

THE BOOK OF ESTHER

A Survey of the Content of the Book of Esther

Theme: Even though you may not see God in your daily circumstances, trust Him and follow His plan.

Today we are beginning a new study—a new expository sermon series—on the Book of Esther.

- I think we are going to find that Esther is a book rich in content for us (about God and His plan).
 - ✓ We are going to see that the Book of Esther has much to teach us about God's plan for His chosen nation, Israel, and their future.
 - ✓ We are also going to see that this same book has a lot to teach us about ourselves and the “daily Christian life.”
- And to start out, we need to take some time this morning to get an overview of what is going on in this book (we need to look at the “forest” before we start getting in amongst the “trees”).
- And so today we are going to briefly look at the story that God has preserved in the ten chapters of the Book of Esther...

I. An Explanation of the Content: Three Main Characters

A. (Est 1-2) Esther: The Great Change in the Kingdom

1. (Est 1) Vashti's Demise

- a) (Est 1.3) In the third year of his reign, king Ahasuerus puts on a big feast (a bit party).
- b) (Est 1.10-12) He commanded that Vashti, his wife (the queen), present herself to the people in order to show her beauty... But she rebels against the king (her husband) and refuses to do so.
- c) (Est 1.19) That meant the demise of queen Vashti. She is removed from the throne.

2. (Est 2) Esther's Rise

- a) (Est 2.1-4) After Vashti is removed, they start a “beauty contest” throughout the whole kingdom in order to find a suitable bride for the king.
- b) (Est 2.17) Esther wins and becomes the new queen of Persia and Media.

B. (Est 3-7) Haman: The Great Enemy of the Jews

1. (Est 3) The Plot of Haman

- a) (Est 3.1) Some years later, a man named Haman arrives on the scene and takes over as “Prime Minister” (the king's “right-hand man”).
- b) (Est 3.6) Haman gets upset with Mordecai and decides to not only kill Mordecai, but he wants to wipe out Mordecai's people, the Jews (shades of Hitler).

2. (Est 4) The Plan of Mordecai

- a) (Est 4.1-4) Mordecai (Esther's cousin: Est 2.5-7) hears of Haman's decree to kill the Jews.
- b) (Est 4.13-17) And he and Esther form a plan to save their people.

3. (Est 5) The Petition of Esther

- a) (Est 5.1-2) Esther enters (unbidden) into the king's presences... and gains his favor.
- b) (Est 5.3-5) She invites the king and Haman to a banquet (preparing to present her request: v8).

4. (Est 6) The Praise of Mordecai

- a) (Est 6.1-3) In an interesting “turn of events,” the king (for some reason) can't sleep. So, he calls for someone to read him “2Chronicles”... and Mordecai enters the scene again.
- b) (Est 6.4-6) So, through some unique and providential circumstances, Haman has to honor Mordecai, his sworn enemy.

5. (Est 7) The Pronouncement Against Haman

- a) (Est 7.3-6) In chapter 7 we see the enemy unmasked: Haman wants to kill the queen.
- b) (Est 7.10) The king makes a pronouncement and deals very quickly with the problem.

C. **(Est 8-10) Mordecai: The Great Victory at Last!**

1. (Est 8) The Vindication of the Jews

- a) (Est 8.1-2) With Haman gone the king promotes Mordecai to Prime Minister (second in command over all his kingdom).
- b) (Est 8.10-11) And with the death of Haman and the promotion of Mordecai, the Jews are vindicated (they are given the authoritative power to defend themselves).

2. (Est 9) The Victory of the Jews

- a) (Est 9.1) When the day of battle arrives...
- b) (Est 9.2) The Jews gain the victory under the leadership of Mordecai.

3. (Est 10) The Vantage of Mordecai

- a) By *vantage* we mean “a position of favor or superiority” (e.g., vantage point).
- b) (Est 10.3) The victory of the Jews carries on throughout the reign of Mordecai.

D. **Summary & Conclusion**

1. The Book of Esther is primarily a book of the history of the Jews during (approximately) the return of the Jews to the land under Ezra.
2. But... what in the world does it have to do with us today...?

II. **An Application of the Content: One Main Lesson**

A. **The Silence of God in Esther**

1. Did you notice that **God** is not mentioned even once in the whole Book of Esther?
2. Did you notice that there is not one **miracle** mentioned in the Book of Esther?
 - a) With a miracle, we see God supernaturally intervening in the course of history in creation.
 - b) But, we don't see that in Esther. There is no pillar of fire... no parting of the Red Sea... no leper healed... nothing.
3. The Book of Esther is about the **providential** preservation of the nation of Israel...

B. **The Providence of God in Esther**

1. **Providence** (the word) come from Latin, from the words *providentia* or *provideo*.
 - a) Those words begin with the prefix *pro-*, which means *before* (just like our prefix *pre-*, as in *prefix*, *predetermine*, etc.).
 - b) The Latin words *videntia* and *video* mean *see* (obviously we “see” “videos”).
 - c) So, **providence** refers to “seeing before” and refers to God's foreknowledge (e.g., 1Pet 1.2).
 - d) Because of God's foreknowledge, he can provide care, direction, and guidance to His creation.

