgment.**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 146.†§

6. The story of Naomi prior to the appearance of Boaz is certainly a tragic one. She lost her husband and both sons in a foreign nation, and she was about to leave both daughters-in-law behind in Moab. However, Ruth insisted on going with her to Israel.
7. In some ways, our spiritual existence parallels the story of Ruth and Naomi. We have lost everything and are beyond repair because of the damage by sin. We are scrambling to survive through what little we can glean. But, then we discover God’s plan of salvation!
8. Shortly after Ruth and Naomi arrived in Bethlehem, Ruth decided to see if she could earn some kind of living. It was time for the harvesting of barley, and she went to collect what she could gather from what was missed by the reapers. The rules provided for such collection of the scraps by the poor. Read **Ruth 2:5-20**.

[BSG:] Naomi could not take possession of her husband Elimelech’s land without obtaining assistance from her husband’s family. She hopes that Ruth can marry a close relative of her deceased husband and bear a child in Elimelech’s name. God had made provision in Israel for individuals to reclaim their inheritance in the Promised Land: a close relative was needed to redeem Elimelech’s inheritance. Boaz was not just a kind farmer; he was a kinsman of Elimelech who could redeem the land.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, June 9.‡ [Everything that had been “leased” was to be returned to the original family at least every 50th year, by the year of Jubilee.]‡

9. Surely, Naomi must have known that Boaz was a near-relative. But, she had no way of knowing that it was his field from which Ruth went and gathered grain.
10. What is implied by the fact that Jesus, the Messiah or Christ, often referred to Himself as *the Son of Man*? Is it possible that if we could review His DNA, we could somehow find that half of it is Divine and the other half of it is human? There are many places in the Old Testament and in the New, that describe Him as *the Son of David*. Could Jesus really be the descendant of women like: (1) Tamar, a Canaanite, the one-time prostitute; (2) Rahab, a Canaanite

prostitute, from Jericho; and (3) Ruth, a Moabite, a descendant of the incestual encounter between Lot and one of his daughters whose mother came from Sodom? Was Jesus truly human? Do you think of Jesus as a descendant of a Sodomite? Or, Canaanite? Or, Moabite?

[BSG:] Far too many people think of God in harsh terms—e.g., “Perhaps He will let us into heaven if we check all the correct boxes on a moral inventory, but He will do so grudgingly because we have scraped by on a technicality.” The picture of Christ revealed in Boaz completely displaces such notions. God not only notices us, but, in spite of our deep spiritual poverty, He wants us as His bride.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, June 9.‡

11. Can we even comprehend the idea that our Creator chose to leave His perfect environment in heaven and come down to this earth, become a human being, living and, finally, dying that awful death to save us?

12. Returning to the story of Ruth:

[BSG:] Boaz falls deeply in love with Ruth and wishes to marry her, but there is a significant barrier: there is a closer relative who also has a claim on the woman and the land. **If we consider Boaz to be a type of Christ, this situation may reveal an issue at stake in the great controversy. Christ loves us, but there is a “closer relative” who also has a claim: Satan.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, June 10.†‡

13. There certainly must have been some young Hebrew women who would have been more than happy to marry Boaz. This seems to imply that Ruth was not only industrious but also probably good looking! Of course, Boaz’s mother had been a Canaanite prostitute, and that may have kept some of the Hebrew women from marrying him; but, that is unlikely!

14. This story is an **interesting parallel to some aspects of the plan of salvation**. Is there any obvious prophetic significance to it? It does indicate that there were some wonderful, kind people alive even in those ancient and rebellious times of the book of Judges. We should not overlook the fact that it was, no doubt, the Devil who was responsible for the drought that started the whole story. So, the question for us who understand the great controversy is: Why would God who knew what was going to happen allow that drought? Was He reminding the Hebrew people that there were other good people outside of the Hebrew nation who needed to be reached, like Rahab, the Canaanite, prostitute mother of Boaz and the beautiful young Moabite widow, Ruth.

