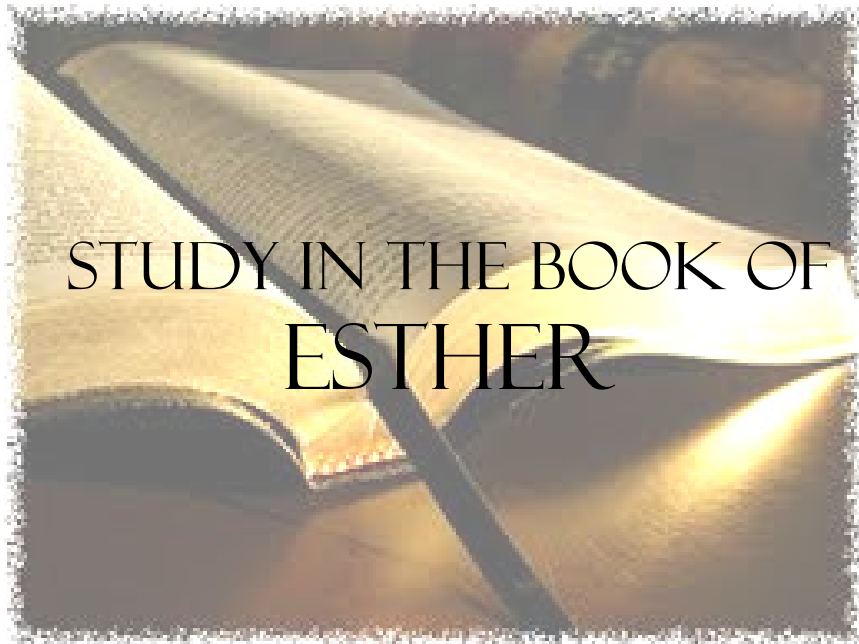


Footprints



CHRISTIAN RESOURCES



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Footprints into Africa

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF ESTHER

1) Background

As we study the book of Esther we enter into a new atmosphere as we move into a pagan court in the Persian Empire.

The amazing thing with Esther is that through the whole book there is not one mention of the name of God.

But although there is no mention of the name of God, God is mentioned everywhere by what he does.

The main doctrine of Esther is the providence of God which teaches us that God plans everything according to His will.

2) Date

The events of the Book take place between 483-473 BC. And the book fills in between Chapter 6-7 of Ezra.

3) Place

We are taken now to the Persian Empire.

4) Why is this book in the Bible?

There are 3 reasons:

It shows us the origin of the feast of Purim (one of the Jewish feasts).

It beautifully illustrates the providence of God.

It gives us a picture of a woman greatly used by God.

ESTHER - STUDY 1

THE QUEEN SAYS “NO” CHAPTER 1:1-22

1. His Boastfulness Chapter 1 :1-9

Three Banquets

- a) For political & military rulers v 1-4
The custom of the day, even as it is today, is for the Emperor to have lavish banquets. All the authorities were invited.
- b) For the men of Susa v 5-8
The party lasted for 6 months.
- c) For the women of Susa v 9
v 8 says The King instructed all the wine stewards to save each man that he wished.

Reasons

- d) To show off his wealth v 4
- e) To show off his majesty v 4
- f) To show of his generosity v 7-8

King Xerxes was a very proud man. Boasting about all that he has achieved.

2. His Drunkenness (v 10-12)

Not only was he a very proud man, but he was a play-boy.

- a) A rash command
When he was drunk, he ordered his wife to come in so that he could show her beauty to all the drunkards.
- b) A brave refusal
Queen Vashti refused to do that.
- c) An inflamed ego
The queen upset King Xerxes. He became furious and he burned with anger.

3. His Revenge (v13-22)

- a) Who we consulted v 13
He spoke to all his counselors. The men who advised him on matters of state.
- b) Who he asked v 15
He asked them, “what must be done to queen Vashti?”
- c) What he was told v 16-18
They said to the King that the queen has done something very wrong. The example she has said has been put.

