



**HOLY TRINITY CHURCH
DOWNTOWN
THE BOOK OF ESTHER
COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY – PART I
FALL 2011**

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WELCOME TO A COMMUNITY GROUP

Welcome to a Holy Trinity Church community group! You may be asking, “What is a community group?” Well, community groups at Holy Trinity Church help us connect on four levels:

- ***Connect to God:*** All people were designed for relationship with God, and God has always been gathering a people to Himself. If our community groups excel at the other three points of connection below, but fail to connect people to the one true and living God, then we’ve failed. Ultimately, the only thing that will matter in this life is if our relationship with God has been restored. Through God’s acts in history, He has provided for our redemption through the person and work of Jesus Christ. No matter where you are on your spiritual journey, the others in your community group will be journeying alongside you by studying God’s Word, and collectively you will be learning how to be re-connected with God.
- ***Connect to the Word:*** We at Holy Trinity Church are confident that God has spoken to humanity through the Bible, and since God has spoken we need to listen! Therefore, the study of God’s Word is paramount in your community group experience. We believe as Jesus said in Luke 24:44–47, that all of God’s Word is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Through our study of the Word, we will always connect the text back to the larger story of God’s redeeming acts, culminating in Jesus Christ.
- ***Connect to other people:*** Most of us reside in the bustling city of Chicago, but we are often isolated from authentic community. We were made for relationship with each other. Participation in a Community Group will allow you to connect to other people through our common exploration of the Bible and related times of fellowship.
- ***Connect to the city:*** We believe God has called Holy Trinity Church to be on a mission for his kingdom. This desire comes from what we have experienced through being in communion with God, and the resulting joy and hope in our life. We want to include as many people as possible to experience our community. God cares about each and every Chicagoan! Consequently, we give of our own time and resources to serve others in Chicago so that everyone in Chicago can be part of God’s community. Community Groups will endeavour to develop participants’ hearts with a desire to serve the poor and disenfranchised.

Community Group Gatherings

Community Groups meet weekly in homes from mid-September to early May. Each group may take a slightly different approach, but generally the time (typically two hours) is broken down between discussion of a previously assigned biblical text, prayer, and social interaction over dessert or periodic dinners.

FALL 2011 COMMUNITY GROUP CALENDAR HTC DOWNTOWN

Week of:

Sep 12	Group Study #1	Esther 4:12–17 <i>personal study/ sermon/ group discussion</i>
Sep 19	Group Study #2	Esther 1:1–22 <i>personal study/ sermon/ group discussion</i>
Sep 26	Group Study #3	Esther 2:1–18 <i>personal study/ sermon/ group discussion</i>
Oct 3	Group Study #4	Esther 2:19–23 <i>personal study/ sermon/ group discussion</i>
Oct 10	Group Study #5	Esther 3:1–15 <i>personal study/ sermon/ group discussion</i>
Oct 17	Group Study #6	Esther 4:1–17 <i>personal study/ sermon/ group discussion</i>
Oct 24	Group Study #7	Esther 5:1–8 <i>personal study/ sermon/ group discussion</i>
Oct 31	Group Study #8	Esther 5:9–6:14 <i>personal study/ sermon/ group discussion</i>
Nov 7	Group Study #9	Esther 7:1–8:2 <i>personal study/ sermon/ group discussion</i>
Nov 14	Group Study #10	Esther 8:3–17 <i>personal study/ sermon/ group discussion</i>
Nov 21	Group Study #11	Esther 9:1–10:3 <i>personal study/ sermon/ group discussion</i>

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The individual studies were written by Joel Miles (studies #1, 2, 6, 7, and 11), Jon Chenot (studies #4, 5, and 10), and Andrew Stravitz (studies #3, 8, and 9). Jon Dennis, Joseph Kim, and Craig Devereaux provided feedback and direction to the project. Joel Miles took on the additional role of project manager, and helped shape a significant amount of the final product, including writing the *Introduction to the book of Esther*, and co-writing a number of the studies. Dana Adams served as copy editor. Tom Barrett served as general editor, and any mistakes are mine.

For God's Glory,
Tom Barrett

LEARNING ESTHER TOGETHER – A 3-MONTH STUDY

From September 2011 through November 2011 we are studying the book of Esther together. We are excited to continue this format of pairing up our sermon texts with what we study individually and discuss in our Community Groups weekly. We believe this approach will better help us understand the text, God, and our ourselves, as well as to help us better apply the text to our lives.

Objectives of This Study Guide

Greater Growth

We believe that the frequent study of God's Word is critical for your spiritual growth. We are providing you with materials to study in an accountable context to foster greater growth in the gospel.

Greater Application

We believe that the opportunity to study the Scripture a number of times personally, hear a sermon preached on the text, and to then discuss in your Community Group will allow for a deep richness of understanding and application.

How It Works

We are asking you to engage the biblical text through:

- *Personal study* - Study each passage on your own three times,
- *Sunday study* - Hear a sermon preached on the text, and
- *Community Group study* - Discuss and apply the passage with the others in your community group.

Note: While we recognize that each person will develop their own rhythms for studying this material, we suggest you complete the three readings associated with the personal study prior to the related Sunday sermon.

Personal Study

To grow spiritually one must be committed to reading God's Word. We suggest that you find a regular time and place for thirty minutes each day to learn from the Scriptures. Bring a pen or pencil, your Bible, a notebook, and study materials. In the following pages, each study suggests three readings for each text, along with a set of questions for each reading. The questions that follow the readings each have a slightly different focus, as explained below:

- *Observations:* The same series of five questions is given for each text to help the reader get an overall sense of the passage.
- *Taking a Deeper Look:* These are more in-depth questions specifically tailored to the passage being addressed. Within this section we will periodically give certain information with the questions, be it historical, contextual or interpretive, which will hopefully help the reader understand the passage.
- *Concluding Study:* In this section we simply ask the reader what they believe is the main point (theme) and main application (aim).
- *For Those Who Want More:* This section contains no questions, and does not need to be completed. Furthermore, this section is not meant to be viewed as the correct answers to the questions. Please use this section for further information on the passage, and for ideas of how the writers may have answered these questions.

Sunday Study

Typically each Sunday you will hear a sermon based on the same text the Community Group study is based on. The sermon is another supplement to assist us in better understanding and applying the biblical text we will be studying privately and in our groups. The Sunday sermon will also be available online at www.htcchicago.org for those unable to make the service, or for those who would like to listen again.

Community Group Study

Most weeks you will have a chance to study and discuss the text together in your Community Group (see calendar on page 4).

Resources

Resources Provided through Holy Trinity Church:

In order to help you grow in God's Word, we will provide you with the following resources:

- *The Biblical Text:* The attached studies have the applicable biblical text printed at the beginning of each study. All of our study efforts are primarily focused on understanding the biblical text.
- *Personal Study Questions:* The attached studies contain three sets of questions for each study. Please prioritize your time during the week to allow for three separate daily readings of this text, attempting to answer the questions to the best of your ability, and praying over prayer requests that come to mind as you interact with the biblical text.

Additional Optional Resources:

The following list of books were consulted and used to help the authors write this study. Therefore, if you would like to study Esther at a more in-depth level, we recommend the following commentaries and resources:

Less technical commentaries/resources:

Duguid, Iain M., *Esther and Ruth: Reformed Expository Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2005).
Howard Jr., David M., *An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1993).
Jobes, Karen H., *Esther: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999).

Technical commentaries/resources:

Berlin, Adele, *Esther: The JPS Bible Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication, 2001).
Bush, Fredrick, *Ruth-Esther* (Waco, TX: Word Press, 1996).
Fox, Michael V., *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991).
Levenson, Jon D., *Esther: The Old Testament Library* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997).

Background Resources:

Scott Jr., J. Julius, *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995).
Tomasino, Anthony J., *Judaism Before Jesus: The Events & Ideas That Shaped the New Testament World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003).

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ESTHER

Approaching the Book of Esther

There tend to be two different mind-sets most people have when approaching the book of Esther. While some approach the book excited to dive into the incredible story of an orphan-turned-queen who must find the strength to save her people from a sinister enemy, many find themselves intimidated by the difficulties the book presents. I was part of the latter group. The intimidation one has regarding the book stems from the book's heavy themes of war and justice, and its unique feature of never mentioning God's name. Furthermore, I have a strong conviction that the New Testament teaches us as Christians to understand the Old Testament through the lens of Christ. In other words, I approached Esther believing that if I truly understood this book, it would lead me to see Christ (Luke 24:27; John 5:39; Rom. 1:1–6; Col. 1:24–29).

