

August 1995

Frank W. Nelte

THE BOOK OF ESTHER

Esther is one of the shorter books in the Bible. It deals with events that took place in the Persian Empire. It contains no prayers and apparently no direct religious teaching. In fact, the name of God is not even mentioned in the whole book.

So what purpose does this book serve? Why is it even in the Bible? In 2.Timothy 3:16 Paul tells us ...

ALL SCRIPTURE [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (2 Timothy 3:16)

How does this verse apply to the book of Esther?

AN OVERVIEW OF THE WHOLE BOOK

The book opens with the king of the vast Persian Empire giving a long and magnificent feast. At this feast the queen, Vashti, rebels against the king and therefore she is removed from her royal position. Then a replacement for the queen is sought out and eventually Esther, a young Jewish girl, is chosen and crowned.

In chapter 3 a new character, Haman, appears on the scene. Haman quickly rises to the top position in the kingdom, inferior only to the king himself. This Haman then plots to destroy all the Jews everywhere. Faced with this problem, Esther, who unbeknown to Haman and to the king is also Jewish, decides to fast and to then approach the king for help.

In chapter 5 the king receives Esther and at the same time Haman plots to kill Mordecai, Esther's uncle. Then, in an unexpected twist of events, Mordecai is honoured for an almost forgotten deed of loyalty. This turns the tables and Haman now becomes fearful. The next chapter culminates with Haman, the plotter, being hanged.

But the decree of doom and destruction still hangs over the Jews. To change this, a new decree is issued. This new decree permits the Jews to defend themselves against all their enemies. In chapter 9 the enemies of the Jews are destroyed and the last chapter briefly shows the king's and Mordecai's greatness.

That's the whole book of Esther.

THE ENIGMA

The book contains a very peculiar situation, extremely enigmatic. Have you ever wondered about it?

When Haman determined to destroy all the Jews, he sought counsel from his astrologers. In the first month of the year (Esther 3:7) they cast lots to determine which month would be the most favourable one to massacre all the Jews. Next, the most favourable day was determined in like manner. According to the lots, the day for this genocide was set as the 13th day of the 12th month (Esther 3:13).

So on the 13th day of the first month (Esther 3:12) this decree was written in every language of the Empire and sent out as speedily as possible (Esther 3:15).

Now picture this situation :

YOU ARE A JEW! You hear read out by public proclamation that all your enemies may kill you and steal everything you own ON ONE SPECIFIC DAY ABOUT ELEVEN MONTHS FROM NOW. Not one day before then. But precisely on that very day.

Picture the situation also from the viewpoint of those who were the enemies of the Jews. What would they have thought about this proclamation?

Surely this situation is UNIQUE in the annals of human warfare ... when both sides are told in advance that the one side may attack (with intent to kill) the other side on one specific day in the near future. Doesn't it strike you as strange?

If you had been a Jew back then, what would you have done? Would you have just waited for the time when your enemies had government approval to kill you? Why not try to flee in the more than ten months warning you had received? Why not go on a long trip beyond the confines of the Persian Empire for the next twelve months or so and only return after this event had taken place? How about a preemptive strike against those who you knew would try to kill you ... what did you have to lose? At the very least you could have tried to arm yourself.

And then the second decree was issued.

Now it was determined that the armed forces of the government and all government employees were to be on the side of the Jews. As we are told "... AND MANY OF THE PEOPLE OF THE LAND BECAME JEWS; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them" (Esther 8:17). That seems logical enough. What is surprising is that, in view of the total support by the government, ANYONE remained an enemy of the Jews. They had the option to drop their animosity and become friendly to the Jews. They must have realized that their own destruction was inevitable, given the military might of the Empire, if they maintained their hostility towards the Jews. Their only hope lay in thinking that somehow their feelings of enmity towards the Jews would not be known to anyone.

A most peculiar situation!

So what are we supposed to learn from this book? Was God only trying to preserve the knowledge of one specific historic event for us? Or was God giving us some added insight into the working out of His great plan for mankind?

UNDERSTANDING THE CODE

Mr. Armstrong used to explain that the Bible is a coded book. To those who don't know the code it just does not make sense. But for those, to whom God reveals the code, it becomes clear and plain and everything falls into place.

