

Hello. This is our 16<sup>th</sup> lecture on “An Introduction to the Old Testament.” /Today, we will study the book of Esther, which is a Historical Book about the time after the exile. /In our last lecture, we mentioned that the book of Esther takes place between the first and second returns during the time of King Ahasuerus.

/The book of Esther is about the things that happened to the people of Judah who lived in Persia’s capital before the second return of the exiles. /King Ahasuerus of Persia fought against Greece when he was king.

/King Ahasuerus had a violent personality, and he had a strong interest in war. /The events in Esther are the events that happened under King Ahasuerus. If we look at chapter 1, we learn that the king wanted to show off his queen to the people.

/The king wanted to show his queen Vashti to the people, but she rejected his proposal. /At the feast that took place just before the war between Persia and Greece, the queen refused the king’s words.

/She no longer could be queen after this. In Esther 2, the king wants a new queen. /Here, Esther, who was raised by Mordecai, comes into the scene.

/Mordecai makes sure Esther doesn’t tell anyone that she is a Jew, and Esther enters a competition for choosing a queen. /Then Esther becomes King Ahasuerus’ queen. Furthermore, Mordecai, who raised Esther, discovers a plot to assassinate the king, and he tells this to the king.

/If we study Esther 3, we learn something new about Esther. /It says that King Ahasuerus promoted Haman the Agagite to a high position. /We need to pay attention to the fact that he is an Agagite. Agagites are descendants of the Amalekites, who lived during the time of King Saul in the books of Samuel.

/God commanded Saul to completely destroy the Amalekites, but Saul disobeyed and spared King Agag. /The Amalekites mistreated the Israelites when they exited Egypt.

/God ordered Saul to get rid of the Amalekites. /Haman, a descendant of the Amalekites, stood at the highest position next to Ahasuerus, king of Persia.

/Mordecai, who did not know of Haman’s position, did not bow to Haman when he entered and left the city.

/Haman was angry, and he planned to punish Mordecai. /Not only did he want to do this, but knowing that Mordecai was a Jew, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews.

/Haman paid the king a large sum of money, and the king drew lots to choose a day to kill all the Jews. /The king issued a decree that declared the day when all Jews, not only Mordecai, would be killed.

/Mordecai, finding out about this, sent a person to Esther to inform her that many Jews would die in Haman's hands. /Mordecai told Esther that she must go forward to the king to save the Jews.

/Let us read 4:14. / "For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

/Mordecai told Esther that she must go to the king in order to save the Jews. He also told her that if she didn't, God would use someone else to save the people.

/Esther fasts for three days and then goes to the king. With her heart prepared for death, Esther asks to meet the king. 4:16. /At that time, no one could freely go to the king and meet him. If Esther went to the king but he refused, she would die.

/However, the king agrees to meet Esther. /Esther invites the king and Haman to a feast. /Haman brags to his family that he gets to participate in the queen's feast.

/Haman, who was angry every time he looked at Mordecai, even made gallows at his house on which he was to hang Mordecai. /He decides to kill Mordecai the very next day by hanging him.

/This is what happens on that night. In Esther 6, The king, who cannot fall asleep, reads the chronicles. /He learns that Mordecai had prevented his assassination by turning in the people who plotted to kill him.

/Ahasuerus asks his people about the distinction that was given to Mordecai. /Hearing that nothing had been done for Mordecai, the king summons Haman.

/The king tells Haman that there is someone he honors more than anyone. The king asks Haman about what he should do to honor this person.

/Haman thought that he was this person. He told the king what he wanted, that the king should let the man ride the king's horse and that it be proclaimed, "The man whom the king loves."

/At that moment, the king orders Haman to do so to Mordecai. /Now the day had passed, and Queen Esther invites Haman and the king to her feast. /The king delights in the queen's invitation, and he says he will do anything for her.

/At the feast, Esther reveals Haman's plot to kill every one of her people. /The king accepts Esther's petition. He issues a decree to punish everyone who plotted to kill the Jews.

/Haman is killed on the gallows he prepared at his house to hang Mordecai. /Many people attempted to kill the Jews, but the situation was reversed. Instead, the Jews kill the enemies with the sword.

