

## Lesson 19: The Book of Judith, Introduction and Chapter 1-2:13

### Nebuchadnezzar Against Arphaxad and Revenge Planned Against the Western Nations

The Book of Judith is considered by most scholars to be an historical novel or morality play. It was written during a time of crisis for the Jewish people in the second century B.C., although the author sets the story in the sixth century B.C. Some scholars suggest the text was a response to the actions of Antiochus IV and the events of the Maccabean revolt (175 B.C. -164 B.C.). In this book, when a general named Holofernes (chapter 2) is about to attack a small town, the inhabitants feel doomed and seek the LORD's assistance. If help does not come soon, the men of the town plan to surrender and hopefully save their lives. Judith is the heroine of the story. She prays, places herself in the hands of the LORD and ultimately defeats Holofernes. The story is one of hope and it stresses the need to put one's faith in the hands of the LORD. The readings for this first lesson are an introduction to the setting of the story, and the political climate.

1. **Read the Introduction to the Book of Judith in your Bible. Share any interesting comments found in your introduction.**



2. **Read Judith 1:1-6. Locate Nineveh and Ecbatana on the map. Share any footnotes you have on these verses.**

**Challenge: In which book of the Bible did the LORD send a prophet to Nineveh?**

**Check footnotes on introduction to see if there is information about when the city of Nineveh was destroyed.**

**How tall and how wide were the walls Arphaxad built around Ecbatana? (A cubit is approximately 18 inches) Some translations may have already done the math for you.)**

**Reflection: What does the size of the fortress walls suggest, or why do you think he built the walls so big and tall?**

**Who was willing to join forces with Arphaxad against Nebuchadnezzar? (See 1:6)**

**3. Read Judith 1:7-11. Nebuchadnezzar tries to make alliances with his neighbors. Which of his neighbors join him?**

**What does the text tell you about Nebuchadnezzar?**

**4. Read Judith 1:12. How does Nebuchadnezzar respond to his neighbors?**

**What did he swear that he would do?**

**5. Read Judith 1:13-16 and any footnotes. Three years after this story began, Nebuchadnezzar attacks again. Where the walls of Ecbatana tall enough?**

**What was the fate of Arphaxad?**

**How did Nebuchadnezzar and his men celebrate their victory?**

**6. Read Judith 2:1-13 and any footnotes. Another year has passed.**

**Who is Nebuchadnezzar's general?**

**How does Nebuchadnezzar describe himself? (See 2:5, 2:12 and 2:13.)**

**How is this different than how the western world thought of him in 1:11?**

**What is the meaning of 2:7? Check for footnotes.**

**How large is the army of Nebuchadnezzar?**

**What does he imagine the western world would look like after the upcoming battle?**