



## December Bible Tidbits—Books of The Bible #3

A selection of facts and information to help you discover more of the riches about Sacred Scripture. **Over the next several months we will continue our journey through the books of the Bible.**

*Each month we'll offer you several new tidbits in print and on-line: In print on the reverse side of the OLV Activities Calendar; On-line on OLV's Web Page ([ourladyofvictorytallmadge.parishesonline.com](http://ourladyofvictorytallmadge.parishesonline.com)). The Tidbits are on the Home Page—below the Question of the Week!*

**Historical Books of the Old Testament *continue*:** *The Historical Books recount the stories of the conquest of the Promised Land.*

- **Ezra:** The first six chapters of this Book give us some valuable information about the first two groups of those returning from the Exile in Babylon. In Chapters 7 – 10 we hear about how Ezra, a priest of the highest rank, began his reform so that all would be restored to the practice of Israelite faith. Men gave up their foreign wives because marriages to pagans were invalid. Unity of faith and practice were essential to Ezra's reform. All those things that characterized Israel's special way of life were to be restored.
- **Nehemiah:** Nehemiah became governor of Judah, and despite great odds, together with the eagerness of the people, he had the basic walls of Jerusalem rebuilt in less than 60 days. Faced with the same problems as Ezra, Nehemiah, too, was faced with enforcing the reform needed to restore its faith and practices. Both these books (Ezra and Nehemiah) give us an extremely valuable glimpse into the life and thought of a fifth century (BC) Jew.
- **Tobit:** This book is a romance about how God bestowed merciful care upon two of his faithful, Tobit, who was taken captive in Nineveh and Sarah, the daughter of his relative. This short story serves as an example of complete trust in Yahweh and fidelity to his law.
- **Judith:** This book tells the story of a heroic widow in a small hill town of Judah who saved the nation from the invasion of King Nebuchadnezzar and his army of Assyrians during the period after the Exile. Judith, a wealthy widow of great piety, is one of the most unique and independent women of the Bible. Her bravery is equal to that of any Biblical man. Judith is clearly the heroine and God the hero of this intriguing story of faith, courage and murder.
- **Esther:** The Book of Esther contains a thrilling tale of escape from mortal danger for the Jews. This book tells the story of a beautiful young Jewish maiden who is chosen to become queen. Through her faith and courage she saves her people from the evil intentions of the prime minister who gets the king to order the death of all Jews. The book then ends with the establishment of the Jewish feast of Purim. What is unique about this book is that some of the chapters are "numbered" and others are "lettered". The numbered chapters are found in the Jewish and Protestant Scriptures because this is the section of Esther that is written in Hebrew. The Hebrew section of Esther emphasizes the faith and courage of Esther and her relative Mordecai, with God only in the background. The lettered chapters were written in Greek, and these chapters added later to Esther underscore the presence and work of God to ultimately save the Jewish people from the hands of the prime minister.
- **1 and 2 Maccabees:** The struggle of Judah for religious freedom and finally for political independence is relative in two important sources, neither of them in the Hebrew canon of the Bible. First source is the writings of the Jewish historian, Josephus, and the other is the 2 Books of Maccabees, written in Greek. They tell the story of the fight for freedom in the years 168-160 BC. 1 Maccabees recounts the events of the entire period in good historical fashion. 2 Maccabees, on the other hand, gives an independent collection of heroic stories from the early period of persecution and struggle in battle. Its purpose was not historical record keeping, but rather to praise those Jews who proved faithful.