/Now Mordecai gets promoted to the highest position after the king. /What does this mean? It shows us that God was with the Jews who were previously in exile. /God's name is not once mentioned in the book of Esther.

/Still, if we look at the process of the Jews recovering after being in a place of trouble, we can see that God is at work. /In a foreign empire, in an evil world where it seemed like God was not there, God protected and guided his people.

/Through his people who were prepared to die for the sake of the people, God delivered his people. /God is at work in this world, and he is helping us from behind.

/The word from the book of Esther is the same word that is given to us today. /Unlike the people in Esther's time, we live in an age of buses and airplanes. /We live in an age where nothing is impossible for humans.

/Therefore, it appears as though man is doing everything. /Even in this world, God is the one helping his people and saving them. /If we are willing to give up our lives to live as God's people, God will work for us.

/We will conclude with Esther and move on to the Poetic Books. They are the Poetic Books or the Wisdom Books. /They are the books of Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.

/We will first study the book of Job. /The first part of the book introduces Job. 1:1 tells us that Job was a blameless and upright man who feared God and turned away from evil.

/Job always tried so that his children would not curse God in their hearts. /God boasted of Job in front of Satan. /To this, Satan says that Job only serves God because God had helped him and given him wealth.

/Satan says that Job will curse God if God is to take away his wealth and children. /God tells Satan to go ahead and take Job's possessions and children. /Consequently, on one day, Job loses his children and a large portion of his wealth.

/However, Job did not blame God or sin. /God was right when he boasted to Satan. /When Satan appears again, God compliments Job.

/Satan, hearing God say good things about Job, says Job will curse God if God is to strike his body. /However, Job once again does not curse God, but he praises him.

/From 2:11, we read about the things that happen when Job suffers from sores on his body. /Job's friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar visit Job, who is living in pain.

/From chapter 3, Job groans and feels sorry for himself as he speaks of his misery. /From chapter 3 to chapter 37, Job talks with his friends. /What do they talk about?

/Job's friends claim that because Job has sinned against God, he is being judged and punished by God. /However, Job consistently denies these views, saying that he is suffering without sin.

/Furthermore, Job claims he hasn't sinned, and he asks God to defend him, that he will debate before God. /Job requests for God to meet him so that he could talk to God and debate about whether he had sinned or not.

/Eventually, God meets with Job, and God shows Job all that he has created. /God asks Job about how the world operates and about the laws under which the world operates.

/Job answers by saying he does not know. /God says he is in command of the powerful forces that move the world. /He says he can do everything.

/The providence and plans of God determine Job's rights, and he teaches Job that God had allowed everything. /After meeting with God, Job realizes why he was suffering. Job came to realize his stupidity in making the excuse that he had not sinned.

/God acknowledges Job, and he tells Job's friends who stood against Job to give an offering of repentance. /Job's friends immediately say that they were wrong.

/Then God restores Job's possessions and children. /What is God telling us through the book of Job? /God does not always work mechanically.

/As Job's friends had said, God is a just God. /He punishes those who sin and disobey him, and he blesses those who obey him. He is a just God.

/However, God does not always work in this way. /What this means is that the believer may receive suffering even if he did not sin. /God in his providence, plan, and glory, can do these things.

/A similar story is seen in Jesus' time. One day, as they were going down the road, Jesus' disciples asked Jesus, "Whose sin caused that man to be blind?"

/Jesus responds by saying that it is neither the sin of that man or the sin of the man's parents, but the man is blind so that the works of God would be revealed. John 9:3. /The book of Job is about God's sovereignty.

/Job did not commit a great sin, but God gave him suffering. Under God's glory and his good will, Job was given suffering. /God makes it known that the word he declared about Job is the faithful word of truth. God gave Job suffering in order to show this.

/Therefore the book of Job isn't simply about the fact that Job was patient in suffering and was blessed as a result. /Job brings us to realize we believers, under God's sovereignty, may suffer even when we do not sin.

/Thus we need to remember that it is wise for us to believe in the providence of God and to work together to do good, to trust in God and obey him.

