

BIBLE STUDY

The Book Of
ESTHER

Purpose For Such A Time As This

Hzo
A Heart of Wisdom

Esther is one of the few books in the Old Testament that does not include a priest or prophet as one of the key characters, rather the focus is how God used an orphan girl and her uncle to deliver the Jews. Through this book we see how God divinely orchestrated events to move these unknown people to be both Queen and the second most important person in the kingdom.

Two major learning points for us are:

1. God can use anyone to fulfil His plans. Your background, social status, etc don't hinder Him in any way.
2. God is a master strategist, He knows exactly what needs to be done at any point in time to fulfil His plans.

I pray this study blesses you as you go through the Book of Esther, and you are reminded that you serve the God of all possibilities.

Day 1

Opportunity

'If it pleases the king, let a royal decree go out from him, and let it be recorded in the laws of the Persians and the Medes, so that it will not be altered, that Vashti shall come no more before King Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she.' Esther 1:19

The Book of Esther opens with an introduction to the great wealth, influence and opulence of King Ahasuerus (also known as King Xerxes). He showcased his kingdom's splendour to his officials and servants for 180 days and capped off the extravaganza with a 7-day feast for all the residents of the capital, Shushan.

The décor was magnificent and royal wine was served in abundance in golden vessels, each one different from the other. At the same time Queen Vashti was holding a separate feast for the women in the palace. Clearly no expense was spared.

Then something strange happens – the king sends his eunuchs to summon Queen Vashti so he could show off her beauty, and she refuses to come. The king is clearly very rich and powerful and yet his queen chose to defy him in front of his officials and servants and dishonoured him publicly.

While we may never know Vashti's reason for this, it was clear to the officials that her example shouldn't be followed by other women in the kingdom and so her punishment was to be banished from the king's presence and her position given to another.

There would certainly have been confusion in Shushan and all the provinces, but from God's perspective, Vashti's exit was an opportunity to orchestrate the positioning of one of His own in the palace.

Reflect: When things don't go our way and we lose a relationship, job, business or something else we value do we automatically assume nothing good can come out of the situation or do we ask God if He can use what we are facing as a backdrop to bring something new and better into our lives?

Day 2

Favour

'Now the young woman pleased him, and she obtained his favor; so he readily gave beauty preparations to her, besides her allowance. Then seven choice maidservants were provided for her from the king's palace, and he moved her and her maidservants to the best place in the house of the women.' Esther 2:9

The second chapter of Esther can be summarized in one word: Favour. In this chapter alone there are 3 separate references of Esther obtaining favour – from the king's eunuch (Esther 2:9), in the sight of all who saw her (Esther 2:15), from the king himself (Esther 2:17). We need to examine her character to understand what it was about her that drew this favour out from people.

The first thing to note is that she could be trusted. Mordecai must have trusted that Esther's character would not get him into trouble while she was in the king's harem, especially as she was a Jew – even when she was away from him, she was obedient to Mordecai and didn't reveal her identity. When a plot to harm the king was uncovered Mordecai could trust her to share the information with the king in his name (Esther 2:22).

Further on in the book, we see that this element of trust played a key part in her role as deliverer for her people.

Secondly, while Esther was physically beautiful, she also exuded a pleasant disposition such that she people around here were drawn to her and willing to show her kindness. Her beauty did not cause her to be haughty or unpleasant.

Thirdly Esther was faithful – though no longer in his care, she was still concerned about Mordecai's welfare even after she became queen (Esther 4:4). She was the queen and could easily afford to forget her people and the man that took care of her, yet she didn't.

Reflect: Does your character draw favour from people? Can you be trusted? Do you consider those who may not necessarily be able to benefit you?

Please note that it is impossible to walk consistently in trust, humility, faithfulness without the help of the Holy Spirit, otherwise we would be striving in our own strength. But that's where grace comes into play: the Holy Spirit helps us where we can't help ourselves and transforms us to conform to the image of Christ. Let's take advantage of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives and give Him room to make us the best version of ourselves.

Day 3

Divine Orchestration

'The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. ' Esther 2:17

We should never underestimate God's mastery in His ability to orchestrate circumstances and situations to fulfil His purpose and this is clearly evident in Esther's life. Firstly, was the fact that Esther was in Mordecai's care after the death of her parents. Secondly, she was one of the young ladies selected by the king's officials for his harem and ultimately the only one selected as queen. Thirdly, Mordecai lived in Shushan and had access to the king's court and so was able to keep abreast of what was going on with her.

Mordecai was also positioned at the king's gate (meaning he performed some form of role in the king's court) so when there was a plot by the king's doorkeepers to assassinate king Ahasuerus, he was in a position to learn of this and warn the king through Esther (we will see how God used this later in the study).

An orphan girl who isn't even a native of the land becomes queen and eventually plays a role much larger than she could ever have imagined. Who else but God can orchestrate all these seemingly unrelated things to fit into the bigger picture of His plan?