15. However, there was a problem with Ruth marrying Boaz. A closer relative stood in the way. He was offered the opportunity to accept Ruth and take responsibility. He declined. So, the “privilege” or responsibility was passed to Boaz. In the same way, we as sinful human beings have sold ourselves into Satan’s kingdom. He has claims on us. So, before we can return to God, we have to extricate ourselves from Satan’s claims. Can we do that? Satan certainly has done everything that he possibly could to get us to join his side in the great controversy and, thus, to claim us as his! See Job 1:6-11; Matthew 4:8-9; Jude 1:9; Luke 22:31.

16. **In considering the story of Job**, we need to remember an important point: When we pray, we believe that God hears our prayers. I do not think Satan needed to travel anywhere, especially not literally to heaven where he was not welcome, to be heard in the heavenly council. He could voice his opinions directly from his place on earth, like “Zoom” or “Teams.”

[BSG:] When Satan appeared in the heavenly council, he told God that he had been “ ‘going to and fro in the earth’ ” (*Job 1:7*), and when God asked him if he had noticed the righteous Job, Satan laid claim to him as one of his own, suggesting that Job’s heart did not *really* belong to God. *That is, he really follows You only because You are good to him. Stop being good to him and see who truly has Job’s allegiance.*—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, June 10.^{†‡§} [Placing one’s foot on some land suggested ownership!][‡]

17. Try to imagine yourself in the wilderness with Jesus after His 40 days of fasting. At His baptism just before going into the wilderness to pray, He had been anointed both by God the Father and the Holy Spirit. So, He had no reason to believe Satan’s claims to this world.

18. What claims does Satan have on us? First of all, he claims that everyone who has died belongs to him. He says that death is his domain.

19. To support the idea that Satan claims all those who have died, consider the story of Moses.

Jude 1:9: Not even the chief angel Michael did this. In his quarrel with the Devil, when they argued about who would have the body of Moses, Michael did not dare to condemn the Devil with insulting words, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”—*Good News Bible.** [Think of what Christ could have said to Satan at that point!][‡]

20. This passage in Jude supports the idea that Moses did not go to heaven at his death, as many believe. Instead, he was resurrected by God Himself and then taken to heaven as one of the first fruits from this earth. That is how Moses could appear on the mount with Jesus at the transfiguration. (Matthew 17:1-8) Where did Jude learn about the body of Moses?

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] For the first time Christ was about to give life to the dead. [Enoch had been taken to heaven earlier as the first human to go there. However, he had not died first.] As the Prince of life and the shining ones approached the grave, Satan was alarmed for his supremacy. [Think of the cross!] With his evil angels he stood to dispute an invasion of the territory that he claimed as his own. He boasted that the servant of God had become his prisoner. He declared that even Moses was not able to keep the law of God; that he had taken to himself the glory due to Jehovah—the very sin which had caused Satan’s banishment from heaven—and by transgression had come under the dominion of Satan [death]. The arch-traitor reiterated the original charges that he had made against the divine government, and repeated his complaints of God’s injustice toward him.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 478.3.[‡] [Satan was saying: How can you save this sinner and not save me?][‡] [<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p84.2203&index=0>][‡]

21. **Obviously, Christ refuted Satan’s claim; Moses was resurrected.** (See Matthew 17:3.)

22. Returning to the story of Ruth: Gates in ancient villages were places where people met. Cases could be discussed and judgments reached.

23. In those days since there was no means of communication or doing business except person-to-person or possibly through a personal messenger, the best way to contact someone was to go to the city gate and wait until that person or someone who worked for that person came by. There were small rooms attached to the gate where people could meet and carry on business with relative privacy.

24. After the nearest relative decided that he did not want to claim Ruth, he handed his sandal

to Boaz as an indication that ownership had been exchanged and he would not marry Ruth.

Ruth 4:1-12: ¹ Boaz went to the meeting place at the town gate and sat down there. Then Elimelech's nearest relative, the man whom Boaz had mentioned, came by, and Boaz called to him, "Come over here, my friend, and sit down." So he went over and sat down. ²Then Boaz got ten of the leaders of the town and asked them to sit down there too. When they were seated, ³he said to his relative, "Now that Naomi has come back from Moab, she wants to sell the field that belonged to our relative Elimelech, ⁴and I think you ought to know about it. Now then, if you want it, buy it in the presence of these men sitting here. But if you don't want it, say so, because the right to buy it belongs first to you and then to me."

The man said, "I will buy it."

