

**Captivity Period:
The Providential Care of God *Esther 1:1-10:3***

Esther, "*star*," is the book where we see the providential care of God for His people Israel during the time of exile. The book is considered a great work of literature. It is like the book of Ruth in its type of story literature. It is a historic narrative.

The name of God is not mentioned in the book of Esther but the presence of His hand is certainly seen. The book gives a historical account of those Jews who did not return to Jerusalem to build the temple.

Chronologically the book of Esther fits between the rebuilding of the temple and the rebuilding of the wall. I have placed it prior to Ezra, which gives us the account of the rebuilding of the temple, so that we might finish with the exile prior to looking at the return period. The date Esther become queen is given by Reece as Jan. 479 BC.

Esther is a very important historic book because it gives the history behind the Jewish feast of "Purim" (Lots). The question has been asked, "*How could God's people in exile still find a reason to praise Him?*". Esther answers this question not only for Israel but also for all people of all time.

The Characters:

Esther was a beautiful Jewish girl who under the providence of God became queen of Persia.

Mordecia's uncle was Esther's father. He had adopted her after her father's death and raised her. (see **2:5**) This would make Mordecai and Esther cousins. Mordecai had been carried into captivity during the time of Nebuchanezzar's raids on Jerusalem. (**2:6**)

Vashti was queen of Persia before Esther.

Ahasuerus (a.k.a. Xerxes) was king of Persia. (**1:1**)

Haman was a man who hated the Jews and especially Mordecai because Mordecai did not bow down to him. However, the king had placed him in the highest position in the land.

Allow me to offer this outline for our study. All relate to the Providence, which simply means, "*to provide in advance*" of God.

I- The Providence of God Makes Esther Queen. 1:1-2:2:20

II- The Providence of God Toward Mordecai. 2:21-23, 6:1-14

III- The Providence of God in relation to Haman's Plot. 3:1-4:17, 5:9-14

IV- The Providence of God working through Esther. 5:1-8; 7:1-10.

V- The Providence of God Toward the Jews. 8:1-17

VI- The Providence of God Celebrated. 9:1-10:3

I- The Providence of God Makes Esther Queen. 1:1-2:2:20

The first two chapters record the providential events that lead to the deposing of Vashti as queen and the placing of Esther as queen. Vashti displeased the king when she would not come to a feast and show off her great beauty to the drunken mob. (**1:10-12**) He allowed his advisors to talk him into make an unwise decree that she would not appear before him again and another queen be found to replace her. (**1:13-21**)

The way her replacement was to be chosen was by a beauty contest

(2:2-4) with the King doing the judging. The candidates were prepared over a year's time. (2:12) Esther was the one that the King chose to be queen of Persia. (2:17) This was setting the stage for the preservation of the Jews by Esther. It was no accident that Esther was chosen queen. It was God's hand.

II- The Providence of God Toward Mordecai. 2:21-23, 6:1-14

We also see the hand of God toward Mordecai. He uncovers a plot to kill the King while he sat in the king's gate. He gave the information to Queen Esther and thereby foiled the plan. This event went almost unnoticed until the time God wanted to use it in His providence. After his own importance had puff up Haman God used this event to honor Mordecai. This was a slap in the face of the Jew hating Haman.

III- The Providence of God in relation to Haman's Plot. 3:1-4:17, 5:9-14

Mordecai would not bow and pay homage to Haman the way he thought he should (3:2). Haman not only hated Mordecai but all that were like him. (3:8) Haman allows his hatred of the Jews to be his final undoing. He plotted and advised the King to make a decree to kill the Jews. He failed to realize that Queen Esther was a Jew herself. Mordecai had instructed her to not reveal her national identity. (2:10)

Haman convinced the king to make a decree to allow the mass slaughter of the Jews on a certain proclaimed day. He had a gallows constructed to hang Mordecai upon. (5:14) \

Afterwards Haman was forced to march Mordecai around the city in honor of him foiling the plot to kill the king. This

honor was bestowed upon Mordecai out of the mouth of Haman. (6:4-9)

IV- The Providence of God Working through Esther. 5:1-8; 7:1-10.

Esther became aware of the plot of Haman to kill all her countrymen. She went into the King and took a chance for her very life. If he had not held forth the scepter toward her it would have meant death. (5:2) Esther invited the King and Haman to a banquet prepared for them. When the King inquired what it was she would ask for she asked that they come to another banquet (5:8). This made Haman a very proud man and he bragged about his prestige.

The next day however was his undoing because Queen Esther revealed the plot of Haman was in fact a plot against her and her people. (7:2) To make matters worse when the King goes out he got down begging the Queen and was mistaken in his intent toward her (7:8). The King was told of the gallows made by Haman for Mordecai. Haman was hanged on his own gallows. (7:10)

V- The Providence of God Toward the Jews. 8:1-17

Esther went before the king to ask for her people to be able to protect themselves from the attack devised by Haman. I remind us that the decree was given in such a way that even the king himself could not undo it because the Law of Medes and the Persians was not reversible. Esther was granted the request. They would be allowed to avenge themselves. (8:13)

VI- The Providence of God Celebrated. 9:1-10:3

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The day came for the execution of the letter written by Haman and signed by the King. The undoing of this was complete and God put a fear of the Jews in the hearts of their enemies (9:2). There were 500 enemies of the Jews killed in Sushan and then the sons of Haman were hanged also (9:13-14).

This led to the establishment of the Feast of Purim. This feast was not established by the Law of Moses like the others but by a decree of Mordecai and Esther. (9:20-32) This festive has been celebrated since this time by the Jews. Josephus, the Jewish historian, says the feast was observed annually.

The name Purim comes from the meaning of the word, "lots". The casting of lots was the way that it was determined by Mordecai the dates of the scheduled slaughter of the Jews. (see 3:7; 9:24). This feast reminds the Jews of the deliverance of God in their lives.

Esther 10 is a recap of the greatness of Mordecai. Notice, much like Daniel was earlier, Mordecai became the number two man in the kingdom. God certainly has His hand on His people.

Application to Life's Steps:

- 1- We should be faithful to our call from God for His purpose.
- 2- Those things we do for God may seem forgotten by the world but God doesn't forget them and will use them in His sovereign time.
- 3- The Lord God will avenge the wrong of His people in His time as well.

4- Prejudices is sometimes based on nationality and types instead of looking at the individual.

5- Anger can lead to ungodly behavior if left unchecked.

6- Every generation has a reason to praise God for His deliverance.

Retracing our Steps:

1- The name Esther means?

2- What relation was Esther and Mordecai? _____

3- Who was the King of Persia during these events? _____

4- The events recorded here take place in what geographic location? _____

5- What event does the feast of Purim celebrate? _____

6- Who plotted the demise of the Jews?

5- How did God prevent this from happening? _____