

Lesson 23 Judith 10:10 - 12:9 Judith and Her Maid Leave Bethulia, Judith Meets Holofernes

In our last lesson we finally met Judith, a devout, Jewish widow from the tribe of Simeon. She called the town council together to admonish them for their willingness to accept surrender as an option. She also condemned Uzziah's testing of the LORD. Judith calls their situation a test like the one God gave to Abraham and Isaac. Judith has a plan. She will not tell the council what it is, but they are to let her out at the city gate that night. Judith then prayed to the LORD a heartfelt prayer that begged the LORD to help her be the woman who would defeat the prideful Assyrian ruler. Deception and lying would be her weapons and she prayed that she would be up to the task. Judith ended her prayer and replaced her sackcloth and widow's garments with festive clothing, jewelry and a crown. She gave her maid a skin of wine and a jug of oil. She filled a bag with roasted grain, dried fig cakes, bread and dishes to carry. She and her maid headed out to the gates of the city.

1. Read Judith 10:9-19 and footnotes. Share any footnotes of interest with the group.

How does the author of Judith transition the scene at the city gates to the next scene in the Assyrian camp? (See 10:10)

Look for evidence that Judith's preparations in 10:1-6 achieved the desired effect. (See verses 10:7, 10:14, and 10:19.)

How many men help to escort Judith to the tent of Holofernes?

How has Judith's appearance affected the Assyrian men at this point?

2. Read Judith 10:20- 11:5 and footnotes.

Again, Holofernes is larger than life. How is the mosquito netting or canopy above his bed described?

How does Holofernes make a 'grand entrance' when he comes to meet Judith?

Why does Holofernes claim he is waging war on Israel?

3. Read Judith 11: 5-14. In the conversations between Judith and Holofernes, are either of them being honest? Give verses to support your thoughts on this. (See also Judith 9:10 below, from Judith's prayer.)

Judith 9:10¹⁰ By the deceit of my lips, strike down slave together with ruler, and ruler together with attendant. Crush their arrogance by the hand of a female.

4. Read Judith 11:6-14 again *and foot notes*. See also Judith 8:4-6, 8:17-18, and 8:24.

Judith told Holofernes that the people of Israel are guilty of many sins against God. What are the sins she reports? (See 11:12-14)

What is the truth about the faith of the people of Israel? (See 8:4-6, 17-28, and 24.)

5. Read Judith 11:16-19 and footnotes.

What is the irony in verse 16?

Judith admits to being a faithful servant of God. How does she use this fact obtain the freedom to go out each night unescorted in the Assyrian camp?

Recall that the Barak would not wage war on Israel's enemies unless Deborah, the Judge, went with him. (Judges 4:8) Review briefly Judges 4 and 5. How does Judith sound a bit like Deborah?

6. Read Judith 11:20-23 and footnotes. How is Judith described by this enemy of Israel?

How did the elders of Bethulia describe Judith in 8:28-29 and 8:31?

7. Read Judith 12:1-9 and footnotes. Share any interesting footnotes with the group.

Why did Judith give food, wine and olive oil to her maid to carry in Judith 10:5? See also 12:2.

What does Judith really mean by the words in 12:4?

What privileges does Holofernes give Judith?

Check footnotes for 12:7 for additional insights into Judith's actions.