⁵ Boaz said, "Very well, **but if you buy the field from Naomi, then you are also buying Ruth, the Moabite widow, so that the field will stay in the dead man's family.**"

⁶ The man answered, "In that case I will give up my right to buy the field, because it would mean that my own children would not inherit it. You buy it; I would rather not."

⁷ **Now in those days, to settle a sale or an exchange of property, it was the custom for the seller to take off his sandal and give it to the buyer. In this way the Israelites showed that the matter was settled.**

⁸ So when the man said to Boaz, "You buy it," he took off his sandal and gave it to Boaz. ⁹Then Boaz said to the leaders and all the others there, "You are all witnesses today that I have bought from Naomi everything that belonged to Elimelech and to his sons Chilion and Mahlon. ¹⁰**In addition, Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon's widow, becomes my wife.** This will keep the property in the dead man's family, and his family line will continue among his people and in his town. You are witnesses to this today."

¹¹ The leaders and the others said, "Yes, we are witnesses. May the LORD make your wife become like Rachel and Leah, who bore many children to Jacob. [Wasn't it only two children that Rachel "had" for Jacob?] May you become rich in the clan of Ephrath and famous in Bethlehem. ¹²May the children that the LORD will give you by this young woman make your family like the family of Perez, **the son of Judah and Tamar.**"—*Good News Bible*.*†‡

25. ***Why do you think that Ruth had not had any children after being married to her first husband for ten years? Was God practicing birth control? If she had had children, it is unlikely that she would have followed Naomi back to Bethlehem.***

Esther or the "Power of Beauty" (and Related Issues) and Bible Prophecy

[BSG:] Equally inspiring, as well as challenging, is reading the book of Esther in light of God's plan of salvation during the last days of human history. **Challenging because the book of Esther reads like a secular book, with no explicit religious content whatsoever. There is no [direct] reference to God.** The course of events seems to run by itself, with no divine, miraculous intervention. **All that transpires in the story depends on the shrewdness of**

Mordecai, a royal courtier, and on the beauty and bravery of Queen Esther, as well as upon timing (*Esther 3:7, Esther 9:24*). The roles of priest and prophet are totally absent from the story. Even the end of the story, with the killing of many people, raises suspicions about its spiritual value. More important, Esther and Mordecai's Jewish identity did not prevent them from reaching the highest positions in the pagan court. Neither does anything in the book suggest a tension between them and that environment. No wonder many ancient rabbis and church fathers question the spiritual value of the book, even denying its canonical place.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 147.†‡§

Esther 3:1: Some time later King Xerxes promoted a man named Haman to the position of prime minister. Haman was the son of Hammedatha, a descendant of Agag [the former king of the Amalekites that God had ordered Saul to kill along with all people and animals. (See 1 Samuel 15.)].—*Good News Bible*.*‡

26. If we read Ezekiel 28:11-15 and Isaiah 14:12-15 about Lucifer while he was still in heaven before he became Satan, we can see that there are many parallels with the story of Haman. See the handout on www.theox.org: “Satan, Before His Fall, and Soon After.”

https://www.theox.org/images/uploads/bbk/KHart_BTGG_PDF_Gnrl_Satan_Before_and_Soon_After_His_Fall.pdf

[BSG:] In the book of Revelation, we see that Satan's lust for power and worship brings this **world to its final crisis**. His deceptions convince the world to “marvel” and follow the beast (*Rev. 13:3, 4, NKJV*), [the whole world] except for [a few] notable exceptions who refuse to worship him. With these people, he resorts to force.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, June 11.†‡§ [Was Haman really a type of Satan?]*‡

Revelation 13:3-4: ³One of the heads of the beast seemed to have been fatally wounded, but the wound had healed. The whole earth was amazed and followed the beast. ⁴**Everyone worshipped [sic-Br] the dragon because he had given his authority to the beast. They worshipped [sic-Br] the beast also, saying, “Who is like the beast? Who can fight against it?”**—*Good News Bible*.*†‡

27. **What could possibly cause the entire world to worship the Devil? Or, the sea beast?**
28. Some of the other officials in the Medo-Persian government pointed out to the king that Mordecai was not bowing to Haman as ordered. Haman became so angry that he wanted to destroy not only Mordecai but also the entire population of Jewish people.

