

From the Garden to Glory

Esther

Author: Unknown

Timeline: c. 483 B.C. (in between Ezra 6 & 7)

Location: Persia

Category: Historical

Theme: The Providence of God

Overview:

The book of Esther is named after the main character of the book, a young Jewish girl who became queen of Persia. There was a large number of Jews who decided to remain in Persia rather than go back to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel's leading. The book gives an account of a plot to destroy and annihilate the Jews. It shows God's unfailing preservation of His people and encourages the returning Jewish exiles by reminding them of God's faithfulness to His promises. Although there is no mention of God's name, prayer or spiritual service (with the possible exception of fasting), God's guiding and protective hand on His people is evident throughout the book. G. Campbell Morgan comments that, "No one reads this book without being conscious of God."

Introduction:

As we begin our study of the book of Esther, consider the following questions and write your responses:

1. Many commentators agree that the theme of the book of Esther is "God's Providence". Look up the word *providence* in a dictionary and write the definition. How has God shown His providence in your life?

2. The book of Esther is one of only two books in the entire Bible that does not mention God by name. Commenting on this, Matthew Henry said, "If the name of God is not here, His finger is." What does this mean? How have you seen God's finger in situations where His name was not even mentioned?

3. The book of Esther is a "rags to riches" story of Jewish orphan who became a queen. How has the Lord transformed your life from one of "rags" to one of "riches" spiritually, materially, physically and/or emotionally? What "riches" are you experiencing today as a result of your relationship with Him?

Rejection of Vashti

Read Esther 1

1. Note everything you learn about King Ahasuerus from the first chapter of Esther.

2. Look at verse 17. How does your behavior influence other women in your life? Read 1 Timothy 4:12 and Titus 2:3-5 and complete the following chart:

A godly behavior listed in these verses (for example-purity)	A specific way in which you can model this behavior in your life	A person who exemplified this godly behavior to you

3. Look at verse 20 and Ephesians 5:22-24 and 33. How would you explain the Biblical mandate for wives to honor/respect their husbands to an unbeliever?

Crowning of Esther

Read Esther 2

1. Look at verse 1 and Esther 1:12. What was King Ahasuerus' *frame of mind* when the decree went out against Queen Vashti? Have you ever made an important decision when you were angry or highly emotional? What was the outcome? How can you avoid making rash decisions?
2. Look at verses 12-13. Consider the twelve months of preparation which the women completed before going in to see the king. What does each of the following verses say about the preparation we need before coming before our King?
 - Psalm 119:9
 - 1 John 1:9
3. Look at verse 15. What does this verse say about *all who saw* Esther? Look at Psalm 75:6-7. From where do *favor* and *promotion* come?

Plotting of Haman

Read Esther 3-4

1. Look at 3:1-6. Mordecai's refusal to pay homage was an affront to Haman's pride. Look at verses 5-6. Where did Haman's pride lead him? Look up the following verses and note what you learn about pride:
 - Proverbs 16:18
 - Proverbs 21:4

2. Look at 4:14. Sit with the Lord and allow this question to search your heart, "Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Make a note of everything the Lord shows you.
3. Look at 4:16. Think of a time when the Lord called you to something which seemed dangerous (physically, emotionally or relationally). What did you do?

Venture of Esther

Read Esther 5

1. Look at verse 1. What did Esther put on when she went to see the king? Look at Isaiah 61:10. How has your King clothed you?
2. Look at verse 2. Esther found favor in the sight of the king. Read the following verses and note the thoughts of your King towards you:
 - Psalm 40:5
 - Psalm 139:17-18
 - Jeremiah 29:11
3. Look at verse 2-3 and Esther 4:10-11. What did it signify when the king extended the golden scepter? Look at Hebrews 4:15-16. What does our King extend to us?

Mordecai Exalted

Read Esther 6

1. Look at verses 1-3. According to John Mac Arthur:

Five years had intervened since Mordecai's loyal but unrewarded act. At exactly the proper moment, God providentially intervened so that the king suffered insomnia, called the book of the records,

read of Mordecai's unrewarded deeds five years past, and then decided to reward him.

The Lord's timing is perfect. It has been said that, "God is never late but rarely early." How has this been true in your own life?

2. Verse 6 says that Haman *thought in his heart*. Look at the following verses and note what the Lord teaches you about *your* heart.

- Proverbs 4:23
- Proverbs 12:20
- Proverbs 21:2
- Proverbs 23:7a
- Proverbs 27:19
- Jeremiah 17:9-10

3. Look at verse 13 and Zechariah 2:8. What do you learn from these verses about God's love and protection for His people? How do the following verses add to your understanding?

- 2 Thessalonians 3:3
- 1 John 4:4

Esther's Feast

Read Esther 7-8

1. Summarize 7:3-4. A wise woman knows what to say, how to say it and *when* to speak. Look up the following verses and note what you learn about wise speech:

- Proverbs 15:28
- Proverbs 16:23
- James 1:5

2. Look at 7:9-10. What became of Haman? In contrast, look at the following verses and note the good that came to Mordecai:

- Esther 8:2
- Esther 8:7-9
- Esther 8:15
- Esther 9:4

3. Look at 8:8-14. How were the Jews delivered from death? Look at John 3:15-17 and Romans 8:2. How has the Lord delivered you from *the law of sin and death*? Sit at His feet today and meditate on Psalm 118:6.

Deliverance of the Jews

Read Esther 9-10

1. Summarize 9:1-17.
2. Look at 9:18-22. How did the Jews celebrate their victory? How do you celebrate the victories that the Lord brings into your life?
3. Share a recent victory which the Lord has given you. Read and meditate on Psalm 30 today. Make a note of anything the Lord speaks to your heart.

Summary

As you conclude your study of the book of Esther consider the following questions and write your answers:

1. What is the most important lesson you have learned from your study of this book? How can you apply this lesson in your life this week?
2. What "new insights" did you learn about the Lord and yourself from your study?

- 3.** List one way in which your study caused you to do each of the following:

Praise and worship the Lord:

Confess an area of sin to the Lord:

Thank the Lord:

Ask for something from the Lord: