

Note

Esther – Part 1 of 1

Era	Characters	Chapters
In the beginning	God created the world.	Genesis 1
Before 4000 BC	Adam & Eve	Gen 1~5
Before 3000 BC	Cain Abel Seth	Gen 4~5
Before 2500 BC	Noah	Gen 5~10
About 2000 BC	Abraham Isaac Ishmael Jacob Esau Joseph	Gen 11~50
Era of Patriarchs		
About 1500 BC~ 1000 BC Era of prophets	Moses Aaron Joshua	Exo Lev Num Deu
	Joshua	Joshua
	Judges(Othniel Ehud Shamgar Deborah Gideon Tola Jair Jephthah Ibzan Elon Abdon Samson) Abimelech	Judges
	Ruth Boaz Naomi	Ruth
	Eli Samuel Saul David	1 Samuel
	Saul Jonathan David Absalom Solomon	1 Samuel 2 Samuel
About 1000 BC ~ 500 BC Era of princes	Solomon Jeroboam Rehoboam Ahab Elijah Elisha Jehu	1 kings
	Ahab Hezekiah Manasseh Josiah Elisha Jehu Elijah	2 kings
	Saul David Solomon	1 Chronicles
	Solomon Rehoboam Asa Jehoshaphat Jehoram Joash Hezekiah Josiah	2 Chronicles
	Zerubbabel Ezra Nehemiah Haggai Zechariah	Ezra Nehemiah
About 500 BC ~Christ Era of priests	Esther Mordecai Haman Ahasuerus	Esther ?

Summary

Esther - Part 1 of 13

In the book of Esther, God's people are suffering in a foreign land and oddly, God is never mentioned in the book. However, God's presence is evident throughout the book of Esther. We get to see that the story exposes the failure in the Persian law and Haman's folly as opposed to the bravery of Esther, and the courage of Mordecai. All of these prove who God is, and how He never forsakes his elect.

The change in Esther also suggests that God was intervening to protect his people. God placed Esther in a place of influence to guide the responses of the most powerful king of their time.

The book of Esther gives us hope. God's plan for his children collaboratively is infinitely greater than any one of our stories on its own. God gave Esther the courage to embrace the risks for the sake of what is right, and we are called to do exactly the same. We have to learn how to recognise God's hand at work in every aspect of our lives, and to give Him the due thanks for His everlasting faithfulness to his children.

Transcript

Esther – Part 1 of 1

Let's now come and look at the book of Esther.

This is one of only two books named after a lady. The other is Ruth. Also, this is just one of three books written outside the promised land. Daniel, Ezekiel and Esther. And this is one of two books that has no mention of the name of God at all; the other is Song of Solomon. So, this is a very unusual book.

It's a very exciting story with a lot of ironical twists and shall we say, coincidences that take place. So, it's an interesting story. Author, unknown; time-it was about 100 years after the return from the exile. It was already a hundred years, and many of them had already gone back to Jerusalem. But as we said, many Jews never returned. They were comfortable. They had prospered in their new land. And this is a story of a Jewish community in the Persian Empire, there were Jews everywhere, literally scattered, as God said, to the four corners of the earth. The Persian Empire was a massive empire that had hundred and twenty-seven provinces-from India to Ethiopia- that's massive. And there were Jews everywhere.

In fact, according to my family history, my great grandmother was probably a Jewess. She lived in Malacca. A really large group of Jews lived in Malacca at that time and they were traders, and according to my family history, she was given the title Jewish lady. In the vernacular her name was Jewish lady. They didn't know her real name. And we know only one thing about her-she sells cloth- that's my great grandmother, probably a Jew. She was a trader, and Malacca was a big trading place.

So, Jews everywhere, wherever there was business. It tells us the Jews were scattered. This gives us a fairly good idea of the life of Jews that were scattered. Number 1, they mostly forgot the law; no priests, no Levites, they just assimilated into the culture of the place they were in. They ate food that typically Jews cannot eat. You will see Esther just eating, drinking, Mordecai eating and drinking. They married Gentiles; Esther happily married the king, I mean there was no qualms about it. They committed the same things as others. They got drunk; they murdered people. And you know, it is interesting that though they were so immersed and actually tried to be like the locals, God still remembered them. And you see in this story, though God is never mentioned at all, he still cares for them, watching over every move of Esther. Though His name is not mentioned, He is obvious behind the scenes. His finger is in everything, in every event of her life.

As Christians, sometimes we may be scattered to some far place, just like Esther, and in spite of all the failings (she forgot many of their laws, nobody taught her), God still remembers His elect people, the Jews. I hope you remember that God will remember His own although we forget Him often.