Esther 3:5-8: ⁵Haman was furious when he realized that Mordecai was not going to kneel and bow to him, ⁶and when he learnt that Mordecai was a Jew, he decided to do more than punish Mordecai alone. He made plans to kill every Jew in the whole Persian Empire....

⁸ So Haman told the king, “**There is a certain race of people scattered all over your empire and found in every province. They observe customs that are not like those of any other people.** Moreover, they do not obey the laws of the empire, so it is not in your best interests to tolerate them.”—*Good News Bible*.*† [Compare Revelation 12:14-17.]‡

Revelation 12:14-17: ¹⁴She was given the two wings of a large eagle in order to fly to her place in the desert, where she will be taken care of for three and a half years, safe from the dragon's attack. ¹⁵And then from his mouth the dragon poured out a flood of water after the woman, so that it would carry her away. ¹⁶But the earth helped the woman; it opened its mouth and swallowed the water that had come from the dragon's mouth. ¹⁷The dragon was furious with the woman and went off to fight against the rest of her descendants, **all those who obey God's commandments and are faithful to the truth revealed by Jesus.**—*Good News Bible*.*† [***They are not like other people!***]†

29. Satan has laid claim to this earth, and he would like to make it his eternal home and domain. However, there is a group of people who will stay loyal to God, keeping His commandments. They disprove Satan's claim of complete supremacy on this earth.

[EGW:] Hearts that respond to the influence of the Holy Spirit are the channels through which God's blessing flows. Were those who serve God removed from the earth, and His Spirit withdrawn from among men, this world would be left to desolation and destruction, the fruit of Satan's dominion. **Though the wicked know it not, they owe even the blessings of this life to the presence, in the world, of God's people whom they despise and oppress.** But if Christians are such in name only, they are like the salt that has lost its savor. **They have no influence for good in the world. Through their misrepresentation of God they are worse than unbelievers.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 306.4.†

[\[https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.1454&index=0\]](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.1454&index=0)†

30. Faithful students of the Bible, especially the prophetic books of Daniel and Revelation, realize that there is a time of trouble coming just before the second coming of Christ. That time is known as *the time of Jacob's trouble*. At that time, Satan will have only one goal in mind: To eliminate all of God's people so he can claim this world as his domain. At the same time, God has promised that He will protect His faithful people. The great controversy will come to an end with God and Satan faced off over the fate of God's faithful people.
31. At the resurrection of Christ, Satan realized that he had lost the great controversy because Jesus Christ had answered his charges and had refuted his claims. After dying and being buried in that tomb, Jesus scattered the Devil and his forces as He arose from the tomb. Think of how Satan felt at that defeat! Then, Satan turned his rage against Christ's faithful followers—since he could no longer attack Christ Himself—in hopes of destroying them.

[EGW:] **When the Sabbath shall become the special point of controversy throughout Christendom, the persistent refusal of a small minority to yield to the popular demand will make them objects of universal execration.** Satan will excite indignation against the humble remnant who conscientiously refuse to accept the customs and traditions of error. **Blinded by the prince of darkness, popular religionists will see only as he sees, and feel as he feels. They will determine as he determines, and oppress as he has oppressed. Liberty of conscience, which has cost this nation so great a sacrifice, will no longer be respected. The church and the world will unite, and the world will lend to the church her power to crush out the right of the people to worship God according to His Word.**—Ellen G. White,

The Signs of the Times,* February 22, 1910, par. 4.††

<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p820.20889&index=0>†

32. Revelation 12 briefly tells the history of the great controversy from Satan’s rebellion in heaven through the story of Jesus Christ and, finally, to the closing events in this world’s history.
33. When Esther was chosen at the beauty contest and became queen, it was not long before a major crisis came for the Jewish people. Because Mordecai refused to bow to Haman, Haman had determined to destroy every Jew in the entire empire.
34. Try to imagine what was going through Esther’s mind as these events developed.

