

Esther - Lesson 02

Esther Chapter 2

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Memory verses for this week: *1Jn 1:5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

Introduction: We continue our study on the book of Esther this week as the king chooses a new queen. The king's name is Ahasuerus which is pronounced heavy on the "E" as Assuerus.

THE KING CHOOSES A NEW QUEEN

The events in the book of Esther fall neatly between Ezra chapters 6 and 7. In Ezra 6, we read about Darius the Persian king. In Ezra 7, we read about Artaxerxes king of Persia. This father and his son ruled for many years. Darius had a plan to conquer Greece, and no doubt would eventually have tried for all of Europe. The Persian army, by far outnumbered the Greeks. In the plains of Marathon (famed for the Marathon races), they were soundly defeated in 490 B.C. When Artaxerxes came to the throne in 486 B.C. he had the same ambition of his father. In 480 B.C. his large fleet of warships was defeated at the battle of Salamis.

Keep in mind that king Ahasuerus in Esther is the Artaxerxes in Ezra, and he is known in history as Xerxes. The book of Esther has great historical value because it falls in a period of history where some of the decisive events that would determine the future destiny of Western civilization. The future of Europe was settled in two decisive battles fought during this period of time. It is believed that the events of this chapter did not happen until after the king returned from his war against the Greeks.

I. DIVINE PROVIDENCE IN A PLAN

Est 2:1 After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her.

Est 2:2 Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king:

Est 2:3 And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hegai the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given them:

The king remembers his wife, the beautiful Vashti. He may have regretted his foolish decision to put the queen away for her actions, but it could not be altered.

Dan. 6:15, "Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed."

As in last week's lesson, the wicked advisers came up with another plan. They point out that there are many beautiful virgins in the kingdom, and they could seek them out. So the king appoints officers to gather all the fair young virgins to be brought to his Shushan palace.

Est 2:4 And let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so.

The advisors point out that he could look over this vast number of young women, and pick out the new queen. The king was pleased by the plan. Remember that this was a wicked heathen king and his advisers were also wicked. God is not responsible for what wicked men do, but God in His divine providence can turn it to His glory and purpose. These advisers would not want Vashti to be restored, because she could have resorted to revenge on them because of their original advise in having her removed. No matter what may happen in this life, it is wise for us to always remember that God is in charge, and may well be working behind the scenes.

Prov. 21:1, "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will."

Dan. 4:35, "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"

Psa. 93:4, "The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea."

II. DIVINE PROVIDENCE IN A CHOICE

Est 2:5 Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite;

Est 2:6 Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.

There was a certain Jew in a strategic place in the palace of Shushan. Mordecai the Jew held a minor post in the government, but he was in the right place at the right time. He was from the same tribe as King Saul.

John Gill said this about Mordecai who was from the tribe of Benjamin.

Est 2:5 Now in Shushan the palace was a certain Jew,.... Not one of the tribe of Judah, for he was afterwards called a Benjaminite; but was so called, because he was of the kingdom of Judah, which consisted of both tribes. Jarchi says, all that were carried captive with the kings of

Judah were called Jews among the nations, though of another tribe:

whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite; who was among those that came with Zerubbabel from Babylon to Jerusalem, and returned to Persia again, Ezr 2:2.

Est 2:7 And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter.

Est 2:8 So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women.

Est 2:9 And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, which were meet to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women.

Mordecai had raised a beautiful cousin as his own daughter. Her parents had died, and he took her in and cared for her. Verse 8 says Esther was one of those chosen as a candidate to become queen. Her name means "star" and she would soon be the star in being used to preserve the Jews from destruction. We cannot emphasize too much that this was a wicked sensual plan carried out by wicked men. However, we will see that God has the last say in all matters.

Est 2:10 Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew it.

Mordecai and Esther were Jews who had hid their racial identity. This means that they were not observing the law, or they could not have kept it secret. We believe that they were wrong in this. This was much different from Daniel, who openly practiced his religion. It is amazing how God still stands with his own even when they don't always do right. Praise God for his love towards us who are so undeserving.

Dan. 1:8, "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself."

Daniel kept up his devotion to God all through his life. Even when there was a death penalty added to the law of Persia for worshiping God, Daniel pressed on in his service to the Lord.

Dan. 6:7, "All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions."

Because Daniel would not observe the law of the king, he was thrown into the lions' den. Even

at the threat of death, Daniel did not change. God protected him in it all.

Est 2:11 And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her.

Est 2:12 Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with other things for the purifying of the women;)

Est 2:13 Then thus came every maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house.

Est 2:14 In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name.

Verse 11 says Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house to check on Esther. Mordecai was very concerned about Esther, just as any father would be.

Many people would rather worry than trust God. We need to remember that worry is simply not trusting God, and whatever is not of faith is of sin. Is it always easy to trust God? No, it is not. But worry is a waste of our time. Even if we worry about it, we won't change the outcome. Just trusting God is always the sensible way to live.

Rom 14:18 For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

Rom 14:19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

Rom 14:20 For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.

Rom 14:21 It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

Rom 14:22 Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

Rom 14:23 And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

All of these women were given all the ceremonial means of purification, and for beautification. Those chosen were added to the king's harem as concubines, but only one of them would be crowned queen. God decreed one wife for one man, but man has been ignoring this down through the centuries.

Ex. 20:14, "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

God's word is plain enough, but what does a heathen king care about what God says. It is the same today. Wicked men and women ignore God and continue to commit fornication and adultery. Jesus made it clear that he holds man to a higher standard than the law.