There are codes (sometimes also referred to as 'keys') that are helpful for understanding the Bible in general. And some books of the Bible seem to carry their own specific codes. The book of Esther is one of these.

The various unique events in this book should already tell us that God is trying to draw our attention to unique events in His great plan of salvation. Those unique events in the Book of Esther are almost like "a

setup", to picture something unique God has planned.

The code for the book of Esther is this: understand that this book pictures the ultimate overthrow of Satan at the end of the 1000-year millennial rule of Jesus Christ! When you understand this, then the whole book falls into place.

THE CODE MADE PLAIN

There is a saying that a picture can convey more understanding than a thousand words. So I have drawn two charts to explain the code for this book. If you have received this paper in ASCII code via e-mail, you will have to draw your own charts. They are quite easy to draw.

- 1) Take a sheet of paper in landscape format (i.e. sideways).
- 2) Draw 2 rectangular boxes, each 2 inches (5 centimetres) deep and the length of the page, i.e. about 9 inches (28 centimetres) long. Have a gap of about 3 inches (7 centimetres) between these two rectangular boxes. You now have 2 parallel boxes of equal size.
- 3) The top box is chart 1. Divide it into 12 equal segments to represent the 12 months of a year, in basically the Jewish calendar format (i.e. with the year starting in the spring, and not according to the Roman calendar of starting the year with January). Each segment is equal in size to all the others. Label the segments from 1 to 12.
- 4) Then mark God's Holy Days into this chart 1. Do this by means of vertical lines in their correct locations ... Passover and Days of U.B. in the middle of segment 1, then Pentecost in the first third of segment 3, then Trumpets, Atonement, F.o.T. and the Last Great Day all in the seventh segment.
- 5) There are 5 scrolls that were known as the "Festival Scrolls". They are: Song of Solomon which was read at Passover time, the Book of Ruth which was read at Pentecost, Lamentations which was read on the 9th of Ab, the 5th month when the Temple was destroyed, the Book of Ecclesiastes which was read at the Feast of Tabernacles, and finally the Book of Esther which was read at the Feast of Purim on the 13th and 14th days of the 12th month. Enter these 5 books into their correct locations on this chart, marking the Book of Esther into the middle of the 12th segment.
- 6) Notice that three of these "Festival Scrolls" were read on God's Holy Days (i.e. Song of Solomon, Lamentations and Ecclesiastes), while the other two were read on days that the nation of Judah observed, although they are not commanded by God (i.e. Lamentations and Esther).
- 7) Now move to the bottom box which is chart 2. This one represents man's 7100 years of physical existence on this Earth. Therefore divide the box into 7 equal segments, so that each segment represents 1000 years of man's time, and then add a very small segment to the last one to represent the 100 years of the Great White Throne judgment period of the second resurrection.
- 8) Label this chart 2 with the numbers 0, 1000, 2000, 3000, 4000, 5000, 6000 and 7000. Enter a few key events in human history ...

- creation of Adam and Eve at the year 0;
- Noah's flood at about the year 1650;
- Israel's exodus out of Egypt at about the year 2500;

- Christ's first coming at about the year 4000;
- Christ's second coming at about the year 6000;
- Satan loosed and his final overthrow at the year 7000;
- the third resurrection and NEW heaven/Earth at year 7100.

You can add any other events you feel are important enough to include. Are you still with me? You have now completed your two charts. Now notice something interesting.

LEARNING FROM THE CHARTS

God has revealed His plan to us through the annual Holy Days. They picture key events in the fulfilment of God's plan. In this representation God chose to have the final Holy Days all fall in the 7th month, because they occur in the 7th 1000-year period God has allotted to mankind. In a sense that completes God's plan. These days were given by God to Israel in the days of Moses (see Leviticus chapter 23 for all the details regarding the Feasts and Holy Days).

However, about 1000 years after Moses God decided to reveal some more details from this great plan. That was when God controlled the events recorded in the Book of Esther and inspired this book to be written, to be a part of His Word for us. The events God chose to reveal will take place almost at the very end of man's physical existence on this Earth, i.e. after 7000 years of man's existence. Therefore God inspired these events to take place almost at the very end of the physical year.