- d) What was he advised? v19-20
He was told to get rid of her and then appoint another queen.
- e) What he carried out v 21-22
Sadly he listened to his counselors, and queen Vashni was deposed and cut out of the palace.

CONCLUSION

On the surface it is a terrible story, but God is at work. And now the door is opened for 2 people to enter Esther and Haman.

ESTHER - STUDY 2

THE NEW QUEEN – Chapter 2

Introduction

In Chapter 1 we saw how King Xerxes in a drunken state get rid of Queen Vashti. It was a dreadful situation, but God was at work because He wanted Esther in the Palace.

Chapter 2 now introduces to us Haman and Esther.

1. The Agreement of the King 2 :1-4)

It is now four years later since Vashti was expelled.

- a. The King remembers his decree (v 1)
“He remembered Vashti and what she had done and what he had decreed about her”.

The ladies would be placed under the care of Hagi, and from those ladies selected, one would be chosen.

So the search began. We do not hear the name of God but we can see the hand of God at work, even in the affairs of a pagan empire, God is in control.

2. The choice of Esther 2:5-18

In these verses, we are introduced to Mordecai who along with Haman are going to play a leading role in the book.

- a. The influence of Mordecai (v 5-18)
Mordecai’s name is mentioned 58 times in the book, and 7 times, it is mentioned that he was a Jew.
 - i. Origins
His ancestor was Kish who was taken to exile in Babylon after the fall of Israel.
 - ii. History
Later the Jews were allowed to return, but Mordecai chose to stay in Babylon.
And beware of his character; he soon had a very influential position in government 2:21.
 - iii. Family
Esther was Mordecai’s cousin and later she became his adopted daughter V 15

She was a beautiful girl, specially raised up by God to replace Vashti.
- b. The Encouragement of Hagi V8-9
 - i. Special Notice

In the same way that Joseph was specially noticed in Egypt Gen 39-21 “The Lord was with him; He showed his kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden”. Daniel was noted in Babylon, Daniel 1:9. “Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to David”. So Esther finds favor in Babylon – God is working.

She becomes part of the women chosen. They were given special diet, perfumes, and cosmetics.

ii. Favoured Position v 10,11
Hegai took special notice of Esther.

c) The Nationality of Esther v 10-11
v 10 says, “Esther had not revealed her nationality”.
She was a Jewess and Mordecai told her not to disclose it.

d) The approval of the King v 12-18
Each night a different girl was brought to the King and Esther won favor with the King.
He responded to her with enthusiasm. She was invited by the King and crowned Queen.
Once he had done that, a public holiday was declared, and souls were set free.
And under God’s hand Esther is now in the palace.

3. Intervention of Mordecai 2:14-23

a. One of favor In the meantime, Mordecai was given a position of honour and authority. He would sit at the King’s gate.
In the east of those days, the gate was equivalent to our modern day law courts. All the important business was conducted at the gate.
Behind the scenes, God is exalting Mordecai.

b. One of opportunity

In his position at the gate, Mordecai learns that two men Bigthana and Teresh become angry and conspired to assassinate King Xerxes.
Mordecai takes the opportunity to Esther, and she reports it to the King.

c. One of Credit

What Mordecai did was recorded in the books. And later we will learn of the King recording these books and rewarding Mordecai.

Conclusion

God is working. Esther is in the palace Mordecai is in a key position and the scene is now set for the rest of the book.

God’s timing is always perfect. Always He is at work and even though we do not see it this God is in control of your life.

ESTHER -STUDY 3

AN OLD ENEMY WITH A NEW NAME

INTRODUCTION

The last 4 years have been peaceful in the palace.

Esther is reigning as queen, and Mordecai is seeing to the King's business at the gate. When suddenly everything changed. A law was going to be put out by Haman, that all the Jews had to be put to death.

i) His Ancestry v 1

Haman is called an Agagite; He came from the area of Agag. He was the King of the Amalekites.

1 Samuel 15:89. He took Agag king of the Amalekites away and all his people were totally destroyed. But God spared Agag and he had the best of everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy.