There is a good chance that many of you using this study guide are experiencing a mix of the feelings I just described—excited, but intimidated. So as we approach this book I want to encourage you. I want to encourage you because studying this book has helped me better understand the themes of war and justice within the Bible. Moreover, I believe that the absence of God's name within the book is one of its unique strengths. Though God seems to be hidden in this book, His work and His presence are painted on every page. In this way we are constantly reminded of God's faithfulness, even when He seems absent; we are reminded to trust God, even when we do not see Him; and we are reminded that it is often through hindsight, that we clearly see God at work.

Lastly, I want to encourage you because my conviction concerning Christ has been strengthened by my study of Esther. Esther is the story of a people condemned to death, who have a mediator step forward, through whom these people are restored and exalted. Likewise, the gospel is the story of a people condemned, who have Christ take their condemnation, leading to the exaltation and restoration of the condemned. As we continue to study this book, I pray that through Esther we will all allow God to speak to us.

How to Read the Book of Esther

Esther Is a Narrative

Though it may seem odd to point this out, Esther is a narrative. This is at once one of the most exciting and most difficult things about studying Esther. It is exciting because the book of Esther is a fascinating story. The twists and turns within the plot, the speeding up and slowing down of time, the intense contrast and contention between the main characters, and the surprise ending make this story an absolute joy to read. Be that as it may, it is difficult because Esther is Scripture, and as a result one cannot only approach it for the joy of reading. Rather, one must approach the book knowing that “all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16).

Interpreting narrative is much different from interpreting other genres of the Bible such as Paul’s letters, poetry, or the Prophets. For example, in a very basic and general way one can split the book of Romans into two sections. Chapters 1–11 contain Paul’s explanation of the gospel, while 12–16 contain Paul’s application of the gospel. In this way it is much easier to understand how Romans is profitable for teaching, for reproof, etc. Esther, however, cannot be neatly split into explanation and application sections. There are no “therefore, do this” sections. Esther makes its points through things like plot twists, setting, characters and their genealogies, and dialogue. Therefore, the way we approach this book, gain application, and ask questions concerning the text must be different from that of other books of the Bible.

Understand the Beginning in Light of the End, and the End in Light of the Beginning

Esther is one complete story told in ten chapters. Each of these chapters impacts the way one should understand the others, and therefore we must be careful not to treat a passage in isolation. For example, at the end of chapter 8 the reader learns that after a counter-edict to deliver the Jews is written, Mordecai is wearing royal clothes, and the Jews celebrate with feasting. If we treat this passage in isolation, we will miss the complete reversal from chapter 4, where after the first edict against the Jews is written Mordecai tears his clothes and puts on sackcloth and ashes, and the Jews mourn with fasting. Esther is a wonderful story, and the more familiar we are with the whole book, the better we will be able to understand the message of the individual passages.

Allow the Text to Speak

Modern novels are usually filled with detail. Authors will include details such as the reasons behind characters’ actions, their individual thoughts, or specific details on the appearance of characters and settings. This is not the way Esther is told. The amount of detail the author of Esther includes is much less than a modern novel. Nonetheless, the details that are included are the details that we want to pay attention to. When studying the Bible it is easy to add details to the story where the text leaves them out. An example of this is the number of wise men who come to see Jesus after He is born. Many of us think that there were three. The fact is we don’t actually know, because the text never tells us.

On the one hand, the text of Esther will sometimes give an overwhelming amount of detail, for example the décor of the feast in 1:6–7. On the other, the text often lacks detail where one might desire it to be present, for example the reason for the assassination plot against the king in 2:19–23. Because of this we must be careful to pay close attention to details that the text does provide, and be cautious when adding in details where the text is silent. This is extremely important as regards the morals in the book of Esther. Many people have approached the first chapter of Esther from a moralistic standpoint. Some have argued that Vashti was correct in standing up to her husband, while others have used this passage to argue that wives need to be submissive. Though there is a place for discussing these issues as it relates to the book of Esther, the text never makes a moral

judgment on this event. Therefore, we must be careful not to make a moral judgment on the main point or main application of the text. We need to let the text tell the story, without adding in details, or trying to make moral applications or judgments when the text doesn't give us warrant to do so.

View in Light of the Bible Narrative

Historically speaking, Esther is one of the latest books in the Old Testament (483–474 B.C.)¹ and does not take place in the land of Israel. In 586 B.C. the Jewish people living in the land of Judah (southern Israel) were conquered and taken into exile by the Babylonians, and Jerusalem was burned to the ground. This historical event was due to Israel's sin and abandonment of God's covenant with them,² as prophesied in Deuteronomy 28:15, 16, 64:

But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. . . . The LORD will bring you and your king whom you set over you to a nation that neither you nor your fathers have known. . . . And the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other.

In 539 B.C. Cyrus II, the founder of the Persian Empire, defeated the Babylonians and therefore became the ruler of Jewish people. It is under Cyrus that the Jewish people were able to return to the land of Israel, as recorded in the book of Ezra (cf. Isa. 44:21–45:7). However, though many did return, many stayed in the lands of the exile. The Jews that one encounters in the book of Esther are those who have chosen to remain. In fact, the book takes place in the ancient Persian city Susa, where the king Ahasuerus, better known by his Greek name Xerxes I, lived.³ Xerxes is best known for his military campaign against Greece, which historically took place between chapters 1 and 2 of Esther, fictionally depicted in the movie *300*.

Jews who remained in lands other than Israel, like those in Esther, became known as living in “The Diaspora” (called such because they were “dispersed” all over the world). Due to the nature of the Diaspora numerous religious and theological questions were being asked, such as: “Is God present outside the land of Israel?” “Are those in the Diaspora loved by God?” “Can those who do not have a temple come before God?” “Is God still faithful to his covenant?” and “Is God really in control?”⁴ These are important questions to keep in mind while reading Esther, and many of these questions are answered in the story. For example, as mentioned above, God seems hidden in Esther. Ahasuerus, on the other hand, is extremely present. His feasts are described in ways similar to God's temple, people fear him, he issues edicts, etc. However, as events unfold one sees that Ahasuerus never makes a decision by himself, and all events turn to work out for the good of God's people. Through the literary decision to leave God's name out, the text answers some of the questions by showing that God is present even when He seems hidden, He does love those in the Diaspora, and He is still faithful to His promises.

Lastly, we need to see Esther in light of the biblical narrative that leads to Christ. How God providentially works through Esther and Mordecai to bring about a reversal for the Jewish people

¹ John H. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 12.

² Karen Jobes, *Esther: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 22.

³ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁴ J. Julius Scott, Jr., *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), 109–110.

points us to the way God works through Christ to bring about the ultimate reversal, where sin and death are conquered, and God's people are reconciled to Him. Let us, therefore, allow God's Word to teach, reprove, correct, and train us in righteousness, and let us allow this book to point us to Christ!

Themes and Interpretive Principles of Esther

1. Literary Principle: God's apparent absence, yet definite presence.
2. Literary and Structural Principle: Feasting (ten feasts in the book), identity marker for Jews.
3. Theological Principle: God's faithfulness and the perseverance of His people.
4. Application Principle: Cannot simply moralize or make principles from the story.
5. Redemptive Theme: Exile and Christ's coming. (But perhaps even more important is the flow from condemnation to death → a mediator comes [mercy] → deliverance.)
6. Primary Theme: Reversal.

Main Point (Theme)

Esther is about God's providential work—His faithfulness, and His presence when he seems so invisible—to bring about a reversal (9:1).

Main Application (Aim)

Trust and look to the God who is faithful, who is forever present, and who can and has brought about the ultimate reversal.

Joel Miles

August 22, 2011

Study #1: Esther 4:12–17

Week 1 - **Week of September 12th**

Community Group calendar: **Study #1**

Text: **Esther 4:12–17**

Ways in which you will interact with the text:

- Personal study (we recommend three separate readings)
- Listen to sermon preached on September 11th
- Group discussion during week of September 12th

Esther 4:12–17 *English Standard Version (ESV)*

¹²And they told Mordecai what Esther had said. ¹³Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. ¹⁴For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" ¹⁵Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, ¹⁶"Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I

and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.”¹⁷ Mordecai then went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.

Introduction

On October 25, 2007, while “Staff Sergeant Giunta and the other soldiers of Company B, Second Battalion (Airborne), 503rd Infantry Regiment, were part of a campaign to provide food, winter clothing and medical care to Afghans in remote villages,” they were ambushed on three sides. The shots seemed to come out of nowhere and instantly three soldiers lay on the ground. Sergeant Giunta noticed one of the soldiers close to him had been wounded, and rushed toward the danger to pull him to safety. Then Giunta noticed that other members of his unit had also been wounded. Giunta and other squad members threw grenades as cover before sprinting to the injured soldiers. While they reached the first and began to give him aid, Giunta continued on by himself to find his second squad member. It was at this point that Giunta saw two insurgents carrying his wounded friend away. Disregarding the potentially fatal consequences to himself, Giunta charged at and engaged the enemy, and was eventually able to carry his friend to safety.