"The Lord says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you." Psalms 32:8 NLT

Reflect: Ultimately we must bear in mind that no matter how much we think we know, God alone sees the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10) and He alone knows how to chart our path. Don't try and figure things out on your own, ask the Holy Spirit for guidance in all things and He will lead you along the best pathway.

Day 4

The Conspiracy

'But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai. Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus—the people of Mordecai.' Esther 3:6

King Ahasuerus had commanded that the palace officials bow to Haman, however Mordecai refused to do so. There are different schools of thought as to why Mordecai refused to bow to Haman, one of which is that Haman 'the Agagite' was a descendant of Agag who ruled the Amalekites. The Amalekites were historically bitter enemies of the Jews and in 1 Samuel 15 God gave King Saul explicit instructions concerning going into battle with them. Whatever the reason for Mordecai's action, Haman took it upon himself to get a decree issued that would not only punish Mordecai, but also see the annihilation of all the Jews in the kingdom.

'The wicked plot against the godly; they snarl at them in defiance. But the Lord just laughs, for He sees their day of judgment coming.' Psalms 37:12-13 (NLT)

What Haman did not realise was that by taking this action against the Jews in the kingdom and attempting to annihilate them all, he was setting himself up directly against the Lord. While all of Shushan and the Jews in particular were perplexed by this decree, God was already ahead of Haman's plot and Mordecai and Esther were about to fulfil the purpose God had positioned them for.

Reflect: While we cannot control what conspiracies may be formed against us, we have this assurance from God: 'No weapon that is formed against you will succeed; and every tongue that rises against you in judgment you will condemn. This [peace, righteousness, security, and triumph over opposition] is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from Me,' says the Lord.' Isaiah 54:17 (AMP)

No matter what the enemy attempts to throw at us, God is always in control.

Day 5

Divine Strategy

“Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!” Esther 4:16

The Jews were in great distress because of Haman’s plan to destroy them and Mordecai went to the front of the king’s gate so a message could be sent to Esther for her to plead to the king for her people. At this point Esther had been queen for about 5 years and was well versed in the practices of the palace. She knew that what was asked of her may lead to her execution and understandably she was concerned for her preservation.

The weight and urgency of what she was being asked to do wasn’t lost on Esther, but she also knew she could not attempt or achieve success in this mission in her own wisdom. Haman’s actions may have set things in motion, but victory wouldn’t come by taking him on directly, it was the Lord that would win this battle. She didn’t depend on her fasting and prayers alone or those of her handmaids, but she called on all the Jews in Shushan to fast with her.

‘How could one person chase a thousand of them, and two people put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, unless the Lord had given them up?’ Deuteronomy 32:30

“Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.’ Matthew 18:19

The Jews were united in purpose and in agreement that God would secure victory for Esther and by God’s grace she received a divine strategy to support the boldness she had been given.

Reflect: Don’t rush into responding to a situation, you may not have the full picture. Take time to pray and receive God’s guidance on the appropriate response. His strategy will never fail.



Day 6

Divine Perspective

'So it was, when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, that she found favor in his sight, and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther went near and touched the top of the scepter. And the king said to her, "What do you wish, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given to you—up to half the kingdom!"' Esther 5:2-3

The Lord was gracious to the Jews and granted Esther favour before the king. Not only was she not punished for coming into his inner court uninvited, the king was pleased to see Esther and immediately agreed to her request. Esther had received a divine strategy and so even when the king and Haman feasted on the banquet she had prepared; she knew that the timing was not yet right to plead for her people. On the other hand, Haman had decided to fast track Mordecai's death and planned to ask the king for permission to hang him on the gallows he would prepare specifically for the execution (Esther 5:10-14).

'Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? ...He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision.' Psalms 2:1,4

Imagine God's perspective from heaven when Haman was boasting about himself and raging against Mordecai. It must have been quite comical being that the Lord already knew what the end would be.

Reflect: It's important that we see life from God's perspective no matter how good or bad things may seem. The Lord doesn't want to us to be left in the dark about His plans for our lives, but we need to do our part in seeking Him. 'For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives...' Colossians 1:9

Day 7

Honour

'That night the king could not sleep. So one was commanded to bring the book of the records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. And it was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, the doorkeepers who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. Then the king said, "What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" And the king's servants who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him.'" Esther 6:1-3

One of the things God has made clear through this study is that He is truly unsurpassed when it comes to orchestrating circumstances. The evening after Queen Esther's banquet, King Ahasuerus couldn't sleep.

As king, Ahasuerus didn't lack options in how to entertain himself through a sleepless night, but the Lord had ensured that not only would the king not sleep (one version says, "sleep escaped the king"), he would also ask for the book of memorable events be read to him. The Lord also placed it in the king's heart to honour Mordecai for the act of loyalty which was read to him.