The Amalekites were always at war with Israel. In 1 Samuel 15, King Saul was ordered to destroy the Amalekites. But because he failed to obey, the Lord would dismiss him as King.

So Haman comes from this background.

ii) His Authority v 1

The king promoted Haman. He becomes the Chief Officer in the Empire.

Because King Xerxes was a very weak man, Haman rode over him.

iii) His Vanity v 2-6

1. The Kings command.

The King orders that everybody should bow down to Haman, and Haman loved it. The natural man is filled with pride.

2) Resisted by Mordecai

However, Mordecai refused to bow down and worship Haman. Exodus 20 v 4-6. The Jews were not to bow down to anybody.

Persistently v 3

Day after day, they spoke to him, but he refused to comply.

Courageously v 4

Everyday they tried to persuade him to change his mind, and they reported his rejection to Haman.

iv. Exposed by Mordecai

I. Haman's Anger v 5

Haman in his anger and his hatred wanted to put Mordecai to death.

II. Haman's Vengeance v 6

He was so filled with hatred that he decided not only to kill Mordecai, but he wanted all the Jews in the Roman Empire killed.

He was an early Hitler

iv) His Subtlety v 7-15

We now see the steps which Haman took to destroy the Jewish people.

1) He selected the day v 7

It would be on the 12th month, the month of Adar.

2) He requested the King's permission v 8-11

Haman was a murderer and a liar, just like his father the devil.

John 8:44 "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning not holding to the truth; for there is no truth in him when he lies, he speaks his native language. For he is a liar and the father of lies".

He goes to the King and he lies about the Jews. He said they disobeyed the king. It was in the King's interest to destroy them. And he promised to put 10 000 talents to be given to the executors.

And very tragically, the king gave into this request, and the order was made.

The Jews were to be exterminated. Haman wanted it to be done quickly.

3) He Spread the Word v 12-14

The Jews did not know of the great danger that they were in.

They were preparing for the Pass-over.

Haman got the securities to write an edict, which was to be spread across the Empire, sealed with the Kings own ring.

All the Jews, both young and old were to be killed. And v 5 says, "the King and Haman sat down to drink".

iv) His Cruelty v 15

What a bad heart Haman had.

The situation seemed desperate and hopeless.

But, No, God was at work.

He had prepared for two people to be in place, Mordecai and Esther.

And Chapter 4 we will see God's plan coming together. And of how Esther would rescue the Jewish people.

ESTHER - STUDY 4

THE DAY OF DECISION – Ch 4

INTRODUCTION

There were 15 million Jews scattered throughout the Roman Empire. Because of Haman's hatred and the stupidity of the King, a law had gone out that all the Jews were to be put to death.

The situation was desperate and so the Jews began to fast. But there was only one man who would be able to do anything, Mordecai.

Ch 4 tells that he did four things:

1. Mordecai : Expressed his concern v 1-3
 - a. By his clothes
“When Mordecai learned of all that had been done he tore his clothes and he put on sackcloth and ashes”.
 - b. By his Actions
“He went out into the city wailing loudly and bitterly”.
 - c. By His Behaviour
He was only able to do this as far as the Kings' gate. Because no one could enter the palace in sackcloth.
 - d. By His Persistence
This went on day after day, and his refusal to put on new clothes gave him the opportunity to get his message to Esther, because she had sent one of her messengers to ask what was wrong with Mordecai.

2) Mordecai explain their peril v 4-9

- a. **To the queen's servants**
Esther was greatly concerned for Mordecai and Mordecai explained to the servants, “everything that the King and Haman had planned – the total annihilation of the Jews.
- b. Mordecai gave to the servants a copy of the edict. So that she could read for herself.
- c. **In his own words**
He then urged Esther to reveal her true nationality and then to go to the King and intercede for her people.
God had brought Esther to the Palace for such a time.

iii) Mordecai Exhorted the Queen v 10-14

- I. She was not guaranteed from death

“Do not think that because you are in the Kings house, that you alone of all the Jews will escape”.

Mondecai makes it clear that if the kings edict was carried through Esther would lose her life, and 15 million would die.