Esther 4:13-14: ¹³He [Mordecai] sent her this warning: “Don’t imagine that you are safer than any other Jew just because you are in the royal palace. ¹⁴**If you keep quiet at a time like this, help will come from heaven to the Jews, and they will be saved, but you will die and your father’s family will come to an end. Yet who knows — maybe it was for a time like this that you were made queen!**”—*Good News Bible*.*††

Esther 5:1-3: ¹ On the third day of her fast Esther put on her royal robes and went and stood in the inner courtyard of the palace, facing the throne room. The king was inside, seated on the royal throne, facing the entrance. ²When the king saw Queen Esther standing outside, she won his favour [*sic*-Br], and he held out to her the gold sceptre [*sic*-Br]. She then came up and touched the tip of it. ³ “What is it, Queen Esther?” the king asked. “Tell me what you want, and you shall have it — even if it is half my empire.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

35. Later in the story of Esther and Mordecai, the survival of the Jews was celebrated.

Esther 9:20-28: ²⁰ Mordecai had these events written down and sent letters to all the Jews, near and far, throughout the Persian Empire, ²¹telling them to observe the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar as holidays every year. ²²These were the days on which the Jews had rid themselves of their enemies; this was a month that had been turned from a time of grief and despair into a time of joy and happiness. They were told to observe these days with feasts and parties, giving gifts of food to one another and to the poor. ²³So the Jews followed Mordecai’s instructions, and the celebration became an annual custom.

²⁴ Haman son of Hammedatha — the descendant of Agag and the enemy of the Jewish people — had cast lots (or “purim”, [*sic*] as they were called) to determine the day for destroying the Jews; he had planned to wipe them out. ²⁵But Esther went to the king, and the king issued written orders with the result that Haman suffered the fate he had planned for the Jews — he and his sons were hanged from the gallows. ²⁶That is why the holidays are called Purim. Because of Mordecai’s letter and because of all that had happened to them, ²⁷the Jews made it a rule for themselves, their descendants, and anyone who might become a Jew, that at the proper time each year these two days would be regularly observed according to Mordecai’s instructions. ²⁸It was resolved that every Jewish family of every future generation in every province and every city should remember and observe the days of Purim for all time to come.—*Good News Bible*.*††

36. Just as God preserved His people, even those who did not return home to Jerusalem as they were supposed to after the Babylonian captivity, He will preserve His faithful children during

the time of Jacob's trouble just before the second coming.

[BSG:] God raised up His remnant church for a specific moment in history. As the 1,260 days of the Dark Ages drew to a close, God brought His bride out of hiding (*compare with Rev. 12:14*) to carry His final message of mercy—the three angels' messages—to the world. We are here “for such a time as this” (*Esther 4:14*).

Esther discovered she was not alone in facing the persecution being unleashed on her people by Haman: she found favor from the king, and her people were ultimately delivered. Neither are we alone as we enter the final moments of earth's history—the King is on our side, and God's people will be delivered, as well. [Are we behaving as Esther did?]

Things worked out well, at least in this story, for God's people. It doesn't always happen that way, though, does it? Why, then, must we always take a long-term view of things in order to maintain the hope that we have in Christ?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, June 12.†§

37. So, what can we learn from the story of Esther?

[BSG:] The story of Esther resonates well with life in our modern and secular world. Wherever we are and whatever we do—in the office, on the road, in college, or even in the family, amid our most menial tasks and humble duties—our presence is important and determines the salvation of others. Who knows whether we have come to a given place for such a time as this (*Esther 4:14*). Be wise—we do not always need to reveal immediately our religious identity (*Esther 2:10, 20*). **Make yourself lovable, as did Esther** (*Esther 2:17*). Vow to do whatever you can to solve your troubles, and trust in God's grace to reverse the course of events.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 148.†§

38. Is there really a parallel between the story of Esther and God's people in the last days?

[EGW:] Satan will arouse indignation against the minority who refuse to accept popular customs and traditions. Men of position and reputation will join with the lawless and the vile to take counsel against the people of God. Wealth, genius, education, will combine to cover them with contempt. Persecuting rulers, ministers, and church members will conspire against them. With voice and pen, by boasts, threats, and ridicule, they will seek to overthrow their faith. By false representations and angry appeals, men will stir up the passions of the people. Not having a “Thus saith the Scriptures” to bring against the advocates of the Bible Sabbath, they will resort to oppressive enactments to supply the lack. **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.—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings** 605.3.†‡ [<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p88.2693&index=0>]†

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