

Esther Series

Revised – August 2010

Good News Bible Studies

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Providence

Esther 2

Enabled through Circumstances (Esther 2:1-4)

1. “After these things when the anger of king Ahasuerus had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her” (Esther 2:1)
 - It appears that some time had passed:
 - 1) It may have been a considerable period of time that allowed for the failed military campaign against Greece to run its course and the king was finally able to ponder his actions against Vashti.
 - 2) It may have been a shorter period of time; perhaps sometime after the wild party ended and its effects had worn off, that the king now had time to weigh out his decision to have Vashti removed as Queen.
 - Whether he considered his actions of removing Vashti to be foolish or not, there was no room for regrets and no real opportunity to change his mind:
 - 1) “If it pleases the king, let a royal edict be issued by him and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media so that it cannot be repealed, that Vashti may no longer come into the presence of King Ahasuerus, and let the king give her royal position to another who is more worthy than she” (Esther 1:19)
 - 2) **He was bound by his very own decree** and even if he wanted to change his mind, the structure of the government of the Medes and the Persians was that no law/decreed could be repealed by the king and he was required to honor it. **To attempt to repeal the decree/law would put him in jeopardy of being overthrown and losing his position as king.**

2. “Then the king’s attendants, who served him, said, let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king.....then let the young lady who pleases the king be queen in place of Vashti. And the matter pleased the king and he did accordingly” (Est. 2:2-4)
- This course of action was also in the interest of the king’s personal advisors (his wise men) as they were the ones who recommended that Vashti be removed.
 - If the king were to change his mind and reinstate Vashti, then she would have the opportunity to turn against them.
 - The king and his advisors had one thing in mind and their focus was on finding a beautiful young woman to replace Vashti. This beauty contest was a mere vehicle for God’s will to be accomplished.
3. These circumstances are what set things in motion to bring Esther to the forefront but we recognize that they are all a part of God’s _____.

Evidenced through Opportunity (Esther 2:5-18)

1. “Now there was at the citadel in Susa a Jew named Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shemei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite, who had been taken into exile with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had exiled”. (Esther 2:5-6)
- This is our first introduction to another key person in the book of Esther and his name is _____ who is referred to as a _____.
- 1) We already learned from the Introduction and Overview lesson that this was his **Babylonian name** (from the god Marduk).
 - 2) We also learned that during the time of the Persian Empire was when the term “_____” was used to identify those from the region of _____.
- We are told that he comes from the tribe of _____ and is the great grandson of Kish who was deported during the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.
 - Some scholars trace Mordecai’s ancestry back to King Saul who was also from the tribe of Benjamin.

2. “He was bringing up Hadassah; that is Esther, his uncle’s daughter, for she had no father or mother. Now the young lady was beautiful of form and face, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter” (Esther 2:7)

- This is the main character of the story and whom the book is named after:
 - 1) **Hadassah** is the Hebrew word for _____ and actually means _____. The myrtle branch is a symbol for peace and thanksgiving.
 - 2) _____ is her Persian name and it means “**star**” which is probably a root or form of the name **Ishtar** - a Babylonian and Persian goddess.
- Esther was raised by her cousin Mordecai
 - 1) We are told that Esther’s parents died and Mordecai (probably through adoption) takes her as his own daughter. We will learn later that Mordecai is a very upstanding man of godly character.
 - 2) This shows God’s _____ by placing Esther in a home where she receives the right influence and religious training, even in the midst of the perverse and corrupt pagan environment of the Persian Empire.
 - 3) It was God who orchestrated the development of Esther’s childhood and creates the right influences in her life to prepare her for a time such as this!

3. “So it came about when the command and decree of the king were heard and many young ladies were gathered to the citadel of Susa into the custody of Hegai, that Esther was taken to the king’s palace into the custody of Hegai who was in charge of the women. Now the young lady pleased him. So he quickly provided her with her cosmetics and food, gave her seven maids from the king’s palace and transferred her and her maids to the best place in the harem” Esther 2:8-9)

- Esther was given favored status (in a similar fashion as Daniel was in Babylon) and this too was orchestrated by God showing His _____.
- This favored status will place her in line to become the next queen and her purpose (slightly different than Daniel) was to save the Jews from annihilation.