II. Her silence would not prevent deliverance from elsewhere

“If you remain silent at this time relief and deliverance will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish”.

If you do nothing deliverance will come from somewhere else.

III. No accident

Mordecai realizes it is now clear to him, that God has brought Esther into the palace for such a time. Who knows, but that they have come to this royal position for such a time as this?

As we listen to these words of Mordecai, there are four lessons we can learn, of God’s providence.

IV. God’s providence

- a. God has a divine purpose to accomplish
- b. God accomplishes His purposes through people
- c. God will accomplish His purpose even if we disobey
- d. God’s in no hurry

God has a plan and that is exciting

iv) **Mordecai Expedited the Plan v 15-17**

We come now to one of the most wonderful passages in the OT as she responds to Mordecai.

She tells him he must gather all the Jews together in Suza, and they should all pray and fast for her.

Then she says, “I will go the King and if I perish, I perish.” She is willing to lay down her life for her people.

Conclusion

Mordecai has done his job, and now Esther will put her plan into place. God has put her there, and with great courage, she would go to the King. “If I perish I perish”.

ESTHER

STUDY 5

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE PRIME MINISTER – ESTHER 5

INTRODUCTION

Numbers 32:23 “be sure that your sin will find you out”.
People may succeed for a time in covering up disgraceful activities but eventually the truth will come out. The wrong that we do to others will come back to us.

i) Divine Sovereignty (v 1-5)

I. The King

Esther had been concerned as to whether the King would grant her an audience and allow her into his presence.

The Jewish people had been fasting and praying for at least 3 days asking that God would intervene, and save them from being put to death.

It was now the time for Esther to act.

A Sovereign God who is working behind the scenes has now put everything in place.

II. Esther

The King officially recognizes Queen Esther, and invites her into his presence.

But Esther was very wise; she did not make her request immediately.

- a. It was not the right time
The King was unprepared to receive the shocking news that his #1 man was planning to kill all the Jews.
- b. It was not the right place
The place was not the right place.
- c. Esther only wanted Haman
He had to be there.
- d. The King had rewarded Mordecai
The King would discover that he had never rewarded Mordecai for what he did saving his life 5 years ago.

Therefore, the time was not right, but she did have a wonderful plan. She would invite the King and Haman for supper.

ii) False Confidence (v 6-9)

- 1) The Lord restrained Esther

ESTHER

WARNING SIGNALS (Chapter 6)

STUDY 6

INTRODUCTION

Today is the 1st day of the rest of your life.

If anybody had said that to Haman as he left home, to go to the Palace, they would have been wrong.

They should have said, “Human, today is the last day of your life”.

1) A Night of Discovery Chapter 6 v 1-5

- a. The Kings insomnia v 19
Again, we notice the hand of God at work, the King could not sleep.
- b. His choice of entertainment v 16
There were so many options he could have chosen for entertainment, but he chose to have his records read.
The hand of God is seen in small ways
- c. The Servant’s choice of books v 1c
Of all the books, one was chosen. And in that book was recorded what Mordecai had done 5 years previously.
- d. The King’s delay in rewarding Mordecai v 2-3
The King could not understand why Mordecai had not been rewarded for saving his life.
Two of the guards wanted to assassinate him. And he now decides to honour Mordecai.
But the moment that decision was made:
- e. The timely arrival of Haman v 4
At the very second, that the King decided to honor Mordecai, in walks Haman.

Everything is planned by God.

2) A Morning of Decision v 6-10

The King asked Haman what he should do to the man who had saved his life.

Haman thought in his pride, that the King wanted to honor him.

So he says to the King, “get a special robe one of the King's horses, parade through the streets – and let everyone bow down and worship him.

3) A Day of Disgrace v 11-14

The King tells them to get all those things and put it on Mordecai.

Human had planned to hang Mordecai, but God honored him.

It was an absolute disgrace for Haman. So he goes home and reported all that happened to his wife and friends.

And while they were discussing what to do, in walks King's servants, waiting to take Haman to supper with the king and queen.