God inspired the events in the Book of Esther to revolve around the 13th day of the 12th month of the year ... the year is almost finished then. And those events picture the time when Satan is loosed for a very little while after Christ's 1000-year reign, only to be bound again, this time for good and for ever. And that is almost at the very end of physical human life on this Earth. Only the second resurrection still has to take place, followed by a 100-year lifespan for people in that resurrection. But 7000 years (or 98,5%) of the 7100 years allotted to man will already have passed.

Do you see the parallels in the two charts you have drawn?

THE PARALLELS TO SATAN'S ACTIVITIES

Let's review the story of Esther one more time.

1) King Ahasuerus of the vast Persian Empire is a type of God the Father. Ahasuerus put on an incredibly splendid feast for all his nobles ... a type of the angels shouting for joy at the creation of this universe, before the creation of man.

2) Vashti, the incredibly beautiful queen, rebels against the king. This is a type of Satan's rebellion against God. Remember how vain Satan was about his great "beauty"?

THINE HEART WAS LIFTED UP BECAUSE OF THY BEAUTY, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. (Ezekiel 28:17)

3) So Vashti is deposed. Her punishment is not death (which was usually the case in the Persian Empire for people who opposed the king) but banishment from her royal estate. In the same way Satan's pride,

vanity and rebellion disqualified him from the high position God had given him over one third of all the angels. His penalty too is banishment, though this will only be imposed later (pictured by the Azazel goat on the Day of Atonement, see Leviticus chapter 16).

4) A search is made for a replacement and eventually Esther is chosen. This is a type of God's Church being selected by God to fulfill the role Satan had not carried out; i.e. to administer God's rule and God's laws on this planet Earth. As ruler on this Earth over one third of the angels Satan had in a sense been a key figure in the government of God. Now the Church is being trained to rule with Christ as kings and as priests (Rev.5:10), and to become Jesus Christ's "queen", or "bride" (see Revelation chapter 19).

5) King Ahasuerus scrutinized very many candidates very carefully before selecting the new queen. Likewise God the Father is involved in specifically calling those who will compose the "queen", i.e. the Bride of Christ.

No man can come to me, EXCEPT THE FATHER WHICH HATH SENT ME DRAW HIM: and I will raise him up at the last day. (John 6:44)

6) The name "Esther" means "star" and this is something that also applies to God's Church.

[There is] one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for [one] star differeth from [another] star in glory. (1 Corinthians 15:41)

And I will give him the morning star. (Revelation 2:28)

7) Esther is crowned and made queen. The Church marries Jesus Christ at the second coming of Christ. See Revelation chapter 19.

Hereafter the symbolism changes. The first "bad" character has been removed from the scene (i.e. Vashti). But another "bad" character now appears instead (i.e. Haman). From here onwards it is Haman who represents, symbolically, Satan. By using two different people to represent Satan, God is showing us two different views of Satan. The first view (Vashti) is of his great beauty which went to his head. The second view (Haman) is of the scheming individual who was planning to take over the Empire.

8) Haman becomes very influential, second only to the king (and queen). Likewise Satan had been very influential, perhaps the most powerful being in the universe after God the Father and Jesus Christ?

9) Haman becomes extremely vain ... upset by people not showing him the respect he craved. Satan did exactly the same, as we saw in Ezekiel 28:17.

10) Haman actually wanted to be worshipped. That is also very typical of Satan!

And all the king's servants, that [were] in the king's gate, BOWED, AND REVERENCED HAMAN: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did [him] reverence. (Esther 3:2)

And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, THEN WAS HAMAN FULL OF WRATH. (Esther 3:5)

In fact, Haman was worshipped by all except the Jews. And Satan is worshipped by all people on earth except the "spiritual Jews" (see 2.Cor 4:4; etc.).

11) Other rewards no longer satisfied Haman; he just craved to be honoured and worshipped.

YET ALL THIS AVAILETH ME NOTHING, SO LONG AS I SEE MORDECAI the Jew sitting at the king's gate. (Esther 5:13)

Likewise Satan is not satisfied with the whole world worshipping him as long as he knows God's people reject him. All the things Satan already had (see Ezek. 28:12-13) didn't satisfy him; he wanted to be worshipped.

12) Now Haman plots to destroy Esther's people. Likewise Satan plots to destroy God's people and God's plan ...