Three years later President Obama awarded Staff Sergeant Salvatore A. Giunta the Medal of Honor, the military’s most prestigious award. In order to be considered worthy of receiving the Medal of Honor a soldier must perform an act of bravery at the risk of his or her life above and beyond the call of duty. Therefore, one of the consequences a soldier faces for performing an act worthy of the Medal of Honor is death. In fact, this was the first time since the Vietnam War that a soldier had received this honor for an act he had survived. Giunta’s acts of heroism could have resulted in his death, but he was willing to face that consequence so that his friends could be saved.

In the book of Esther we also see the heroine make a choice to risk everything to save the Jewish people regardless of the consequences to herself. It is this choice that leads Esther to be a mediator for the Jewish people, and ultimately to be involved in saving them from death.

First Reading: *Observations*

1. What questions do you have concerning this text? For example, “Why is this point important?” “How does this verse relate to that verse?” “Should we view this character as a model?” etc.

2. List all characters mentioned in the text and whether they are major or minor characters.

3. What role or contribution does each of these characters play in the story?

4. Where does this scene take place? Include any descriptions about the setting that you find significant, odd, or confusing.

5. What “plot twists” do you see in this passage?

Second Reading: *Taking a Deeper Look*

1. Read Esther 2:5–7. What is the significance of Esther’s heritage and her position as queen in this passage?

2. In 2:10 we are told that Esther is hiding her identity from the king. Read chapters 3:13 and 4:6–11. In light of this what are the possible consequences of Esther’s decision to act?

3. What does Mordecai say will happen to Esther if she does not go before the king?

4. Does Mordecai believe that Esther is the only hope for this situation? What significance does this have on how we understand this book?

5. Do you ever believe that you are the only person who could salvage a situation? What significance does this passage have on how you view those instances in your own life?

6. The end of verse 14 is probably the best known sentence in the entire book. Mordecai believes that God may have raised Esther to the position of queen specifically so that she could plead on behalf of the people of God. Though you may never be in a position exactly like Esther’s, what positions has God put you in where you are able to work for Him?

7. Question 2 above asks you to look at the consequences that Esther faced due to her decision to help her people. What are the consequences you face for working for the Lord? Are you willing to face those consequences?

8. In 4:16 Esther reveals her willingness to die to save her people from death. How does Esther's willingness point us to Christ's work on the cross?

Third Reading: *Concluding Study*

1. What do you think the main point/message of this passage is?

2. How do you think this passage primarily applies to your life?

For Those Who Want More

Summary of the Plot

Mordecai has called upon Esther to plead for the Jews. Esther at first refuses, knowing that death is the likely outcome of her attempts. In 4:12–17 Mordecai challenges Esther to step up and act in line with her identity as a Jew and the queen. Esther accepts this challenge and works to save the Jewish people, no matter the consequences.

Important Points from the Text

Even though Esther believes that her life may be taken if she tries to plead for the Jews, Mordecai believes that refusing to act would certainly result in her death.

This is one of two places in the book of Esther where the preservation of God's people is guaranteed (see also 6:13). This is an important idea throughout the book. God does preserve his people.

Esther's decision should be seen as a decision to identify with the people of God (i.e., as a Jew). In 2:10 we see that Esther had been commanded by Mordecai to keep her identity as a Jew a secret. However, by the time we reach chapter 4 her identity as a Jew is no longer a secret, but is simply not apparent. The Jews all over the kingdom are putting on sackcloth, weeping and mourning their fate. Esther, however, is sending different clothes to Mordecai so that he would take off his sackcloth, and therefore have him not identify with the Jews. It is not until Esther's decision in 4:15–17 that her identity rests as a person of God as she issues a fast.

This decision to identify with her people must be seen as extremely significant. Not only does Esther's decision to identify with her people mean that she is deciding to work to save her people, but it also means that she is putting herself in grave danger. As one commentator puts it, "She would be admitting that she had not been living as a devout Jew should live. Furthermore, she would be identifying herself as a target of destruction under Haman's decree and an easy mark in the

treacherous Persian court.”⁵ Nonetheless, in doing this Esther becomes the mediator for the people and saves them from destruction.

It is interesting that Mordecai does not tell Esther that the Jewish people need her. Rather, Mordecai understands that Esther is not needed. God is not dependent upon us, though he does choose to use us.

Other Ways This Speaks into Our Lives

Clearly this was a defining moment in Esther’s life. Mordecai’s words in 4:14 (“Who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”) do not lay a guarantee that this will work out for good. It is unlikely that we will ever face such a defining moment in our lives. Instead it is more likely that we will constantly face moments where the easiest thing to do would be wrong, and the right thing would be hard. However, it is in these moments when lying to our boss will help us move up in the business world, making fun of a colleague will help us fit in, or cheating will help us make more money, that we must allow our identity in Christ to shape how we will act.

Do you ever feel that you are needed? Do you ever feel that if you were not around things would completely fall apart? We often feel that we are the only person who could possibly accomplish the tasks that we do. It would be easy for us to look at the book of Esther and think that the Jews only could have been saved through Esther. However, this is not the message of the book. Yes, the book of Esther does explain that Esther’s beauty elevated her to her position, but it does not want us to think that without Esther everything would have gone wrong. God would have worked through someone else. It is He whom the Jewish people had to rely upon, and it is He whom we must always rely upon.

Relation to Main Story Line of Esther

It is at this moment of desperation that Mordecai’s words and Esther’s decision mark the beginning of a reversal for God’s people’s fortune.

Christological and Theological Points

Matthew 16:13–20, Mark 8:27–30, and Luke 9:18–20 tell the famous story of Peter’s assertion that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God!” Though this story is amazing, it is not properly understood unless one sees what happens directly following each of these passages. Jesus, for the first time, tells his disciples that He must die. Peter and the disciples had come to a point where they believed that Jesus was the Messiah, but their understanding of what the meant was incomplete. Jesus, however, knew exactly what His role as Messiah meant: He was to suffer and rise again for the salvation of the Church. Though Esther reveals her willingness to die in trying to save the Jewish people, Christ came to earth knowing that He must die to truly save God’s people.

Main Point of the Passage

God providentially works His plan in the world through people, but His plans are not dependent upon any one person.

⁵ Jobes, *Esther*, 137.

Final Application Summary

Know that God works through the situations in our lives and positions we are in to bring about His purposes.

PRAYER REQUESTS

Study #2: Esther 1:1–22

Week 2 - **Week of September 19th**

Community Group calendar: **Study #2**

Text: **Esther 1:1–22**

Ways in which you will interact with the text:

- Personal study
- Listen to sermon preached on September 18th
- Group discussion during week of September 19th

Esther 1:1–22: *English Standard Version (ESV)*

The King's Banquets

¹Now in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces, ²in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne in Susa, the citadel, ³in the third year of his reign he gave a feast for all his officials and servants. The army of Persia and Media and the nobles and governors of the provinces were before him, ⁴while he showed the riches of his royal glory and the splendor and pomp of his greatness for many days, 180 days. ⁵And when these days were completed, the king gave for all the people present in Susa, the citadel, both great and small, a feast lasting for seven days in the court of the garden of the king's palace. ⁶There were white cotton curtains and violet hangings fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rods and marble pillars, and also couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and precious stones. ⁷Drinks were served in golden vessels, vessels of different kinds, and the royal wine was lavished according to the bounty of the king. ⁸And drinking was according to this edict: "There is no compulsion." For the king had given orders to all the staff of his palace to do as each man desired. ⁹Queen Vashti also gave a feast for the women in the palace that belonged to King Ahasuerus.

Queen Vashti's Refusal

¹⁰On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha and Abagtha, Zethar and Carkas, the seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus, ¹¹to bring Queen Vashti before the king with her royal crown, in order to show the peoples and the princes her beauty, for she was lovely to look at. ¹²But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command delivered by the eunuchs. At this the king became enraged, and his anger burned within him.

