



Esther: God of Bounty

Memory Verse: Esther 4:12-14 "When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, he sent back this answer: 'Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?'"

Background

The book of Esther is the 17th book in the Bible and the final book of history in the Old Testament. The book is named after its main character and the name "Esther" is the Persian work for "star." The author of the book of Esther is not identified. However, the author was likely a Jew who was familiar with the royal Persian court as evidenced by the detailed descriptions of the court life and traditions as well as eyewitness knowledge to the events covered in the book. Esther was probably written between the time period from 464 to 435 BC.

Although Esther is the final book of history in the Old Testament, the events covered in the book occur between chapters 6 and 7 of the book of Ezra from 483-473 BC when King Xerxes was ruler of Persia. The book of Esther takes place in Susa the capital of Persia. Esther is the only book in the Bible that provides a view of the Jewish people that chose to remain in Persia instead of return to Judah after the Exile. Esther was written to these Jews who remained in voluntary exile.

The Short Story

A beautiful Jewish girl becomes Queen of Persia and saves her people from annihilation.

What's the Big Idea?

Esther is a beautiful story of the preservation of the Jewish race. King Xerxes of Persia has a "beauty contest" to find a new queen and Esther is the winner. She becomes his wife without revealing her Jewish heritage under the advice of her wise uncle Mordecai. Mordecai with Esther's help warns the king of an assassination plot and his heroic deed is recorded in the palace records. In Esther, we see the fruit of King Saul's disobedience to the Lord 500 years earlier through Haman, the king's evil second-in-command. Haman was a descendant of Agag, king of the Amalekites, who were the ancient enemies of God's people (the same Amalekites that King Saul failed to destroy completely in 1 Samuel 15). Haman is furious with Mordecai when he refuses to bow to him, so he spends a year planning the elimination of the Jews. Daily Haman cast the lot, called "pur" in order to determine the day the Jews would be exterminated. Through deceit, Haman convinces King Xerxes to issue an edict that on that day all Jews in the kingdom will be killed. Esther, through wise planning and skillful strategy, risks her life for her people. Because a king's decree cannot be revoked, she requests that the king issue a new decree so the Jews can gather and defend themselves on the day they are to be attacked. He agrees and the Lord gives the Jews victory over their enemies. The Jews celebrate and the feast of Purim becomes an annual Jewish holiday to commemorate the Jews' deliverance from Haman's plot.

So What? Why is this book so important? What was God's purpose for the book?

While the Lord's name is not mentioned anywhere in the book of Esther, His sovereignty and providential power is evident. Esther becoming queen, Mordecai's heroic deed being recorded in palace records and later read by an insomniac King Xerxes in the middle of the night, Esther's wise approach to King Xerxes, the Jews victory over their enemies...God's hand and timing were in it all. Life's circumstances can be difficult and painful and may not make any sense. Nevertheless, we can be confident that God is sovereign. He is always at work in our lives even in the painful and hard times. If we trust and obey Him as Esther did, when the time is right, we will see how God has worked all things together for His glory and our good.

**Material taken from various sources.*

Teaching Text

Esther 4:12-16 ¹²When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, ¹³he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. ¹⁴For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"

Sermon-Based Discussion Questions

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Practical Application

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Hitting the Highpoints

- 1:5-10
- 10:3
- 2:2-4
- 8-9
- 17-18
- 3:5-6, 5:30-4, 7:3-10

Bonus Features

Personal Takeaways and Notes