And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. (Revelation 12:4)

13) Haman is given the opportunity to show his real intentions. God gave Satan the same opportunity ... to show what he REALLY wanted, and what he would do to try to get it.

14) Haman's request was.

So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself? And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour, LET THE ROYAL APPAREL BE BROUGHT WHICH THE KING [USETH] TO WEAR, AND THE HORSE THAT THE KING RIDETH UPON, AND THE CROWN ROYAL WHICH IS SET UPON HIS HEAD: AND LET THIS APPAREL AND HORSE BE DELIVERED TO THE HAND OF ONE OF THE KING'S MOST NOBLE PRINCES, THAT THEY MAY ARRAY THE MAN [WITHAL] WHOM THE KING DELIGHTETH TO HONOUR, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour. (Esther 6:6-9)

These verses reveal Haman's intentions ... HE wanted to be king! He wanted everything that belongs to the king and that represents the king's status! He wanted to take over!

The same is true for Satan. He wanted to take over from God.

For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. (Isaiah 14:13-14)

The parallel between Haman and Satan in this regard is unmistakable.

15) Haman was given a free hand to show his intentions ... God also gave Satan a free hand to show his true intentions.

16) In his wrath Haman tried to create empire-wide havoc and destruction ...

And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that [were] throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, [even] the people of Mordecai. (Esther 3:6)

Likewise, Satan in his rebellion tried to destroy this whole universe.

17) The laws of the Medes and the Persians could not be changed or altered.

Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal [it] with the king's ring: FOR THE WRITING WHICH IS WRITTEN IN THE KING'S NAME, AND SEALED WITH THE KING'S RING, MAY NO MAN REVERSE. (Esther 8:8)

Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians [is], That NO DECREE NOR STATUTE WHICH THE KING ESTABLISHETH MAY BE CHANGED. (Daniel 6:15)

That is precisely the way the laws of God are.

Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise THE IMMUTABILITY OF HIS COUNSEL, confirmed [it] by an oath: (Hebrews 6:17)

18) Before Esther was chosen as queen, she had to go through a process of purification (Est.2:12). Likewise, God's Church also has to go through a process or period of purification.

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and HIS WIFE HATH MADE HERSELF READY. (Revelation 19:7)

19) When Esther was made queen, a great feast is made for her (Esther2:18). This is a type of the marriage supper for Jesus Christ and the Church.

20) At the time of this marriage the king made "a release to the provinces" ...

Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, [even] Esther's feast; and HE MADE A RELEASE TO THE PROVINCES, AND GAVE GIFTS, according to the state of the king. (Esther 2:18)

This is a type of what will happen at the beginning of the millennial rule of Jesus Christ. Christ will "release" the world from all the burdens that were brought on during the events just before His return. And Christ will give "gifts" ... forgiveness and blessings for those who repent.

21) Haman is called "the Jews' enemy" and he tried to destroy all the Jews. The Jews are a type of ALL HUMANITY DURING THE MILLENNIUM (i.e. all those who submit to God). Satan's plan is revealed through Haman. It is to destroy all humanity and especially those who obey God! Satan's name means "ENEMY" or "ADVERSARY".

22) Haman himself dies during the third month, about nine months before his plan was to go into action (on the 13th day of the 12th month). Likewise Satan is bound at the beginning of the millennium and he himself is not around to influence people for the next 1000 years.

23) Once Haman himself is dead, the problem that he created is still in existence and it must await being solved at a later date because the laws of the Medes and Persians may not be changed.

Likewise, even though Satan is bound and removed at the beginning of the millennium, THE PROBLEMS HE CREATED will only be totally resolved at the end of the millennium.

24) Everyone in the Persian Empire knew the exact day on which the confrontation was scheduled to occur ... it had been announced by a royal decree.

DURING THE MILLENNIUM EVERYONE WILL KNOW THE EXACT TIME WHEN SATAN WILL BE RELEASED FOR A SHORT TIME TO ROUND UP "ALL THE ENEMIES OF THE JEWS"! It has been announced and fixed in the Bible by a decree from Almighty God (see Rev. 20:7-8). It will be "when the thousand years are expired" (Revelation 20:7).

25) Until the decreed day the "enemies of the Jews" lived among the Jews and were outwardly not recognizable as being in any way different ... they were subjects of the Persian Empire just like the Jews. Only on the day decreed were these enemies actually identified.