¹³Then the king said to the wise men who knew the times (for this was the king's procedure toward all who were versed in law and judgment, ¹⁴the men next to him being Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, who saw the king's face, and sat first in the kingdom): ¹⁵"According to the law, what is to be done to Queen Vashti, because she has not performed the command of King Ahasuerus delivered by the eunuchs?" ¹⁶Then Memucan said in the presence of the king and the officials, "Not only against the king has Queen Vashti done wrong, but also against all the officials and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. ¹⁷For the queen's behavior will be made known to all women, causing them to

look at their husbands with contempt, since they will say, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, and she did not come.'¹⁸This very day the noble women of Persia and Media who have heard of the queen's behavior will say the same to all the king's officials, and there will be contempt and wrath in plenty.¹⁹If it please the king, let a royal order go out from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes so that it may not be repealed, that Vashti is never again to come before King Ahasuerus. And let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she.²⁰So when the decree made by the king is proclaimed throughout all his kingdom, for it is vast, all women will give honor to their husbands, high and low alike."²¹This advice pleased the king and the princes, and the king did as Memucan proposed.²²He sent letters to all the royal provinces, to every province in its own script and to every people in its own language, that every man be master in his own household and speak according to the language of his people.

Introduction

In celebration of Adolf Hitler's fiftieth birthday, Nazi Party Chancellor Martin Bormann oversaw the construction of what is famously called the "Eagle's Nest." Hitler was afraid of heights and claustrophobic, making the Eagle's Nest, which sits on the edge of a mountaintop and requires an elevator in the middle of the mountain to reach, an odd gift. In fact, Hitler only visited the Eagle's Nest fourteen times. In reality, the Eagle's Nest was not for Hitler, but for impressing the world. The Nazis knew that when someone saw the Eagle's Nest, their perception of the German people would be one of power.

In many ways the perception one received from looking at the Eagle's Nest was true. The Germans were indeed a strong and mighty force. But many of the perceptions of power the Nazis created were simply not true. For example, seeing old clips of the Nazis marching in perfect harmony gives the false impression that their regime was more organized than they actually were. In fact, the combination of these marches along with Hitler's propaganda speeches gave the German people the false impression that Hitler was a man in control, a man who could lead the German people. The reality was something much different.

Appearances do not always correlate to the way things really are. Do you see things in this world that appear to be powerful, or in control, but in reality are not? What do these institutions or people use to project an image of power? Are they really in control?

First Reading: *Observations*

1. What questions do you have concerning this text? For example, "Why is this point important?" "How does this verse relate to that verse?" "Should we view this character as a model?" etc.

2. List all characters in the text and whether they are major or minor characters.

3. What role or contribution does each of these characters play in the story?

4. Where does this scene take place? Include any descriptions about the setting that you find significant, odd, or confusing.

5. What “plot twists” do you see in this passage?

Second Reading: *Taking a Deeper Look*

The author introduces King Ahasuerus within a specific time frame. In verses 3 and 5 we are told of two different feasts that Ahasuerus hosted. Historically, these feasts line up with feasts Ahasuerus put on to gain support for a military campaign against Greece. This military campaign, however, was a failure (fictionally depicted in the movie 300). To the original readers Ahasuerus was well known for this defeat at the hands of Greece, and would have been aware that these feasts took place before his humiliating loss.⁶

1. Based upon this historical information and the way you see Ahasuerus described in the passage, how would you characterize Ahasuerus?

2. Contrast Ahasuerus with how the New Testament teaches husbands to love their wives (see Eph. 5:22–33; Col. 3:18–19).

If a Jew lived in Persia (or anywhere other than the land of Israel) at this time, they were known as living in what is called “the Diaspora” (i.e., the Dispersion), titled such because they were dispersed throughout the world. Because the Jews of the Diaspora had lost their Promised Land, monarchy (Davidic king), and temple, there were numerous theological and religious questions being asked by the people of that day. In 1:1–9 the text refers to each one of these lost items. First, verse 1 speaks of the Persian kingdom from India to Ethiopia, consequently over the land of Israel. Second, in verse 1–2 there is a Persian king, not a Davidic king, who is sitting on his “royal throne in Susa, the citadel,” not Jerusalem. And third, in verses 1:6–7 the author gives an incredible explanation of the décor that surrounded the feast. In fact, the explanation is so incredible that the only description

⁶ Ibid., 60–63.

aesthetically comparable is that of the tabernacle and temple (Exodus 25–28; 1 Kings 7; 2 Chron. 3–4).

3. Look at 1:1–9. For the Jews living in this time period, what kind of impression would this reality have upon them? What impression does the description in these verses give you?

4. Do you see things in the present time that remind you of the way the king hosted this feast? Note that this does not have to be governmental. It could be a boss, a co-worker, friend, parent, even your own life.

5. What does the king's first edict in 1:8 reveal?

6. The king's second edict, which he gives through the advice of Memucan, begins a pattern seen in the rest of the book. Read the rest of the edicts and commands Ahasuerus gives in 2:1–4; 3:7–11; 7:7–10; 8:3–8. What is similar about each of these?

7. Looking specifically at the king's edict in 1:19–22, what does this edict reveal about the king's ability to be master or ruler?

8. Comparing the way Ahasuerus appears in 1:1–9 with what his edict reveals about his capability to rule, do you see anything in our present day that is similar to this? Once again this question is not limited to government persons.

9. The book of Esther is the only book in the Bible that never mentions God in the entire book. In light of this, one could say that in Esther God is hidden. However, when we look at the work as a whole we consistently see things work out for the good of God's people. What is the significance of the appearances and perceptions of Ahasuerus and God's apparent hiddenness?

10. Have you ever felt as though God was hidden in your life? How does this passage speak to that experience?

Third Reading: *Concluding Study*

1. What do you think the main point/message of this passage is?

2. How do you think this passage primarily applies to your life?

For Those Who Want More

Summary of the Plot

King Ahasuerus, the king of Persia, is introduced, and shown to be an extremely rich and pompous king. While holding two different feasts, the first of which lasts 180 days and the second 7, the king shows off all his riches to the people. One of the treasures he wishes to display is Queen Vashti. However, Queen Vashti refuses to come. The king therefore banishes her from before him and ironically issues an edict throughout all of Persia for husbands to be master in their own homes.

Important Points from the Text

Numerous things in this passage show the reader that Ahasuerus is not truly in control. First, through the knowledge the original readers would have of the feasts, the author is depicting a king whose apparent rule is not as powerful as it seems.

Second, within the Diaspora one of the theological and religious questions being asked was, “Is God present outside of Israel and without the temple?” Through the explanation of the feasts put on by Ahasuerus the author is setting up a competing “god.” From a visual perspective the author is showing us that it would seem that the king is the one who rules here. However, as events unfold it is clear that this seemingly hidden God remains the ruler.

Third, the king’s edict in 1:19–22 originated from someone else’s words. Furthermore, the edict was written because Vashti would not obey her husband, and states that every man should be master in his own household (1:22), ironically showing that Ahasuerus himself was not able to do this, and is in fact not the master of his household, let alone the kingdom.

There are three different feasts that are mentioned in this passage. Pay attention to feasting throughout, as it will play a thematic role in the book.

Esther 1:19 is extremely similar to 1 Samuel 15:28, when King Saul is told that he is going to be replaced by another “who is better than you.” The replacement for King Saul ends up being King David. Two things should be gleaned from this. First, throughout the book of Esther we need to pay attention to the relationship this book has with King Saul and his failure. Second, there is some typology that is in play here between David as king, Esther as queen/savior of the Jewish people, and Jesus as the Davidic King who saves his people (see below under *Christological and Theological Points*).

Other Ways This Passage Speaks into Our Lives

To which things do you attribute worth? The king’s feast was littered with what many view as valuable things. However, these aesthetically pleasing items are not where we should find worth.

Do you believe that God is always present? There are numerous power structures set up in our world that could lead one to believe God is not in control. We must remember, however, that God's presence is a reality that is not dependent upon anything except His personhood. God is always present, and He is always in control.

Relation to Main Story Line of Esther

As mentioned above this introductory scene reveals the location where the Jews are living. They are not in Israel, they do not have a ruler they recognize, and in fact they have a competing "god" set up as if he were the true ruler. Since the story of Esther moves to reveal how God is ultimately in control and works for the good of His people, this section contributes to the main story line in numerous ways. First, we see how difficult the situation is for the Jews in Persia, which is about to get worse. Second, we see how absent God seems to be. But third, we see how this king doesn't seem to be in control after all, and we already see events starting to shift towards God providentially raising up Esther to be queen.

Christological and Theological Points

As mentioned above, 1:19 is extremely similar to 1 Samuel 15:28, when King Saul is told that he is going to be replaced by another "who is better than you." The replacement for King Saul ends up being King David. Saul was replaced because he failed to follow God's command against the Amalekites (which the character Haman in Esther descends from). Vashti is replaced because according to the standards of the Persian Empire she failed. When we look throughout biblical history we see people constantly failing to live up to the standards of another King, namely God. Esther is the story of one "better than" Vashti coming to the throne, becoming a mediator, even if it means risking death, for a people who are going to be destroyed. The King of the universe graciously put another who is better than us in our place on the cross, so that as our mediator we would be free from condemnation. Esther is the story of God faithfully working, even when he seems hidden, to bring about a reversal for His people, which is the story of the gospel.

