

THE BOOK OF ESTHER

Messages Prepared for the Good News Network by Tom ^V(T) Taylor, November 2002

Message # 1....Introductory: The Captivity of Judah

Welcome to a study in the book of Esther.. a book that demonstrates the program and sovereignty of God to a remarkable extent. It also tells us a great deal about our responsibilities in the light of these truths and has a great deal of practical insight for the age and world in which we live. I will try to work through the book on a verse by verse, section by section, basis and attempt not to get bogged down with details although the temptation to that end is very real. But before we enter the accounts in the book we need to review generally the captivity Judah and the purposes that God had for His people when He caused them to be taken into a hostile land.

1. You will remember the division of the kingdom of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, and the resultant two Hebrew kingdoms of Judah and Israel.. *1 Kings 12*

2. You should remember that Israel departed almost immediately into an apostate situation while Judah walked with the Lord and away from the Lord...having godly leadership and ungodly leadership from time to time. Israel was carried away into Assyrian captivity in the latter part of the 8th century (ca 720) and the removal of these ten tribes has given rise to the "lost tribes of Israel" to this day. They were not, of course, actually lost. God knew where they were and many of them filtered back into Judah and kept their identities intact as you will see from the account of Anna in Luke 2...she was a daughter of the tribe of Asher. *1 Kings 10:1*

3. Judah was repeatedly threatened with the captivity possibility--warned by Isaiah and many of the prophets. She did experience revival at times but following the kingship of Josiah, fell into a rebellious state whereby God decreed that Judah would go into captivity to Babylon. Jeremiah assigned the time period of 70 years to this captivity and instructed the Hebrews in Babylon to settle down and live there until the 70 years were up--even praying for the peace of Babylon (Jeremiah 29). The Lord promised to return them to the homeland at that time but until then they were in bondage with a time to think about their sin and apostasy.

4. The seventy years began with the fall of Jerusalem about 605 and continued until after Cyrus had subdued Babylon about 539. It was a hard time but many of the Jews prospered in Babylon and Assyria and when the time came to return, many did but many did not. They were scattered throughout the Persian empire and many remained in the places of their dispersal but about 535 (approximately) return efforts were