Likewise, during the millennium, those who think like Satan thinks are not any different OUTWARDLY from the people around them who are converted Christians. It is only when Satan is loosed for that little while, that these people are actually identified.

26) Once Haman was killed, "the fear of the Jews" fell upon many people, and many people voluntarily "became Jews" (Esther 8:17). When Satan is bound at Christ's second coming, the fear of God will also fall on many people and they will gladly "become Jews".

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days [it shall come to pass], that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt OF HIM THAT IS A JEW, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard [that] God [is] with you. (Zechariah 8:23)

27) The seeds of hatred towards the Jews that Haman had sown were kept alive below the surface even after Haman's death. There were still a large number of enemies around and therefore on the appointed day (and the following day as well) almost 76000 enemies were killed. When Satan is released after having been bound for 1000 years and he then quickly rounds up the rebels in whom "the hatred of the Jews" has been smouldering below the surface, he gathers a vast army.

And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: THE NUMBER OF WHOM [IS] AS THE SAND OF THE SEA. (Revelation 20:8)

28) After Haman's death the king gave Haman's house (i.e. his possessions) to Esther (Esther 8:1). Likewise, when Satan is bound at the beginning of the millennium, God will give the Church rule with Jesus Christ over "the house" that Satan previously ruled over (see Luke 4:6; 2.Cor.4:4).

29) There are two time-lapses in the Book of Esther.

A) In the THIRD YEAR of the king's reign Vashti is deposed (Esther 1:3). Satan disqualified himself through rebellion.

B) In the SEVENTH YEAR of the king's reign Esther is made queen (Esther 2:16). The Church becomes "the Bride" of Jesus Christ at the beginning of the seventh 1000-year period allotted to mankind. I find it hard to believe that Esther becoming queen in the seventh year would be a totally unplanned coincidence. God controlled all these events.

C) In the TWELFTH YEAR of the king's reign Haman plotted to destroy all the Jews, in the twelfth month on the 13th day. This final overthrow of all enemies is at the end of the 7000 years.

[Comment: God's plan includes another time of destruction of enemies; i.e. the lake of fire at the end of the 100-year period. But that destruction of the wicked involves no war and no fighting of any kind. The incorrigible wicked are resurrected to physical life just in time to be thrown into the lake of fire, so that the record of their existence can be formally blotted out permanently by fire. Thereafter it will be as though those who died in the lake of fire had never existed (Obadiah 1:16). The people in that resurrection are pictured by the rich man in the parable of "Lazarus and the rich man" (see Luke 16:23).]

30) With the 13th day (of the 12th month) picturing the ultimate overthrow of Satan, it should be clear why Satan has inspired this world to consider the number "13" as an unlucky number. To feel that "13" is an unlucky number is a way of feeling sorry for Satan.

31) The penalty for Vashti's rebellion was decided after the king received counsel from his top advisors. The penalty was unanimously agreed upon (Esther 1:21). Likewise, 1.Cor.6:3 tells us that those in the first resurrection will judge angels.

32) Haman's plot was to kill all the Jews. Yet, as Esther clearly pointed out, the one who would have suffered damage thereby would have been the king himself ...

For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail THE KING'S DAMAGE. (Esther 7:4)

Even Haman himself admitted as much by offering the king a compensation-bribe of 10000 talents of silver (Esther 3:9). Likewise, Satan's plot to destroy mankind would really bring damages upon God Himself. It is God's plan of salvation that Satan is attacking.

33) If Haman's plot had succeeded, no Jews would have escaped, not even Esther in the king's palace, since the laws of the Medes and Persians might not be altered.

Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. (Esther 4:13)

Likewise Satan's intention is to destroy EVERY human being!

34) No hatred of the Jews is evident until Haman develops this hatred in the first month of the twelfth year (Esther 3:7) and the first decree is sent out to incite such hatred. A little over 2 months later Haman is dead and the second decree goes out (Esther 8:9). Yet Haman's influence was such that that short time was sufficient to incite animosity in so many people that another 9 months later almost 76000 foes have to be killed.

Revelation 20:3 tells us that Satan must be loosed "a little season" ...