In Isaiah 53:2, Isaiah prophesies concerning the appearance Jesus was to have upon this earth: "He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him." Jesus' appearance upon earth was not one that caused people to believe He was in control. In fact, the act that saved the world was a humiliating death upon a cross. However, just as the book of Esther reveals that things are not as they seem, Paul explains of Christ' death, "For he himself [Christ] is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility" (Eph. 2:14-16). Christ's death was not as it seemed, as it brought about the power of salvation!

Main Point of the Passage

The easily influenced king, though appearing to be in control, is not!

Final Application Summary

Trust that God is fully in control, even when He seems hidden.

PRAYER REQUESTS

Study #3: Esther 2:1–18

Week 3 - **Week of September 26th**

Community Group calendar: **Study #3**

Text: **Esther 2:1–18**

Ways in which you will interact with the text:

- Personal study
- Listen to sermon preached on September 25th
- Group discussion during week of September 26th

Esther 2:1–18 *English Standard Version (ESV)*

Esther Chosen Queen

¹After these things, when the anger of King Ahasuerus had abated, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her. ²Then the king's young men who attended him said, "Let beautiful young virgins be sought out for the king. ³And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom to gather all the beautiful young virgins to the harem in Susa the capital, under custody of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women. Let their cosmetics be given them. ⁴And let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." This pleased the king, and he did so.

⁵Now there was a Jew in Susa the citadel whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish, a Benjaminite, ⁶ who had been carried away from Jerusalem among the captives carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away. ⁷He was bringing up Hadassah, that is Esther, the daughter of his uncle, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman had a beautiful figure and was lovely to look at, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter. ⁸So when the king's order and his edict were proclaimed, and when many young women were gathered in Susa the citadel in custody of Hegai, Esther also was taken into the king's palace and put in custody of Hegai, who had charge of the women. ⁹And the young woman pleased him and won his favor. And he quickly provided her with her cosmetics and her portion of food, and with seven chosen young women from the king's palace, and advanced her and her young women to the best place in the harem. ¹⁰ Esther had not made known her people or kindred, for Mordecai had commanded her not to make it known. ¹¹And every day Mordecai walked in front of the court of the harem to learn how Esther was and what was happening to her.

¹²Now when the turn came for each young woman to go in to King Ahasuerus, after being twelve months under the regulations for the women, since this was the regular period of their beautifying, six months with oil of myrrh and six months with spices and ointments for women—¹³when the young woman went in to the king in this way, she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the harem to the king's palace. ¹⁴In the evening she would go in, and in the morning she would return to the second harem in custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch, who was in charge of the concubines. She would not go in to the king again, unless the king delighted in her and she was summoned by name.

¹⁵When the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his own daughter, to go in to the king, she asked for nothing except what Hegai the king's eunuch, who had charge of the women, advised. Now Esther was winning favor in the eyes of all who saw her. ¹⁶And when Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign,¹⁷ the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she won grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. ¹⁸Then the king gave a great feast for all his officials and servants; it was Esther's feast. He also granted a remission of taxes to the provinces and gave gifts with royal generosity.

Introduction

In the film *The Princess Bride* the character Humperdinck was a conniving and selfish king-to-be. Though he was a powerful man, he desired more. In order to consolidate this power, Humperdinck thought up a plan where he would marry the most beautiful woman in the land, murder her, and blame the Guilder-ites for the murder. Humperdinck knew that his people would be so enraged by the murder that they could easily be rallied for war, resulting in further power for Humperdinck.

It just so happened that the most beautiful lady in the land was a peasant farm-girl named Buttercup. Buttercup was poor, but was in love with and loved by a man of unparalleled honor, courage, and self-sacrifice, Westley.

Though the evil prince and the beloved peasant were worlds apart, "fortune" would have it that Buttercup became entangled in Humperdinck's scheming, and the peasant girl found herself advanced to near-royalty at Humperdinck's whim. Her only hope for survival was Westley's courageous, undying, and selfless love for her.

In Esther chapter 1, we are introduced to the most powerful man in the world at the time, Ahasuerus, while in chapter 2 we are introduced to one of the most vulnerable people in the world, a beautiful Jewish orphan named Esther. As chapter 2 unfolds, we see their two worlds collide, resulting in this Jewish orphan exalted to be Queen of Persia, an influential position God's people will soon depend on.

First Reading: *Observations*

1. What questions do you have concerning this text? For example, "Why is this point important?" "How does this verse relate to that verse?" "Should we view this character as a model?" etc.

2. List all characters mentioned in the text and whether they are major or minor characters.

3. What role or contribution does each of these characters play in the story?

4. Where does this scene take place? Include any descriptions about the setting that you find significant, odd, or confusing.

5. What “plot twists” do you see in this passage?

Second Reading: *Taking a Deeper Look*

One of the interesting things about this passage is the use of language that is often associated with the characteristics of God. Through comparing the ways the different characters display these characteristics, one will come to a better knowledge of God’s love toward His people, and His work in the book of Esther.

1. When reading through this passage, how important is the king’s pleasure and displeasure? Why and which verses make you think so?

2. Though numerous passages could be used, compare Psalm 69:30–33 with this passage. How does the king’s pleasure contrast with what pleases God?

3. In 2:1 we see Ahasuerus’s anger abate before he remembers what Vashti had done in chapter 1 and the edict he decreed against her. Compare Ahasuerus’s remembrance and actions that ensued with God’s remembrance and actions towards his rebellious people in Psalm 106:32–48. (See also Genesis 9:15–16, Exodus 6:5, and Leviticus 26:42–45 for other instances of God remembering.)

One of the most difficult things about applying and understanding this passage is thinking through the morality of Esther’s actions. Jobes points out, “Esther’s marriage to the Gentile king has been the most troublesome moral problem for Jewish interpreters because it so clearly violates the Torah’s prohibition of intermarriage (e.g., Deut. 7:3). . . . Unfortunately, the text does not commend

Esther's obedience to those laws. She does not rise to her high position by consistent obedience to the law of God, the way, for instance, Joseph did in Egypt when he refused the sexual advances of Potiphar's wife and spent harsh years in an Egyptian prison as a result."⁷ Whether or not Esther made the right moral decision is not actually possible for us to know, because the text does not tell us.

4. Because of the information given above, it is important that we don't focus on Esther's morality in this text. What do you think should be our focus when looking at this text?

5. Read Ezekiel 16:1–14. What similarities can you draw between Esther and Israel, and Mordecai and God in Esther 2:5–11?

6. Furthermore, what do you notice about the reasons for Esther's beautification in 2:1–18, and Israel's beautification in Ezekiel 16?

7. Read Esther 2:1–4 and 2:15–16. Based on these verses, who or what determine Ahasuerus's actions in this passage?

In 2:16–17 Esther enters the king's presence and the text reads: "The king loved Esther more than all the women, and she won grace and favor in his sight . . ." The words *loved*, *grace*, and *favor* are foundational words in the Old Testament for God's covenant love for Israel.

- *Love*: this is often used for Yahweh's affection for Israel.
- *Grace*: this is translated from the word *hesed*, which is used of God's loyal, covenant love despite Israel's sinfulness.
- *Favor*: this is often used in pleas for God's favor and blessing in the midst of trial and temptation.

8. Read Exodus 34:6–7 and Esther 4:10–11. Given Ahasuerus's reaction to Vashti and subsequent actions, and noticing that Esther thinks she could be killed if she goes before Ahasuerus, and that Esther has not been called to see him for thirty days, do you believe the king displays these characteristics in a way similar to God? Why or why not?

⁷ Ibid., 113.

9. We learned in the second study that many people questioned God's presence outside the land of Israel. However, after looking at Exodus 34:6–7 why do you think the text uses these strong covenantal terms when referring to Ahasuerus? In other words, what does the text's use of these words tell us about God's sovereignty?

Third Reading: *Concluding Study*

1. What do you think the main point/message of this passage is?
2. How do you think this passage primarily applies to your life?

For Those Who Want More

Summary of the Plot

The most powerful king in the world seeks to repair his image by deposing his resistant queen and replacing her with the most beautiful girl in the city. Through impossibilities and absurdities, an orphaned Jew is chosen, and is exalted to the place of queen. Through much irony, the author demonstrates that God's steadfast love is accomplishing His aim despite Ahasuerus and his petty anger.