Matt. 5:28, "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

Matthew Henry said this about the love Mordecai showed towards Esther.

How tender he was of her, as if she had been his own child (Est 2:11): he walked before her door every day, to know how she did, and what interest she had. Let those whose relations are thus cast upon them by divine Providence be thus kindly affectioned to them and solicitous for them. [2.] How respectful she was to him. Though in relation she was his equal, yet, being in age and dependence his inferior, she honoured him as her father - *did his commandment*, Est 2:20. This is an example to orphans; if they fall into the hands of those who love them and take care of them, let them make suitable returns of duty and affection. The less obliged their guardians were in duty to provide for them the more obliged they are in gratitude to honour and obey their guardians.

Here is an instance of Esther's obsequiousness to Mordecai, that she did not *show her people of her kindred*, because Mordecai had charged her that she should not, Est 2:10. he did not bid her deny her country, nor tell a lie to conceal her parentage; if he had told her to do so, she must not have done it. But he only told her not to proclaim her country. All truths are not to be spoken at all times, though an untruth is not to be spoken at any time. She being born in Shushan, and her parents being dead, all took her to be of Persian extraction, and she was not bound to undeceive them.

Providence sometimes *raiseth up the poor out of the dust, to set them among princes*, 1Sa 2:8. The king's chamberlain honoured her (Est 2:9), and was ready to serve her. Wisdom and virtue will gain respect. Those that make sure of God's favour shall find favour with man too as far as it is good for them. All that looked upon Esther admired her (Est 2:15) and concluded that she was the lady that would win the prize, and she did win it. (2.) The king himself fell in love with her.

Est 2:15 Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her.

Est 2:16 So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

Esther's turn comes to go before the king. The date of this event proves that this took place after he returned from his defeat at Salamis in 480 B.C., so this event took place around 478 B.C., since he began his reign in 486 B.C. It says in verse 15 that Esther obtained favor in the sight of all them that looked upon her.

Est 2:17 And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.

None were so fair in the king's sight than Esther. Esther is chosen as the new queen. We must not understand the love of the king to be biblical love. It was a love based upon his own carnal desires, but God overruled even in this. God had a plan, and made it all work to His end and counsel. Isaac is an example of showing biblical love for his wife.

Gen. 24:67, "And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death."

Rebekah was chosen according to father Abraham, a type of God the father. She was chosen by the servant, which was a type of the Holy Spirit. Rebekah gladly accepted the responsibility of becoming the wife of Isaac. In this she is a type of the believing sinner who accepts Jesus Christ as Saviour. She is received and taken by Isaac, a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. This spiritual lesson can be applied to the Christian plan for marriage. You can further see the church as the bride of Christ in this typification.

The bible gives us instruction about not being yoked to unbelievers, and how we should seek out a mate.

I Cor. 7:39, "... she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord."

God also instructs men how to love their wives.

Eph. 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."

Est 2:18 Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king.

Est 2:19 And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king's gate.

Est 2:20 Esther had not yet shewed her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him.

The king gives a celebration feast. The king's generosity is shown by the giving of gifts, and evidently releasing the provinces from taxes and tributes for a certain length of time. It proved to be a kingdom wide celebration. Evidently Mordecai was promoted since he is now sitting in the gate, a place of ruling and judging. While scripture is unclear concerning this, it could have been because of the influence of the new queen. As Mordecai had instructed, Esther still keeps her race secret, but it will providentially be revealed in due time. She still looks to Mordecai for guidance in this matter.

III. DIVINE PROVIDENCE IN A WICKED PLOT

Est 2:21 In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.

Two officials plot the death of the king. Such intrigue and plots happened where kings ruled. Many kings have been assassinated in the history of the world. A number of things may have contributed to this plan.

There may have been dissatisfaction over the humiliating defeat by the Greeks at Salamis. Also, they could have been dissatisfied over the choice of Esther or dissatisfied with the promotion of Mordecai. We can only speculate for the Bible does not explain.

Est 2:22 And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told it unto Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king thereof in Mordecai's name.

Est 2:23 And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out; therefore they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king.

It was providential that Mordecai discovered the plot, and revealed it to Esther, now that she is in a strategic place. She notifies the king and the men are found out and both hanged.

Rom. 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Later on it would be crucial that Mordecai get the credit. The time is coming that Mordecai will be repaid.

Prov. 13:21, "Evil pursueth sinners: but to the righteous good shall be repayed."

We need not be surprised by how God used this event.

Acts 15:18, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world."

Once found out, there was swift justice done. Verse 23 says both were hanged on a tree.

People wonder how these wicked kings prospered without any thing happening to them. Of course they did not get by with their evil deeds. This same Xerxes was assassinated in 465 B.C., through the same kind of plot that was foiled in this chapter.

Adam Clarke made this comment about the men being hanged.

It was found out - It was proved against them, in consequence of which they were hanged. Perhaps the words they were hung upon wood or a tree, may refer to their being impaled. A pointed stake is set upright in the ground, and the culprit is taken, placed on the sharp point, and then pulled down by his legs till the stake that went in at the fundament passes up through

the body and comes out by the side of the neck. A most dreadful species of punishment, in which revenge and cruelty may glut the utmost of their malice. The culprit lives a considerable time in excruciating agonies.

It has been observed that the name of God does not once occur in this book. This is true of the Hebrew text, and all translations from it.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.