

JUDITH

Short Version

In its introduction to Judith, the *Collegeville Bible Commentary* writes: “The book of Judith was written during the period of the Maccabean revolt. Its setting is in an earlier period, but many details reveal the author’s interest in his own time rather than that of the seventh century B.C. In the story, an Israelite town is besieged by Holofernes, commander-in chief of the Assyrian army. The town leaders despair of help from God and declare that if deliverance does not come within five days, they will surrender. A beautiful widow, an observant Jew, upon hearing the decision of the elders, scolds them for their lack of faith. She prays, placing herself in the hands of God. Finally, she prepares her weapon – beauty. Because God works through her beauty, she beheads Holofernes and delivers her people.

“The message of the book is that victory comes not from human might but through the power of God. God can deliver the faithful people at whatever time and in whatever way God wishes. Even though the way of deliverance may look like folly from a human point of view, the story of Judith demonstrates that the real fools are those who place their trust in human power and weapons. The whole army of Holofernes is defenseless against God’s weapon – the beauty of a faithful woman” (p.844).

In its introduction to Judith, *The Catholic Bible – Personal Study Edition*, writes: “The book of Judith is a piece of literature for difficult times. It was hoped that the reader would take to heart the lesson that God was still the master of history who could save Israel from her enemies. There is a parallel with the time of the Exodus: As God had delivered the people by the hand of Moses, so God could deliver them by the hand of the pious widow Judith....

“The story of Judith is full of unexpected turns. The most obvious, especially to those who first heard or read the story, is that a woman – not a man – saved Judah in time of severe distress. Judith is more faithful and resourceful than any of the men of Bethulia. She is more eloquent than the king and more courageous than the

leading citizens of the city. While the king, priests, and leaders, show themselves incapable of dealing with the crisis, Judith stands up to the threat posed by Holofernes, and takes decisive action to end that threat” (p.54).

Division of chapters

PART 1: The Assyrians pose a threat to Israel (Chapters 1-7)

PART 2: Judith saves Israel from Assyrian invasion (Chapters 8-16)

Suggested passages to read

Chapter 7: Siege of Bethula. This chapter tells how bad things had become for Israel and sets the stage for the entrance of Judith.

Chapters 8-16: Judith. One needs to read all of these chapters to catch the magnificent story of Judith’s bravery.