Important Points from the Text

The time lapse between chapters 1 and 2 is dramatic. "Vashti refused to come to King [Ahasuerus] in the third year of his reign, 483 B.C. Esther was made queen in the seventh year of his reign, 479 B.C. (2:16–17). During the intervening years [Ahasuerus] was off fighting a disastrous war with Greece."⁸

Once again we see Ahasuerus being influenced by others to issue a command (vv. 2–4). Furthermore, Esther's exaltation to the throne was heavily aided by the advice of the eunuch Hegai (vv. 8–9). This further reveals that Ahasuerus is not truly in control.

Mordecai's lineage is strikingly similar to that of King Saul in 1 Samuel 9. This will become increasingly important, as the enemy of Mordecai, Haman, descends from Agag, the king whom Saul failed to kill leading to the kingdom being taken from him. Moreover, as the story develops the Saul-and-Agag parallels lead one to understand the war of Esther 9 to be a fulfilling of the war Saul failed to fully carry out in 1 Samuel 15.

Esther is thrown a feast in 2:18. As we will discuss in a later study, feasts are extremely important for the Jewish identity. In fact, Esther's partaking of this feast indicates further that she is not yet following the law of God.

⁸ Ibid., 94.

The only truly admirable male character is Mordecai. His adoption of and steadfast concern for Esther demonstrates God's love for us in the midst of terrible circumstances.

Other Ways This Passage Speaks into Our Lives

What do you desire? Do your desires line up with God's humble, self-sacrificing, and holy desires and actions on behalf of sinful, selfish people? Are your desires marked by vanity, lust, and impish self-gratification?

Who are your advisors? We are all petty kings seeking to increase our puny kingdoms. Who do you surround yourself with when in need of advice? Lascivious advisors, like Ahasuerus's young council, or men, like Mordecai? Seek out wise, mature, Godly, Christ-centered people who can advise you when you're unsure of what to do, and who can speak into your life when you're blindly campaigning for yourself.

What circumstances are too great for God? We are never outside of the jurisdiction of God; our circumstances are never too difficult for Jesus, who is authoritative over heaven and earth. The king, though inestimably powerful, was fickle and impressionable under immature advisors and a clever eunuch. Esther, though orphaned as a child, came under the loving care of Mordecai during the exile. Further, Esther was chosen out of all the young women in Susa, despite being an immigrant Jew. God used all these absurdities to advance Esther to a position of influence.

Relation to Main Story Line of Esther

This section introduces Mordecai and Esther, as well as continues to show us how decadent and fickle Ahasuerus is.

Christological and Theological Points

Our circumstances are dire. We live in a world in which sin reigns, and each one of us is by nature a child of wrath (Eph. 2:3). We desire things that are wrong, love people for the wrong reasons, and seek our own pleasure above the pleasure of God and others. However, Paul tells us in Titus 3:3-7, "For we ourselves were one foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life." God's grace worked amidst our grime.

Main Point of the Passage

God's grace works amidst grime.

Final Application Summary

There is no dark corner of our lives that God is afraid to tread, to rescue us from our petty, lustful, idolatrous desires.

PRAYER REQUESTS

Study #4: Esther 2:19–23

Week 4 - **Week of October 3rd**

Community Group calendar: **Study #4**

Text: **Esther 2:19–23**

Ways in which you will interact with the text:

- Personal study
- Listen to sermon preached on October 2nd
- Group discussion during week of October 3rd

Esther 2:19–23 *English Standard Version (ESV)*

Mordecai Discovers a Plot

¹⁹Now when the virgins were gathered together the second time, Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate. ²⁰Esther had not made known her kindred or her people, as Mordecai had commanded her, for Esther obeyed Mordecai just as when she was brought up by him. ²¹In those days, as Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, became angry and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. ²²And this came to the knowledge of Mordecai, and he told it to Queen Esther, and Esther told the king in the name of Mordecai. ²³When the affair was investigated and found to be so, the men were both hanged on the gallows. And it was recorded in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.

Introduction

Have you ever had anything happen to you that seemed insignificant at the time, but in the end worked out for tremendous good? A young couple in Chicago (let's call them Jacob and Ruth) have. On April 17, 2007, Jacob took part in an intramural softball game. At the time of the game Jacob and Ruth were going through hardships in their dating relationship. Due to the stress of school and Jacob's immature understanding of love, their relationship had become strained. However, something happened during that softball game that unexpectedly strengthened their relationship on to marriage. While Jacob was waiting in line to bat, one of his teammates accidentally let go of the steel bat during his swing. The bat flung through the air, striking Jacob directly in the mouth. After Jacob was rushed to the hospital, it soon became clear that he was going to need surgery. Though he thankfully had not lost any of his teeth, he had shattered his maxilla and needed it to be put back together quickly.

Due to the seriousness of the injury, Jacob had to take time off school as he slowly recovered. During this time, Ruth also took time off school in order to care for her ailing boyfriend. It was then, when they were able to be away from the stress of school, able to realize that love is not just a feeling but an action, that Jacob and Ruth's relationship was strengthened. To this day they thank God for that incident, knowing that though it seemed insignificant to their relationship at the time, God used it to move them toward marriage.

In Esther 2:19–23 we witness an event take place that seems completely insignificant to the story line. However, when we recognize this passage's significance to the rest of the story, we see God's sovereignty at work.

First Reading: *Observations*

1. What questions do you have concerning this text? For example, “Why is this point important?” “How does this verse relate to that verse?” “Should we view this character as a model?” etc.
2. List all characters mentioned in the text and whether they are major or minor characters.
3. What role or contribution does each of these characters play in the story?
4. Where does this scene take place? Include any descriptions about the setting that you find significant, odd, or confusing.
5. What “plot twists” do you see in this passage?

Second Reading: *Taking a Deeper Look*

1. What information is given in this passage that we have already seen in 2:1–18?
2. As far as this passage is concerned, does this repetition seem significant?
3. Repetition is important in the Bible for highlighting things that the reader should notice. Read 3:8–11; 4:12–17; 7:1–6. Why do you think this repeated information is important for us to remember?

4. The clause in verses 19 and 21, “Mordecai was sitting at the king’s gate,” “refers to holding an official position in the court.”⁹ Mordecai’s position, therefore, enabled him to be able to overhear a plot to kill the king. What other character in this story uses their position to save the king?

5. When Esther informs the king of the assassination plot, the text says that “Esther told the king in the name of Mordecai.” As far as this passage is concerned, does this detail seem to be important?

7. Read 6:1–11. In light of this passage, does the detail mentioned in question 6 seem important? How does this affect our understanding of this entire passage?

8. “Acts of loyalty were usually rewarded immediately and generously by Persian kings.”¹⁰ Read 3:1. What is surprising about this verse in light of what we know from 2:19–23, and this historical information?

9. What does this passage teach us about God’s providence? What does it teach us about seemingly insignificant events in our lives?

10. Read Luke 24:13–27. How did these two individuals view Christ’s death on the cross? However, what was the result of that death?

Third Reading: Concluding Study

1. What do you think the main point/message of this passage is?

2. How do you think this passage primarily applies to your life?

⁹ Ibid., 118.

¹⁰ Ibid.

For Those Who Want More

Summary of the Plot

In this seemingly peripheral event in the book of Esther, the king's life is put in danger as two eunuchs seek to kill him. Mordecai, however, overhears their plan and informs Esther, who in turn informs the king in the name of Mordecai. The eunuchs are hung, but nothing is done for Mordecai. That is, not until much later in the story.

Important Points from the Text

As stated above, this text continues to portray King Ahasuerus as a ruler who is not truly in control. It illustrates further the corruption and decay that has infiltrated his power structure beneath him, how even some of those closest to him in his own royal court are seeking a way to destroy him.

We are told once again that Esther has not made herself known to her people. This repetition means that this is an important point the author wants us to grasp.

Esther does not hesitate to use her position to save the king. This is important since Mordecai will command her in 4:8 to use her position to beg for the life of the Jews. What is surprising is that Esther first refuses Mordecai's command in 4:8, where in 2:19–23 she seems to have no problem going before the king.

This passage gives us a glimpse into how Ahasuerus reacts to those who defy him. This is helpful for understanding Esther's fear to go before the king in chapter 4, along with the king's quick decision to hang Haman.

It is significant to note that immediately following this passage, we meet a new character named Haman, whom we know nothing about. He is advanced to a position of high authority by the king. The irony of this is that Mordecai is the one who should be rewarded and advanced.

Haman's statement in 3:8 "that it is not to the king's profit to tolerate [the Jews]" is actually wrong. The fact is that it is in his profit, if the king would only consider the significant recent event of Mordecai saving his life.