ESTHER

STUDY 7 AND 8 **REWARDED**

INTRODUCTION (Chap 7-8)

Haman arrives at Esther's palace, and six things happened during that supper.

1) The Queen's Request (Chap 7 : 1-4)

- a. The right time v 1-2
Esther was brilliant; she had waited patiently for the right time.
- b. The right approach v 3-4
When the King asked what her request was, she told him that her life and the life of her people were in danger.

2) The Kings Rage 7:5-8

When the King heard what Haman had planned.

- a. He was humiliated by his ignorance v 5-7
- b. Blind with resentment v 8
He goes outside.

3) Haman's End v 9-10

- a. He had no friends
- b. His wicked plan backfired on him
The King was told of the gallows which Haman had built for Mordecai; so the King ordered that Haman was to be hung on the gallows.

Gal 6:7 "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows".

4) The promotion of Mordecai (8:1-2, 5)

- a. His presence before the King

The King gave Esther all of Haman's estate, and Mordecai now comes into the King's presence.

- b. His new appointment and authority

The King takes off His ring, and gives it to Mordecai – he is given authority.

5) Esther's Petition (8:3-6)

- a. Her concern for others
Esther now begs the King to put an end to the evil plan of Haman.

- b. Her wise suggestion
She asks that the edict be scrapped. She was a brave woman, and it was to save her people.

6) The King's Proclamation (8:7-17)

The King replied to Esther's request.

- a. The new decree
The old was put aside, and a new one was put in place.
- b. It was drafted by Mondecai
- c. It was translated and circulated to the whole Empire
- d. It brought great joy to God's people

CONCLUSION

The whole book had been building up to that point. Esther had been raised up by God to bring deliverance to her people. Step by step, God placed the right people in the right place at the right time.

ESTHER

STUDY 8

GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES (Ch 9-10)

INTRODUCTION

The day has finally arrived for the Jews, the day in which it was appointed by Haman, for every Jew to be put to death. But nothing happened, and Haman is dead. The tables have been turned. God has looked after His people.

1. The Fear of the Jews Ch 9 v 1-16

- i) The tables are turned and turned v 1

The Jewish men were organized and ready to fight, but the Lord had gone before them.

In Ch 8:17 & 9:2 it says, “The fear of the Jews fell upon the people”.

- ii) The fear of the Jews

This had also happened with Jacob in Gen 35:5 “Then they set out, and the terror of God fell upon the towns all around them so that no one pursued them” and in Deut 2:25 “This very day I will begin to put the terror and fear of you on all the nations under heaven. They will hear reports about you and tremble and be in anguish because of you.

- iii) The fear of Mordecai v 3

God had given Mordecai a very high position. He was now the prime minister in a government where his word was law.

- iv) The Jews defended themselves

The wonderful thing was that God had gone before them.

- v) Their Only Defense was in the Sovereign hand of God V 9, 15-16

2. THE FEAST OF THE JEWS 9 : 17-32

- i) The days of fasting v 17-19

As a result of their deliverance, they established the Feast of “Purim”, which is still celebrated to this day.

- ii) It become an Annual celebration v 20-23

Today when the Jews celebrate “Purim”, they start with a day of fasting, and then they go to the Synagogue and listen to the book of Esther being read, and the children bring a raffle, and when ever the

name of Haman is read they make a noise with it, and the people say, “May his name be accursed”.

iii) Naming v 24-28

They named the fast Purim. A wonderful “celebration of their deliverance”.

iv) Purim is Regulated (v 29-32)

Both Mordecai and Queen Esther sent a law around the country, which saw to the feast being instituted.

3. THE FAME OF MORDECAI (10:1-3)

i) Mordecai

He was exalted to the highest position, but the lovely thing is; he used his office to serve the King and help his people.

He instituted a new system of tribute, which would help the people across the empire.

ii) Mordecai’s Fame

It spread across the empire.

“He did his best for his people, and he was a friend at court for all of them”.

Conclusion

This lovely book has been a reminder of the providence of God, that God is in control. That everything is working according to God’s plan. Therefore we can trust him.