4. “Esther did not make known her people or her kindred, for Mordecai had instructed her that she should not make them known. Every day Mordecai walked back and forth in front of the court of the harem to learn how Esther was and how she fared”. (Esther 2:10-11)
- The emphasis by Mordecai that Esther use discretion by not making her Jewish identity known becomes obvious as the story unfolds.
 - 1) The Jews that remained behind in Persia were unwelcomed or unwanted by many within the Persian Empire.
 - 2) Mordecai seemed to have keen insight as to the dangers of revealing their heritage and as such chose to keep such disclosure secret.
 - 3) We can draw several conclusions as to how or why Mordecai understood this, but clearly the _____ of God is at work through these _____.
 - The fact that Mordecai “*walked back and forth in front of the court of the harem*” reveals his fatherly concern for Esther and his desire to keep her from harm.
5. Esther will spend about one _____ preparing for the opportunity to impress the king with her beauty, poise, and charm. (Esther 2:12-15)
- These verses describe the process by which these women (who were specially chosen) would go through a rigorous and lengthy process of beauty treatments in preparation for their one night with the king. *This was rather demeaning (in my opinion), but it was the method by which a queen was chosen and no doubt satisfied the lustful cravings of a pagan king.*
 - We are not given a lot of specifics as to what transpired when it was time for Esther to appear before the king. Here are my observations of the text:
 - 1) Esther’s beauty, qualities and character were obvious to others without all of the cosmetics, perfumes and other extravagances.
 - 2) Esther impressed all who saw her (especially the king) and in similar fashion to Daniel the prophet, her inner qualities were what made her so favorable.

6. “So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus to his royal palace in the tenth month which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. The king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found favor and kindness with him more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. Then the king gave a great banquet, Esther’s banquet, for all his princes and his servants; he also made a holiday for the provinces and gave gifts according to the king’s bounty” (Esther 2:16-18)

- The **seventh year of Ahasuerus’ reign** would have been the year **479 B.C.**
 - The 10th month **Tebeth** (the Babylonian name); would have been at the same time as our December-January.
 - It had been about 4 years since Vashti had been removed as queen
 - The Scriptures tell us that **the king loved Esther** more than all the other women in his harem and he proclaimed her to be queen which was his right to do.
 - The king gave another banquet in honor of Esther and ordered a holiday for all those in the provinces. A holiday in those days would have included some rest and relaxation for his military personnel and probably some sort of tax reprieve for the citizens of the kingdom.
 - The king also gave gifts (probably food and other necessities) to his subjects to celebrate his new found happiness.
7. In each of these opportunities we can see the _____ of God at work and the way in which He orchestrates (what we might consider natural occurrences) His will to be accomplished in spite of what may seem (to some) as unimportant at the time, but is actually divine intervention for His purposes and our good. (Romans 8:28)

Exercised through Discipline (Esther 2:19-23)

1. “When the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai was sitting at the king’s gate. Esther had not yet made known her kindred or her people, even as Mordecai had commanded her; for Esther did what Mordecai told her as she had done when under his care” (Esther 2:19-20)
 - The phrase **“Mordecai was sitting at the king’s gate”** leads some scholars to conclude that Mordecai may have held some sort of prominent position in the Persian government.
 - 1) Some believe that Mordecai may have received some special consideration from Esther and as such he may have been appointed as a judge/magistrate in the Persian court system.
 - 2) Others suggest that he may have already held a position of prominence much like Daniel. (see Daniel 2:49)
 - 3) In either case, the fact that Mordecai (a Jew) was sitting at the king’s gate would place him in a position to hear of a plot to assassinate the king. This was no mere accident, but the _____ of God.
 - It is also good to point out here that there was an apparent need for Esther to keep her Jewish nationality/heritage a secret.
 - 1) We are not told the reason at this point but we will see as the book unfolds that there is animosity and hatred toward the Jews in the Persian kingdom.
 - 2) Things were changing for the Jews during this time and some of the “special” considerations and protections from the days of the Babylonian Empire under king Nebuchadnezzar and the early days of the Persian Empire under King Cyrus were diminishing.
 - 3) Mordecai (perhaps by God’s revelation) apparently was aware of this shift and he made this a part of Esther’s training.
 - 4) Esther’s _____ and _____ to this instruction is duly noted in this text.

2. “In those days, while Mordecai was sitting at the king’s gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king’s officials from those who guarded the door, became angry and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. But the plot became known to Mordecai and he told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai’s name. Now when the plot was investigated and found to be so, they were both hanged on a gallows and it was written in the Book of the Chronicles in the king’s presence” (Esther 2:21-23)
- We are not told why these two eunuchs (Bigthan and Teresh) became angry at the king and set out to kill him:
 - 1) They may have become disenchanted with the king and changed their allegiance to someone else.
 - 2) They may have been mad at the removal of Vashti
 - 3) Whatever the reason for the assassination plot, it sets the stage for Mordecai to overhear their scheme and as such he tells Queen Ester.
 - Mordecai informs Esther, she informs the king; the plot is investigated and found to be true.
 - The two men are hanged (possibly impaled on a pole or shaft) and the event is recorded in the Persian record book.
3. We will learn later (Esther 3) that for some reason, Mordecai doesn’t receive a promotion for uncovering this plot.
- Although Mordecai may get the short end of the stick (for now), he will reap huge rewards later.
 - Mordecai and Esther were both patient on the Lord and their _____ and _____ will pay off as we will see in the remaining chapters.
4. Perhaps this is a good lesson for us to realize the value of _____ on the Lord and not forcing our will on the circumstances. As we will see, God had better plans for them.