Now, Esther lived in Shushan, actually in history, Susa, S U S A. Susa was the Persian capital and she was eventually married to King Ahasuerus; from the story, all he does is drink and look at women and do silly things, and make poor decisions. He seems to be a weak character here. So this is the background of the story. Now it is 100 years later, and actually the book we just studied was Nehemiah, so it appears that this event is after Nehemiah, but it was 30 years before Nehemiah. So, it's not chronological.

Now, let's look at the first two chapters. It tells us of a huge, long 180-day party thrown by the Persian king. How to have a party for 180 days? Probably my guess is, he had 127 provinces. So, basically, he was entertaining his leaders from the different provinces. The hardest thing when you rule such a widespread empire is how to unite them. How do you assure that these guys are still part of your team? In those days there was no Wi Fi, zoom calls....so he was probably entertaining his generals, his officials to unite them and to lift up the morale.

All empires were always under threat of splitting... the Greek Empire later came, Alexander the Great wiped out the Persians. Then at the end of 180 days there was a big, shall we say, summit celebration. And all the leaders came together, had a big party and of course got drunk.

And so when King Ahasuerus got drunk on the last day, he asked for the queen to come out, and I guess, to entertain his guests. When a guy gets drunk, he doesn't do very wise things. Of course, Vashti the queen is not going to come out and dance for these guys. These people are below her. These are the officials, the generals, and she's the queen! So, she refused to come out. What happened was Ahasuerus was in a drunken rage and was so angry - What shall we do with this queen? His advisors told him that if he allowed this to happen, all their wives too, will rebel against them. "You cannot allow this to happen!" So, they deposed the queen. She was no more queen.

Actually, I think the king lost face with his generals. I mean, how can you run an empire of 127 provinces when you can't run your wife? Who will look up to you? So he probably agreed to this without, you know, any second thought. You make me lose face before my guys and this whole idea of this celebration was to make me look like the king. So she's deposed and then of course he gets lonely. And so they advise him to have a beauty pageant of the virgins, the beautiful girls in the empire.

So, they select all the beautiful girls, and Esther, this Jewish girl, was selected. Now, Esther never revealed her identity, like most Jews in the new community did not reveal their identity because of anti-Semitism. Somehow the Jews have always been persecuted. Number one, they have rather strange customs that make them unique. God gave them food laws and so on, to help them to realize they were a unique people, but then it also makes others look at them as strange. And secondly, Jewish people tend to be very independent, very strong persons. And so they knew they were going to be persecuted for their uniqueness. And they were successful in business, so people were envious, so they hid their identity.

It's very, very common. Today, a lot of people in America are actually Jews who have anglicized their names.

So Esther is selected in this contest, it's a 12-month contest. You prepare the girls, so she knows how to dress, and she smells good, and she's cleaned up in case she has some disease. And after 12 months, the king test her out, so to speak, and she won the contest. And so she is made Queen; but she never revealed her identity to the king. He thought she was a Persian girl. When she was made Queen, some interesting, cool incidents happens. Her uncle who brought her up, because she was an orphan, was sitting by the palace, and he heard two eunuchs plotting to kill the king. So, he tells Esther; Esther tells the king. And the king investigates and find it's correct. And so, Mordecai's name is recorded in the chronicles of the king but the king completely forgot about Mordecai. All these are coincidences- he was at the right place, she wins the contest, I mean of all the girls, why her, right? When the king likes somebody, he likes somebody and that's it!

Chapter three introduces a new character called Haman. Haman, interestingly enough, was promoted to be the Prime Minister. But he was not a Persian. He was an Agagite.

Now you say what in the world is that? If you go back to First Samuel 15:33 I'll give you a clue who he was. He was one of the original races of Canaan. And Samuel had told Saul, you have to destroy the Canaanites, including the Agagites. But Saul didn't do the job. So Samuel was so angry with Saul, he killed the king of Agag. So just to give you the background, there was always this enmity between Agagites and Hebrews.

Now Haman became prime minister and he expected everybody to bow to him. He was a kind of egomaniac, but Mordecai refused to bow. This is very difficult to a Jew. It's not that it's wrong to bow to a living man. Don't bow to idols. Obviously, you can bow to the king or Prime Minister but typical of Jews, he was kind of independent. He refused to bow. So Haman hated this guy who didn't give him face. Furthermore, he sensed, and he knew this guy is a Jew. So, what he does is he went to the king, "King,

there is this race of people who are very problematic. I will give you 10,000 talents of silver for the king's treasury. And let's kill all the Jews, they are a problem to me. This guy wouldn't bow to me, they are also independent, you can't rule them."