Other Ways This Speaks into Our Lives

The reality of Ahasuerus's kingdom, and the reality of the structures and principalities that govern and exercise dominion over many aspects of life in our day, is that they are given to corruption and depravity from within. Whether it be a government eroding from within, or the abuse and dishonor an oppressive husband might force on his wife, the corruption and decay in power is often as complex as it is ugly and messy. What we see in Esther, particularly in our passage, is the silent and almost invisible presence of God's work amongst such a situation of power decay within Ahasuerus's court.

Relation to Main Story Line of Esther

This passage continues to carry along the idea that though God is not mentioned, His presence is made clear by the orchestration of events for the good of His people. Furthermore, though this passage is brief, its importance for the reversal of fortune beginning in chapter 6 cannot be denied.

That Mordecai overheard this plot and that Esther told it to the king in Mordecai's name moves the story toward Mordecai's eventual exaltation, and the fall of the enemy of the Jews, Haman.

Christological and Theological Points

Two thousand years ago, a Jewish man in his early thirties was crucified on a Roman cross. This man had been extremely influential to people within Israel; some even thought that He was the promised Messiah. However, His crucifixion seemed to tell the people that their hopes had been wrongly placed. If this man was dead, how could He be the promised Messiah? Jesus' death upon the cross seemed almost insignificant. However, it was precisely in this event, an event that appears horrible, that we find our life. For it is in Jesus' death upon that cross, and His resurrection from the dead, that sin and death no longer have a hold upon us.

Main Point of the Passage

Even seemingly insignificant events have God's hand behind them.

Final Application Summary

Trust that the Lord is at work in the midst of even the most "insignificant" events.

PRAYER REQUESTS

Study #5: Esther 3:1–15

Week 5 - **Week of October 10th**

Community Group calendar: **Study #5**

Text: **Esther 3:1–15**

Ways in which you will interact with the text:

- Personal study
- Listen to sermon preached on October 9th
- Group discussion during week of October 10th

Esther 3:1–15 *English Standard Version (ESV)*

Haman Plots Against the Jews

¹After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, and advanced him and set his throne above all the officials who were with him. ²And all the king's servants who were at the king's gate bowed down and paid homage to Haman, for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage. ³Then the king's servants who were at the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why do you transgress the king's command?" ⁴And when they spoke to him day after day and he would not listen to them, they told Haman, in order to see whether Mordecai's words would stand, for he had told them that he was a Jew. ⁵And when Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage to him, Haman was filled with fury. ⁶But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone. So, as they had made known to him the people of Mordecai, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus.

⁷In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that is, they cast lots) before Haman day after day; and they cast it month after month till the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar. ⁸Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom. Their laws are different from those of every other people, and they do not keep the king's laws, so that it is not to the king's profit to tolerate them. ⁹If it please the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed, and I will pay 10,000 talents of silver into the hands of those who have charge of the king's business, that they may put it into the king's treasuries." ¹⁰ So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. ¹¹And the king said to Haman, "The money is given to you, the people also, to do with them as it seems good to you."

¹² Then the king's scribes were summoned on the thirteenth day of the first month, and an edict, according to all that Haman commanded, was written to the king's satraps and to the governors over all the provinces and to the officials of all the peoples, to every province in its own script and every people in its own language. It was written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king's signet ring. ¹³Letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with instruction to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods. ¹⁴ A copy of the document was to be issued as a decree in every province by proclamation to all the peoples to be ready for that day. ¹⁵ The couriers went out hurriedly by order of the king, and the decree was issued

in Susa the citadel. And the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Susa was thrown into confusion.

Introduction

The events of Esther 3 appear to be ushering in a “Dark Age” for God’s people: an edict from the king has been issued calling for their annihilation. Given that King Ahasuerus’s kingdom included the land of Israel, this edict if carried out would result in the death of every single Jew in the world. Clearly, a people in such a position need to recognize the stark and real danger they face as a people. However, this is also the time to trust that God will deliver His people from the impending, seemingly certain murderous plans of their enemy. Could it be that their “Finest Hour” is yet to come?

In 1940, Britain faced similar circumstances. British forces had battled the Nazis in France, but had to withdraw back to England in defeat. The British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, gave many stirring speeches during those dark days of World War II when the very future of the British people hung in the balance, including a speech on June 18, 1940:

I expect that the battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization. Upon it depends our own British life, and the long continuity of our institutions and our Empire. The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, “This was their Finest Hour.”

Esther 3 sets up the very real potential of the “Dark Age” for the complete destruction of God’s people. But the events of Esther 3 also set up the possibility that Winston Churchill–type leaders will step up, trusting that God will deliver His people from their enemies, and in fact ensure their “Finest Hour” is yet to come.

First Reading: Observations

1. What questions do you have concerning this text? For example, “Why is this point important?” “How does this verse relate to that verse?” “Should we view this character as a model?” etc.

2. List all characters mentioned in the text and whether they are major or minor characters.

3. What role or contribution does each of these characters play in the story?

4. Where does this scene take place? Include any descriptions about the setting that you find significant, odd, or confusing.

5. What “plot twists” do you see in this passage?

Second Reading: *Taking a Deeper Look*

There have been many different explanations put forward for why Mordecai refuses to bow down to Haman. Many have argued that it was religious reasons. In other words, Mordecai refuses to bow down because he is unwilling to pay homage to one other than God. However, Jobs points out, “It is known from other sources that in general, Jews did bow to pagan officials of the Persian court. It was not a religious act but one of court protocol, much as moderns still curtsy or bow to the British queen. This suggests that Mordecai’s refusal was not religiously motivated, but personal and specific to Haman. . . . [Therefore, in order to know why Mordecai did not bow down we need to note that] in Hebrew narrative the characteristic described when a character is introduced is key to understanding his or her role in the story.”¹¹

1. Compare 1 Samuel 9:1–2 with Esther 2:5. What do you notice?

2. Compare 1 Samuel 15:1–11 with Esther 3:1. What do you notice?

3. Read Exodus 17:14–15. Based upon the introduction of Haman, what should our immediate impression of Haman be?

4. Based on the historical information given above and what you noticed in questions 1, 2, and 3, why do you think Mordecai refused to bow to Haman?

¹¹ Ibid., 119.

5. What is similar about the way Haman desires to punish Mordecai, and the way Ahasuerus punishes Vashti's defiance in chapter 1?
6. Read 3:7–11. What is similar about the way Ahasuerus is involved in the issuing of this edict, with how he has been involved in the other edicts and commands in the book? (See 1:13–22.)
7. How does Haman convince Ahasuerus that the Jews should be punished? How does this apply to you?
8. In 3:12–15 we learn that this edict to annihilate all Jews was issued on the thirteenth day of the first month. Within Jewish history, this date is significant as it marks the eve of the Passover. The Passover is important for the Jews, since it marks the time when God saved his people from slavery. What do you think the timing of this edict might signify?
9. When you are faced with difficult circumstances, what promises do you rely on? What is it that truly gives you hope in this world?

Third Reading: *Concluding Study*

1. What do you think the main point/message of this passage is?
2. How do you think this passage primarily applies to your life?

For Those Who Want More

Summary of the Plot

Despite Mordecai's actions in 2:19–23, Haman is exalted and honored. Not only does the king advance Haman but demands that all his officials kneel down to pay honor to him as well. When Mordecai refuses to bow down, Haman becomes enraged. This event provokes Haman's wrath against the whole Jewish race, and he uses the king to issue an edict on the eve of Passover to kill all the Jews.

Important Points from the Text

The connections with Saul and Agag are vital for understanding Mordecai's refusal to bow down to Haman. Furthermore, since the reader should see Haman as an enemy of God as soon as they read his genealogy, this also helps us think through the war which takes place later, in Esther 9.

This story deals with the question of how God's promises to His people will stand against the scheming forces of human pride and sin that seek to destroy God's people. Since God's people are in exile, the question might be further clarified. Even though God's people have failed to uphold their end of the covenant that God made with them after delivering them out of Egypt, will God uphold his promise to protect Israel and to be at war with Amalek in every generation (Ex. 17:8–16)?

Though the connections with Passover do bring up the question of God's faithfulness, we must also see the hope that is made available through this connection. Though God's people are being threatened by their ancient enemies, the date of this edict reminds the reader of God's promises to His people.

It is very important to see the connection with the Passover in this text. Passover was the feast that celebrated and commemorated God's action on behalf of Israel in Egypt to deliver them from their bondage. It is a core moment in history for the Jews' identification of themselves as God's people.

Other Ways This Speaks into Our Lives

Christians face similar choices between conformity and faithfulness to God every day. The very nature of our identity with Christ requires that we stand out in certain ways, and in some cases it necessitates opposition against some outside force. Instead of just going along with every whim and trend that comes with our cultural context, we need to be critical and intentionally observant of what we embrace and what we choose to refrain from as the people of God (see Eph. 4:14). This kind of living will invite hostility from those who would benefit from our conformity.