And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that HE MUST BE LOOSED A LITTLE SEASON. (Revelation 20:3)

Is Satan loosed for those 8 weeks from the first to the third month? At any rate, Satan's influence, even over a very short timespan, is very compelling.

SO WHAT DOES THE BOOK OF ESTHER SHOW US?

This book gives us an insight into God's dealings from a different perspective. We are shown additional information about Satan, his dealings, his influence and his intentions. We also see something about people during the millennium. Even though Satan is bound, the attitudes that Satan had originated and broadcast to people (selfishness, greed, vanity, etc.) continue to exist in human minds. But those attitudes are hidden from view for the 1000 years that Jesus Christ will rule. So something is needed to force those attitudes out into the open. That is precisely what Satan's release for that short period of time will do.

Understand this!

When Satan is released for "a little season" after Jesus Christ has ruled for 1000 years, it is NOT for the purpose of seeing how many people he can tempt and deceive. The time is intentionally too short for that. There will be many people who have obeyed all of God's laws outwardly, because Jesus Christ ENFORCED obedience during those 1000 years ...

And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This [is] the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left. (Isaiah 30:21)

But their hearts were not in this "obedience". It was outward and mechanical. It was out of fear of punishment. They really have not come to view life from God's point of view, even though they have obeyed God's laws. They really would break God's laws if they felt that they would not be punished for doing so.

This attitude God wants to force out into the open! This is the attitude of "AN ENEMY OF THE JEWS", to use the terminology of the Book of Esther.

When Satan is released, EVERY PERSON ON EARTH WHO HAS THIS WRONG ATTITUDE will be receptive to Satan's influence. They are already thinking the way Satan thinks. It is God's purpose in releasing Satan to round up every single person alive who has this wrong attitude. Satan's release will be the catalyst needed to bring their hidden attitudes out into the open.

THE HERESIES BEING TAUGHT IN GOD'S CHURCH TODAY

We know that there are heresies being taught in God's Church at this time. But many people do not understand why God is allowing this to happen. If you understand the events pictured by the Book of Esther, perhaps you can also understand the present condition more clearly. There are certain parallels.

We should recognize that not everyone in the millennium, who will outwardly keep God's laws, really has his heart in that obedience. It is just the expedient thing to do during the millennial rule of Christ ... to

abide by all of God's laws.

Likewise, we should recognize that not everyone who has in the past accepted the Sabbath and the Holy Days and everything else that the Church taught, accepted those things based on a fervent desire to understand the mind of God and to act on that understanding. Not everyone has made an unconditional commitment to always put God first.

And, just like setting Satan loose FOR A SHORT TIME at the end of the millennium to expose these problems, so God is allowing these heresies to be taught FOR A SHORT TIME to expose the lack of total commitment by those who outwardly have professed a zeal to live according to God's will. God knows who the people in this category are, because He can read our thoughts and intents (Hebrews 4:12). But God will never condemn anyone based on such "inside" knowledge alone. God will bring about circumstances to force those thoughts out into the open.

Keeping God's laws is fine and good. But when people then tell us that the Sabbath and deleavening our homes for Unleavened Bread, etc. were a burden which we don't need to be subject to any more, THEN our innermost thoughts are exposed. And that is what God wants, our innermost thoughts brought out into the open.

We ourselves make bad judgments because we judge by appearances, by what we can see and hear. That is why we may have felt that certain people were absolutely and totally committed to God ... and we are shocked by how soon they are removed "... unto another gospel" (Galatians 1:6), one of rejecting the Sabbath and the Holy Days, one of accepting the trinity heresy, one of feeling they are born again already, etc.. There is no commitment to the truth of God to the point of diligently PROVING what is acceptable to God (Ephesians 5:10). They seem to glibly accept whatever they are told to believe.

Understand this!

ACCEPTING WHAT YOU ARE TOLD TO BELIEVE IS PROOF OF A LACK OF COMMITMENT TO GOD!

God judges differently. He knows our hearts and our attitudes. God knows who the people are who lack commitment. God is not shocked by how quickly these people have accepted the heresies that are now being taught. It is because God knew about these hidden attitudes (like the hidden animosity towards the Jews in the Book of Esther) that He has allowed these heresies.

We today need to understand what the message of the Book of Esther is and we need to learn from the lessons this book presents. The parallels are far too compelling to be ignored.

Frank W. Nelte