Now when you see 10,000 talents, you don't realize what it's like. I checked it out. It's 4.5 billion dollars, a lot of money. He was a super-rich guy. And he bribed the king. Of course, the king said, Why not? "4.5 billion to my royal treasury, kill these Jews." So they are drinking, and they rolled a dice to see what date to kill the Jews and the dice fell on the 13th day of the 12th month of the Persian calendar. 13th day—that's why the number 13 is bad luck. It came from this story in case you didn't know. It is the day that Jews were supposed to be killed throughout 127 provinces.

So, when the decree went out that all Jews will be killed on the 13th day of the 12 month, Mordecai started to tear his clothes, and Esther found out that Haman had bribed the king to put a decree to kill all the Jews. And so Mordecai tells Esther, you are probably put in this position for a purpose; to save your people. No name of God mentioned. She thinks about it, and she agrees. And she said, If I perish, I perish. Because when the king finds out she's a Jew, he might say 'What! I married a Jewess? you never told me that.' And furthermore, now there's a decree to kill her. She has to go to the king and do something.

But you know, in the Persian custom, nobody can approach the king unless the king calls you. And she was not called. And if you go without being called, you can lose your life. But anyway she took the risk. She went there, she stood at the door and the king called her and said, What can I do for you? She said, Can I have a party and invite you and Haman? And he said, Why not? He came for the party and wondered what the agenda is, but all she said was Let's have another bigger party tomorrow. And so Haman is like, wow, the Queen invited me twice. So he felt very proud. But on the way out, he saw Mordecai who refused to bow to him; and he said, I cannot take it. I am so high up there, and this fellow refuses to bow to me.

So he went home, he said to his family, I'm a big guy, and you know, this guy won't bow... The family said, just build a big stake and impale him on that stake. One big stake sticking out with a sharp point in the end, and that stake was like eight storeys high. And so the next day he comes for the party expecting something big. But that night before the party the king had a bout of insomnia-coincidence again. It doesn't say God's name. What is the best way to cure insomnia? To read something boring. So he asked for the records of the kingdom. So the records are brought in- scroll upon scroll upon scroll. I don't know why they brought that particular scroll, and he reads it and he finds Mordecai's name in there who saved his life. He forgot about it. And he asked, has this guy been rewarded? No... So he figured out he had to reward this guy who saved his life. You know, coincidence again.

So the next morning, Haman comes to the king, thinking, "Woah...I'm this big guy now". And then the king says, What will you do to a guy whom I want to honour? What is the right way to honour this guy really well? Haman thought it was himself because he thought that the king was going to honour him. He said, simple, King, give him your robes, give him your crown, let him ride the horse and make him noble, bring him to the streets of the capital city saying This is the honoured man.

The king said Great! Get ready to bring Mordecai. Haman got a shock. He had to do it. So he brings Mordecai around and has to declare that this is the man the king honours. This is the guy he just built a stake for yesterday to impale him and now he's has to do the opposite. So what happens is, he's already panicking when he had to do this, and he went home. He was kind of depressed and then the King's agents came and said, "Hey, don't be late, Haman. King's waiting... party time..." So, he rushes to the party.

And then at the party, Esther identifies herself for the first time. And tells the King, I'm a Jewess. And this man, Haman, wants to kill me and Mordecai, the Jew. King said, What? You want to kill my wife and you want to kill the guy I just honoured this morning? Coincidence again, right... And so in his drunken rage, he puts Haman to death. So Haman is now put on his own stake which he built for Mordecai. What happens now is, the

decree had already gone out. On the 13th day of the 12th month, all Jews can be killed. "Kill them!" Free day to kill Jews and you know people would love to do that. The Jews own the businesses. "Kill the Jew and I won't have to pay my debts." So, there was a decree on the 13th day of the 12th month to kill. In Persian culture when the decree goes out with the king's signature stamped on it, you cannot revoke it. So what did they do?

Now Mordecai is the prime minister. He's the honest guy. So they made a counter decree that the Jews could defend themselves on the 13th. And they were allowed to kill those who would kill them. Of course now everybody's afraid of the Jews. Because Mordecai is a Jew and he's the Prime Minister, he is the big guy, so many switched sides. Many who planned to kill the Jews are now on the side of the Jews and identified all those who had been planning to kill the Jews. So, instead of Jews being killed, there was a reverse. The Jews and those who now allied with them, killed the people who wanted to kill the Jews on the 14th day of the 12th month, 15th day of the 12th month, they killed all those who were planning to kill the Jews.