Relation to Main Story Line of Esther

This chapter sets up the true conflict of the story. Up until this point, things have gone relatively smoothly, at least for Mordecai, Esther, and the rest of the Jews. Now we are introduced to Haman, who descends from Israel's ancient enemies, and a true threat to all the people of God develops. It is this problem that the rest of the story will combat, and ultimately reverse.

Christological and Theological Points

Just as the Jews in Persia lived among people who hated them, so also does Christ declare that because of our identity in Christ, people will hate us. This is the promise that Jesus gives his disciples in John 17 while he is praying for them. However, when we read these passages, when we see God's people condemned to death, it is at these times that we must rely upon the promises given to us. Jesus says, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14:1–3). Jesus' active obedience, death, and resurrection guarantee us that though we will face many dark days, hope lies at the end of the tunnel.

Main Point of the Passage

God's enemies will continually attack, but God has promised to save and deliver His people.

Final Application Summary

Depend on God's promises in spite of hard circumstances.

PRAYER REQUESTS

Study #6: Esther 4:1–17

Week 6 - **Week of October 17th**

Community Group calendar: **Study #6**

Text: **Esther 4:1–17**

Ways in which you will interact with the text:

- Personal study
- Listen to sermon preached on October 16th
- Group discussion during week of October 17th

Esther 4:1–17 *English Standard Version (ESV)*

Esther Agrees to Help the Jews

¹When Mordecai learned all that had been done, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and he cried out with a loud and bitter cry. ²He went up to the entrance of the king's gate, for no one was allowed to enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth. ³And in every province, wherever the king's command and his decree reached, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and many of them lay in sackcloth and ashes.

⁴When Esther's young women and her eunuchs came and told her, the queen was deeply distressed. She sent garments to clothe Mordecai, so that he might take off his sackcloth, but he would not accept them. ⁵Then Esther called for Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs, who had been appointed to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mordecai to learn what this was and why it was. ⁶Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate, ⁷and Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the exact sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews. ⁸Mordecai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her and command her to go to the king to beg his favor and plead with him on behalf of her people. ⁹And Hathach went and told Esther what Mordecai had said. ¹⁰Then Esther spoke to Hathach and commanded him to go to Mordecai and say, ¹¹“All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law—to be put to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter so that he may live. But as for me, I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days.”

¹²And they told Mordecai what Esther had said. ¹³Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, “Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. ¹⁴For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” ¹⁵Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, ¹⁶“Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.” ¹⁷Mordecai then went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.

Introduction

In the movie *The Nanny Diaries*, the main character Annie Braddock, recently graduated with a degree in anthropology, finds herself interviewing for a position at a big, New York corporation. During the interview, Annie finds herself completely stumped when the interviewer asks her the simple question, “Who exactly is Annie Braddock?” Annie begins the answer confidently, but quickly finds herself struggling to answer. After stumbling over her words Annie exclaims, “I have absolutely no idea. Excuse me.” Leaving the interview, Annie is in somewhat of a panic, admitting to herself, “Of course, I knew all the basic facts—date of birth, hometown, socio-economic makeup—but I didn’t really know who I was, where I fit in, who I was going to be.”

Knowing our own identity takes more than simply knowing specific facts about ourselves. Up until this point in the book of Esther, it appears as if Esther would have equally failed in being able to answer seemingly basic questions surrounding her identity. Though Esther would have been able to list numerous facts about herself, it is not until chapter 4 that we finally see Esther understand who she really is.

First Reading: *Observations*

1. What questions do you have concerning this text? For example, “Why is this point important?” “How does this verse relate to that verse?” “Should we view this character as a model?” etc.

2. List all characters in the text and whether they are major or minor characters.

3. What role or contribution does each of these characters play in the story?

4. Where does this scene take place? Include any descriptions about the setting that you find significant, odd, or confusing.

5. What “plot twists” do you see in this passage?

Second Reading: *Taking a Deeper Look*

1. As previously explained, God is never directly mentioned in the book of Esther. However, considering the passage as a whole how do you detect God’s presence?

2. How would you characterize Mordecai and the Jews' reaction to the edict in 4:1–3?

3. How would you characterize Esther in verses 4–11?

4. Why is Esther distressed in verse 4?

5. Looking specifically at 4:1–11, and based on your characterization of the Jews and Esther in the previous questions, does it appear Esther is identifying with the Jewish people at this point? Why or why not?

Due to the traumatic nature of the exile the Jewish people clung on to certain “identity markers.” These identity markers were things that were unique to the Jewish people, and therefore set them apart from the other nations. The three major identity markers were circumcision, Sabbath, and food laws. Unlike circumcision and Sabbath, food laws play a significant role in the book of Esther. If one desired to be identified as a Jew, eating meals put on by Gentiles was not advised. We have already seen numerous feasts throughout Esther, however the Jews have organized none of them.

6. In our text do you find anything that would contribute to the Jewish identity being associated with food laws?

7. In light of this what significance do you find to Esther's words in verse 16?

8. What are the possible and actual consequences of Esther choosing to act for her people?

9. Compare Esther's choice to help the Jewish people with Christ's salvific work. What parallels do you see?

10. When reading narrative stories in the Bible we often find ourselves trying to identify with characters in the story. Usually it is easy to associate with the main character in the story, and the questions that have preceded this one have focused on associating ourselves with Esther. However, in this question try to associate yourself with the Jewish people. How does their situation relate to yours?

Third Reading: *Concluding Study*

1. What do you think the main point/message of this passage is?

2. How do you think this passage primarily applies to your life?

For Those Who Want More

Summary of the Plot

As Mordecai learns of the edict issued through Haman, he and the Jews throughout the kingdom go into a state of mourning. When Esther reaches out to Mordecai he encourages her to plead for the life of her people. Esther, however, knows that to go before the king without being summoned would risk her life. Upon hearing Esther's concern Mordecai strongly explains to Esther that her position as queen and identity as a Jew demand that she take action, no matter what the risks. Esther agrees.

Important Points from the Text

This passage is famous for indicating God's sovereign activity throughout the book. One of the places God's presence is clearly indicated is through the Jews' fasting, which should be understood as them pleading with God and asking for mercy. This is furthered in 4:16, where Esther calls for a fast on her behalf among all the Jews. Since the text has already shown the reader that death is a likely result of Esther's actions, her call to fast reveals their plea that God will act to save her and the Jewish people.

Another place the author indicates God's presence is in 4:14, where Mordecai shockingly guarantees the perseverance of God's people. Mordecai's words, and presence of the Jews fasting mentioned above, show that the providential acts yet to occur are accomplished through the hand of God.

It is important that we notice the about-face that occurs in the actions of Esther between this chapter and the next. In the beginning of chapter 4 Esther is either not aware that this edict has been issued, or is aware and is too scared to act. However, after Esther makes her decisions in 4:16 we see a totally different character in the rest of the book. Esther is no longer a passive character, but is an active character working for the good of her people.

In the questions above we mentioned the importance of feasting in Esther. Prior to chapter 4, every feast the reader sees is either organized by or put on for Gentiles. However, after chapter 4 and Esther's decision to identify with the Jewish people, every single feast is either organized by or put on for Jews.

This passage finishes with Mordecai obeying Esther's commands. This is a reversal compared to the earlier passages where Mordecai commands Esther (see 2:10). This shows the reversal that has taken place in Esther's heart, and also foreshadows the complete reversal in the Jews' situation that is to come through Esther's work.

Other Ways This Speaks into Our Lives

We are dependent upon God! It is often easy to think that we can handle things on our own, but this simply is not true. In the book of Esther the Jewish people from all over the Persian kingdom weep and mourn as they await their death. Their hopes turn outward as they become dependent upon someone else. As strong as you may believe that you are, you are lost in this world if you do not depend upon God.

Relation to Main Story Line of Esther

This passage introduces the turning point in the plot. It is at this moment, when Esther truly identifies with her people, that the story begins to reverse in favor of God's people.

Christological and Theological Points

The Jews needed someone to come to their aid. Haman's decree put a death sentence upon every Jew's head. In Esther's identification with the Jewish people we see an eventual reversal take place. This is so similar to our story. Because of our sin we are a people who have a death sentence hanging over our heads. However, Jesus Christ came and identified with us by taking on flesh. While Esther says to Mordecai, "If I perish, I perish," Christ perished and rose again so that we would not have to perish.

Main Point of the Passage

Queen Esther's renewed identity as a Jew leads to her role as potential mediator.

Final Application Summary

As a person of God we must depend solely upon our Mediator, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER REQUESTS



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