Recall Mordecai did this in the 7th year of the king's reign and now, 5 years later the king sought to reward him. It's worthy of note that even though the king didn't reward him for uncovering the plot to assassinate him, Mordecai continued to be faithful in service.

'And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. ' Galatians 6:9

'He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him.' Psalm 91:15

Reflect: Don't be tired of doing the right thing whether you're recognized for it or not. God sees all you do and He knows how to preserve and honour His children as only He can.

Day 8

Pride

'So Haman went out that day joyful and with a glad heart; but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, and that he did not stand or tremble before him, he was filled with indignation against Mordecai.' Esther 5:9

Though very highly positioned with all palace officials bowing before him, the fact that just one man did not do so bruised his ego and caused Haman to take such strong objection that it led to him planning Mordecai's execution and the annihilation of his people.

'So Haman came in, and the king asked him, "What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?" Now Haman thought in his heart, "Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?"' Esther 6:6

It was also pride that led Haman to believe that the only person King Ahasuerus would want to honour would be him, not knowing that he was laying the foundation for his own embarrassment – he would parade around town the very man he had planned to execute (Esther 6:10-11). Pride also led to Haman preparing the gallows for Mordecai which was eventually used for his own execution (Esther 7:10).

'Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.' Proverbs 16:18

'Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves...' Philippians 2:3

Reflect: The danger with pride is that it can be very subtle. Just because a person isn't boastful does not mean the person does not have pride in his/her heart and if not dealt with it could cost us a close relationship with God. But how do you deal with what you don't even know exists? This is why we need to ask the Holy Spirit to constantly search our hearts and pray like the psalmist: 'Examine me, O God, and know my mind; test me, and discover my thoughts. Find out if there is any evil in me and guide me in the everlasting way.' (Psalm 139:23-24). As we yield to Him, the Holy Spirit not only puts a searchlight on our hearts but also removes the impurities in us and leads us aright.

Day 9

Purpose

'You yourselves write a decree concerning the Jews, as you please, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's signet ring; for whatever is written in the king's name and sealed with the king's signet ring no one can revoke.'" Esther 8:8

Haman had been thoroughly embarrassed and subsequently executed following Queen Esther's banquet. Not only was Haman executed, the king's ring was also taken from him and both the ring and Haman's estate were given to Mordecai. The king also gave Mordecai the go-ahead to dictate the terms of a new decree which would guarantee the deliverance of the Jews across all the provinces.

'The Jews had light and gladness, joy and honor. And in every province and city, wherever the king's command and decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a holiday. Then many of the people of the land became Jews, because fear of the Jews fell upon them.' Esther 8:16-17

Mordecai used his newly found prestige for the benefit of his people, thus fulfilling God's plan for delivering the Jews. Recall we said earlier in the study that God divinely orchestrated both Esther and Mordecai's positioning? The same also applies to us: wherever it is we may find ourselves, God has a plan for us.

'You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and I have appointed and placed and purposefully planted you, so that you would go and bear fruit and keep on bearing, and that your fruit will remain and be lasting, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name [as My representative] He may give to you. ' John 15:16

Reflect: God has intentionally planted us in homes, families, schools, organisations, etc to fulfil His divine agenda as His representatives here on earth. Take time to seek God and find out what your assignment is where you've been positioned.

Day 10

Purpose

“For Mordecai the Jew was second to King Ahasuerus, and was great among the Jews and well received by the multitude of his brethren, seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his countrymen.” Esther 10:3

Esther’s story started with her being an orphan girl in the care of Mordecai her uncle and closes with her being Queen and Mordecai the second most important man in the kingdom. Unlike Haman, Mordecai used the prominence God had given him for the benefit of his people and so he was well received by them.

Mordecai’s words to Esther (perhaps you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this - Esther 4:14b) suggests that he also understood that he was acting as God’s representative in the position he had been given, and would also seek God for guidance on how to fulfil His plans.

“Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim.” Esther 9:29

Esther also moved into another level of prominence, not just as Queen, but now as a policy maker, with the letters she and Mordecai wrote to the Jews. The first one turned the tables on Haman’s initial edict, while the second detailed the practice that Jews would perform for generations to come to remember and honour what God had done for them.

In this study we have seen the power of God to orchestrate events, defend and protect His own and put those who fear Him in positions of influence they could never have imagined in order to bring into effect His divine plan.

Wherever it is you find yourself now, understand that you have been positioned there for such a time as this to fulfil a divine agenda, but only God can reveal to you what that agenda is.

Prayer: “And ask the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, to give you the Spirit, who will make you wise and reveal God to you, so that you will know Him. I ask that your minds may be opened to see His light, so that you will know what is the hope to which He has called you, how rich are the wonderful blessings He promises His people, and how very great is His power at work in us who believe.” (Ephesians 1:17-19a GNT)

Thanks for completing the study. We'll love to hear from you, so please connect with us on:

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