Interesting story, right? Many times in history there were attempts to exterminate the Jewish race. We have Pharaoh trying to kill all the male babies. There were people like Herod trying to kill all the babies. Then there was Hitler. So there's always this Satanic plot to remove the Jews. Because of Esther and all these coincidental events, the Jews were prevented from being extinct. You mustn't forget the Persian empire stretched from India to Ethiopia, basically where all the Jews have migrated to, including the promised land. In other words, if this event had taken place, and Haman had his way there'll be no Jews left; including no Jesus, because Jesus' family was within the Persian empire. Jesus descendants or ancestors were within this territory of the Persian king. So you see how God has planned all these interesting things to protect the Jews.

Now some people feel this book is so Jewish. So the 14th and 15th day of the 12th month, the Persian month, is still celebrated by the Jews. It was decreed by Mordecai that this day must always be set up. Till today the Jews celebrate it. It's called Purim. 'Pur' is the name of the dice they threw

to choose the day. So, the 13th became a bad luck day, but the dice ('Pur') became the festival of Purim, celebrated on the 14th and 15th day of that calendar. Today in Jewish communities, this is their big fun celebration. They read the story of Esther and every time the name of Haman is mentioned, they scream, they stomp their feet, they yell, and they make noise at this villain in the story. Most Jewish celebrations are sacred, very quiet, but Purim is like a party. How do you call it... it is like we were freed up from being annihilated.

So, God had made all these coincidences for them. Some people feel there is no God in this book. It's all about Jews killing people. Even Martin Luther said this book shouldn't be in the Bible. He was kind of angry and he's German... doesn't like the Jews; but we must never be anti-Jew! Even if they make all the money in the world you must never be anti-Jew. Because our truth has come through the Jews, right? The entire Bible was written by Jews except for Luke. He was the only Gentile writer. If not for the Jews, we don't know God. So when you hear a Christian speaking against the Jews, just be careful.

So what did we learn in this lesson? No mention of God, but you know, no mention of God doesn't mean no presence of God. This is a book showing how God typically works behind the scenes. Many people never see the hand of God because they can only see miracles done in the church when some faith healer comes, or in some rally. They need to see a miracle to see God. It's really hard to see God, looking at the events. God doesn't work like that. God works in the normal things of life where somehow things seems to work out in our favour. You know how Mordecai hears the eunuchs' plot; how the king has insomnia and gets a particular scroll on the particular day. I mean, why that particular line. There's a thousand scrolls there but he saw the name. Everything just seems to fit in.

I look at my life and I can say, that's exactly the story of my life. Somehow God worked things out. Even this beautiful book-COVID comes, and I can't go out and then I just started my recording. Now I learn how to do a lot of recordings, and then all of a sudden everything is put in place. God raised up a technical guy to help me set up the studio, God raised up a technical

guy to help me edit all the videos, God raised up a team to do the transcripts, to do the subtitling. Wow! From where, I don't know! They were all raised up. It's like coincidence but no, it's all the hand, the finger of God in our lives. And every day we should look back and say, Thank you, God.

But then 90% of Christians are looking for some miracle, otherwise there's no God, but I see the God of men all the time. So I hope you understand this is how God works. Even how far you are from God -I don't think Esther and Mordecai thought a lot about God, God was out of their minds, but they were never out of God's mind. They were God's people. You see how God works in the mess of life. It looked like nothing was going on in the king's palace but God was there, faithfully working through imperfect people to preserve the Jewish seed that will bring Christ into the world. Though God is not in your life like those miracle stories, God is with you. That's the wonderful part about this. Then you see how God raises the Jews, you know, it is unique. Moses became the number two man in the Egyptian Empire which is a massive one, Daniel-Babylonian Empire, Mordecai-Persian Empire; my goodness... All these Jews! God raised them up. Singapore's first Chief Minister, interestingly enough, was a Jew, 100% Jew. He was from Baghdad; a Baghdadi Jew became the first Chief Minister of independent Singapore. Can you imagine that? And people think God has forgotten the Jews. No! God chooses, God elects, and God is faithful, even though they were not faithful to him.

Some people say if you know Hebrew, though you don't see the name of God in this book, you can look at the acrostic, you can see in the Hebrew language, the invisible hand of God is in it, through acrostics. (Acrostics is like that letter A, letter B, letter C that is found only in Hebrew). God puts his thumb print there because he doesn't put his name there. I don't know.... It is enough for me to see the hand of a wonderful God, a beautiful God, and this is a beautiful book about Him! I hope you enjoyed this study. It's not a romance of a drunken king and a queen. It's a romance of my God and me, of my God and His people. God bless you.