

Lesson 20: Judith 2:14-6:13

In our last lesson we were introduced to the brutal ambitions of Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar wants to conquer the entire known world and will destroy anyone who gets in his way. A man named Holofernes is Nebuchadnezzar's second in command and he carries out the commands of his king in his attempt to conquer all nations within his reach.

1. Read Judith 2:14-28 and footnotes.

Share any footnotes that are interesting in this section.

How is the army of Holofernes described? How large is it, and how is it equipped?

(See 2:14-18)

To what is the army of Holofernes compared in 2:20?

What message is being conveyed by describing the army in that way?

Read also Ex 10:14-15 below and Revelation 9:6-9 for clues.

Ex 10:14-15 Never before had there been such a plague of locusts, nor will there ever be again. ¹⁵They covered all the ground until it was black. They devoured all that was left after the hail—everything growing in the fields and the fruit on the trees. Nothing green remained on tree or plant in all the land of Egypt.

Rev 9:6-9 During that time these people will seek death but will not find it, and they will long to die but death will escape them.⁷ The appearance of the locusts was like that of horses ready for battle. On their heads they wore what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces,⁸ and they had hair like women's hair. Their teeth were like lions' teeth,⁹ and they had chests like iron breastplates. The sound of their wings was like the sound of many horse-drawn chariots racing into battle.

Describe the actions of the Assyrian army in 2:24-28.

2. Read Judith 3:1-10 and footnotes. Share any footnotes.

Chapter 2 ended by mentioning 7 cities conquered by Holofernes. What have the people in those cities decided to do?

What objective do Nebuchadnezzar and Holofernes intend to achieve in conquered territories? See Judith 3:8.

3. Read Judith 4:1-14 and footnotes. Verse 3 is a reference to the return to Judah *after* the Babylonian exile. (538 BCE). There is also a reference to purifying the Temple which would have been done when the Temple was rebuilt in 515 B.C.

Historically, which country was in control of the middle east at this time? See footnotes or timelines for help.

What steps are the Jews taking to prepare for the attack by Holofernes in 4:1-8?

4. In 4:9-12, how are the people preparing spiritually in these verses?

What is the significance of “sackcloth and ashes”?

See footnotes and read *Job 16:15-17* and *Jonah 3:6-8* below.

How are the actions of the people in Judith 4 similar to the actions of Job and the King of Nineveh in the scripture verses below?

Job 16:15-17 I have sewn sackcloth on my skin, laid my horn low in the dust.

¹⁶My face is inflamed with weeping, darkness covers my eyes,¹⁷ Although my hands are free from violence, and my prayer sincere.

Jonah 3:6-8 When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. ⁷Then he had this proclaimed throughout Nineveh:^[b] “By decree of the king and his nobles, no man or beast, no cattle or sheep, shall taste anything; they shall not eat, nor shall they drink water. ⁸Man and beast alike must be covered with sackcloth and call loudly to God; they all must turn from their evil way and from the violence of their hands.

5. Read Judith 5:1-24 and footnotes.

Who is *Achior* and what do we know about him?

What does his name mean?

What does he tell Holofernes about the Israelites?

6. Read Judith 6:1-21 and footnotes. How does Holofernes react to the advice of Achior?

Who does he think is greater than the God of Israel?

What does Holofernes predict will happen if the Assyrians attack Israel? (6:4)

What threats are made against Achior in 5:22 and 6:5?

What does Holofernes propose to do to Achior in 6:6-9?

How is Achior treated by the Israelites in 6:13-21?

Who do the people of Israel turn to in time of distress?