/We will now study the word of the Wisdom Books. We will study Proverbs. /Proverbs starts with "The proverbs of Solomon." /Solomon was truly a wise king.

/He sought for wisdom before God, and God gave Solomon his wisdom. /God gave Solomon wisdom. Thus Solomon was able to see who the real mother was when two women were fighting for a child.

/The word of God given through Solomon, who received God's wisdom, is the book of Proverbs. / "Proverbs" means "stinging word of advice." /It is the stinging word of advice, much like the sting that comes from a needle, that guides us into God's way.

/It is the word of wisdom. 1:7 tells us how God gives us wisdom.

/Let us read 1:7. / "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction."

/The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom. / "Wisdom" means believing in God, knowing God, and obeying God's word. /However, the fool does not know God and despises the wisdom of following God.

/In 1:8, wisdom is introduced in the form of a father instructing his child. /The verse says, "Hear your father's instruction" and "Forsake not your mother's teaching." /What are the father's instruction and mother's teaching that the children must hear?

/This refers to the law of instruction that God gave to parents. /We discover this meaning in Deuteronomy 6. /God commands the parents of the people of Israel, people who know God. He commands them to teach their children God's instruction and law.

/Therefore fearing the LORD is keeping God's word and instruction that is given through parents. /The children are instructed not to walk down the way of evil. /1:10 says "sinners," which refers to people who trick others and cause them harm, people who accumulate their personal wealth.

/God says he will make such people lose their lives. /Parents tell their children to not be around sinners. If we look in verse 20, it says we must listen to the call of wisdom.

/What does wisdom cry out? /It tells us to turn away from the way of not knowing God and to come to the way of fearing God. /In verse 32, the one who does not listen to the LORD will eventually be cursed and walk down the way of death.

/From Proverbs 2 to 9, we see parents talking about the way of evil and the way of wisdom. /The way of evil is the way of death, which is expressed as being the adulteress or the foreign woman. /However, wisdom is portrayed as the virtuous and pure woman.

/Up to chapter 9, we see two types of women. /The parents tell their children to marry a woman of wisdom if they want to gain wisdom. /This woman of wisdom refers to the word of God.

/If we read chapter 8, we learn that the woman of wisdom is not simply a woman. /She was used by God during the creation of the world. /Therefore, the woman of wisdom refers to the word of God, and it is saying that if we live closely with the word of God, then we will gain life.

/Proverbs 10 to 31 are a series of short proverbs. /The short proverbs are about money, language, and relationship with friends. /However, there is something we need to be careful about.

/These short proverbs sometimes repeat and mention each other. We will study chapter 26. /Proverbs 26:4,5 are important for understanding Proverbs. /Proverbs 26:4 says, "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself."

/For us to not become like the fool, we must not answer the fool. /Let us read 26:5. / "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes." /Proverbs 26:5.

/What does it say? We need to answer a fool when he thinks he is wise. /We must not insist on either verse 4 or verse 5 for all situations. /We need to be aware of the situation. It is important for us to know when we should answer and when we shouldn't.

/This is an important aspect of interpreting Proverbs. Having the ability to correctly recognize the situation and the ability to correctly apply the word of Proverbs is wisdom. /Having the ability to discern the time to answer a fool and the time to not answer a fool is not merely human ability, but it comes from the power of the word of God.

/We need to understand these proverbs as being complementary. /In Proverbs 30 and 31, we have the proverbs of Agur and of the mother of King Lemuel.

/They are God's words of wisdom given through these people. /In chapter 31, we learn about the virtuous woman. /Verse 30 says this woman fears the LORD.

/She is a woman who cries out that the LORD must be feared. /In every aspect, this woman is virtuous and mature. /It says that we must be close to this woman and follow her.

/We will receive blessings from God when we draw close to his word and keep the word in our hearts.

/Jesus Christ is the wisdom of God.

/We receive life when we keep close the word given through Jesus Christ. /Also, when we receive abundant life, we receive the wisdom that allows us to enjoy the blessings that God gives to us.

/In our next lecture, we will study the books of Ecclesiastes, Psalms, and Song of Solomon.

/Thank you.