2. This is exactly what we see in the Book of Esther: *The Providence of God*.
- a) Based on His foreknowledge, God moves within the “normal” circumstances of the “normal” day-to-day lives of “normal” people... in order to provide for them, protect them, and fulfill His plan and purpose through them.
 - b) If you would take each of the circumstances that we just saw in the Book of Esther, and look at them each individually, you wouldn't see anything miraculous. They are simply “normal”...
 - (1) We saw the story begin with a divorce because Vashti refused to obey her husband (how normal is that!).
 - (2) The king remarries, choosing the prettiest young lady there is (how normal is that!).
 - (3) There are political movements with the appointment of a new Prime Minister, etc.
 - (4) Then Esther asks her husband for a favor (a night out for dinner).
 - (5) Her husband then has insomnia and can't sleep, so he reads a book.
 - (6) In all of these day-to-day circumstances, there is absolutely nothing “miraculous.”
 - c) And yet when we take the circumstances together and look at the whole story, we can easily and clearly see the hand of God in everything!
 - (1) The individual circumstances are not (in and of themselves) miraculous.
 - (2) But the circumstances taken together (seen in harmony with each other) form one big miracle, and that miracle is called *providence*!
3. And it is because of this that the Book of Ester applies to us today.
- a) The way we see God working in Esther is exactly how God works in our lives today!
 - (1) Today, during the Church Age, we don't see great, grand, visible signs, wonders, and miracles.
 - (2) Yes, God still works miracles (e.g., the birth of a child, the healing of a loved one).
 - (3) But, today we will look in vain for the wondrous, visible miracles like the healing of the lepers, the pillar of fire, and the parting of the Red Sea.
 - b) Today, during our dispensation, God is working out His plan and purpose providentially in and through life's boring, normal, day-to-day circumstances.
 - (1) And you know what...? You may not see God and His working in your day-to-day life.
 - (2) But, I would image that if you took the time to think back on last week... last month... last year... the time since you've been saved... you will clearly see the hand of God in the totality of the circumstances of your boring, normal, day-to-day life.
 - (3) And I guarantee that you'll see His working in your life when it is all said and done (when your “book” is closed; when your life's history comes to a close).
 - (4) We may not be able to see God in the details of our lives each day (just like we don't really see God in the individual details of each chapter of the Book of Esther).
 - (5) But, just like in the Book of Esther, He is there! He is there, providentially guiding the circumstances in the lives of His people in order to accomplish is perfect plan and purpose.

Conclusion:

And so here we see the lesson to learn in the Book of Ester...

- I don't doubt your life is full of trials, tribulations, difficulties, and problems... because mine is!
- I don't doubt that at times (maybe most of the time) you feel like God is nowhere around (His silence in our day-to-day lives is often deafening... and defeating).
- Esther's life was very similar: full of trials, tribulations, difficulties, and problems.
- Esther also had to deal with the “deafening silence” of God when she was anxious, worried, and even concerned for her life (Est 4.10-13, 16).
- Esther lived during a time when her entire world was governed by godless pagans... and God's people were basically apathetic and indifferent to God's plan (most of the Jew chose not to return to the land!).
- But Esther chose to trust God. She chose to get involved in God's plan, even at the risk of her own life and comfort (she chose to sacrifice her comfort and provision as queen in order to *make a difference*).

If we want to make a difference with our lives today, we have to do the same thing.

- Don't go out looking for that “one big miracle” (God opening up heaven and giving you the winning lottery ticket!).
- You are going to have to trust God in day-to-day circumstances of life, even when you don't see Him working in those daily circumstances.
- And you will have to do that just like Ester did: ...in spite of how uncomfortable it may be... in spite of your worries, fears, and anxiety...
- But, if you will do that... at the end of your story, you'll be able to look back and see the providential hand of God all over those normal, daily, boring circumstances... just like in the Book of Esther.

What that means...

1. **For the lost:** You need to choose... the Lord Jesus Christ. You need to repent and trust Christ as Lord and Savior; you need to be part of God's people.
2. **For the saved:** We need to evaluate our lives... sacrifice our comfort... and choose to get neck-deep involved in what God is doing in this world.
 - And that is exactly what we are going to be studying in the Book of Esther (how to get involved!).
 - And that is exactly what we aim to do here at our church (get involved in God's plan... being and making disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ).

Esther is a book about God's providential care of His people.

- Even though we may not see God in the daily circumstances of our lives, if we will trust Him and follow His plan, we will see Him providentially lead to victory in Christ (victory in fulfilling our life's mission).

BOOK CHART

An Outline of the Book of Esther

Title: God's Providential Care of His People

Chapters 1-2	Chapters 3-7	Chapters 8-10
HISTORICAL APPLICATION		
Esther The Rise of Esther The Feast of Ahasuerus	Haman The Lies of Haman The Feast of Esther	Mordecai The Prize of Faith The Feast of Purim
DOCTRINAL APPLICATION		
The Nation of Israel The Rapture/Translation The Queen of the Jews	The Antichrist The Tribulation The Enemy of the Jews	The Messiah The Second Coming The Victory of the Jews
PERSONAL APPLICATION		
Conversion Our Great Change The Struggle Begins Romans 6	Opposition Our Great Enemy The Struggle Defined Romans 7	Victory Our Great Choices The Struggle Erupts Romans 8