

## 17 – Esther : Salvation in Persia



- Esther has all the ingredients of something you'd see on the **silver screen** (in fact you can: "One Night with the King," 2006). Pomp and circumstance, luxurious living, good guys and bad guys, beautiful women and a dastardly plot with a happy ending. But God wrote this book and the entire storyline. **It is a testimony to all those who would seek to destroy Israel, and to a powerful, Almighty God who cares for His people.**
- The author is unknown. Some believe it was Mordecai. Esther is a Greek name. In Hebrew it is Hadassah, "star."
- This is about the Jews who did not return to their land of Israel after King Cyrus allowed them to leave Persia (formerly Babylon). Most Jews stayed behind where they had established families, farms, businesses, etc.
- Most believe that Ahasuerus of Esther is Xerxes the Great of Persia. He had big ideas and a terrible temper.
- The Book of Esther in one sense is the most remarkable in the Bible, because the **name of God is apparently not mentioned in this book at all**. There seems to be nothing that refers to God. Yet the heathen king is mentioned 192 times. For this reason, Martin Luther did not want it included in the Bible. The Book of Esther is never quoted in the N.T. It is a book about world government and affairs, where God SEEMS absent. However, careful investigation reveals that He is indeed there, not only in Spirit, but also in Name. There are several "beneath the surface" clear indicators of God's Name and His Presence. These references exist in what are called "Bible Codes" (*equidistant letter spacing, ELS, and acrostics*) throughout the book.

### Highlights

- Haman was an Agagite, the royal family of the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15:8). Saul should have obeyed God and destroyed the Agagites. God knew what was coming. Saul's failure to exterminate the Agagites almost led to the extermination of his own people. But again, God is behind the scenes, keeping watch over His own.
- When Cyrus made the decree that the people return to the land, not all of them did. Less than 60,000 came back. A larger group (several million) did not return to Israel – they remained content in Persia. They should have returned, as God commanded them to. Now they're out of the will of God, but He is still protecting them.
- Mordecai** belonged to the royal family of Israel, from the family of Saul (Benjamite). In 2 Samuel, David decided against killing a man named Shimei who was cursing him. Shimei is an ancestor of Mordecai. Mordecai, the man who God uses to save His people in a strange land, is literally a product of the grace of David! Mordecai seems to be a good guy, but what he does is out of God's will. God told His people not to intermarry with the heathen. He is breaking the Mosaic Law by entering Esther in the beauty contest. The girls who didn't win would enter the harem of the king. If Esther lost, she would become a concubine to a pagan. We don't know if God asked to him to do this, but God can use our wrong choices for good.
- Like the book of Ruth, the book of Esther is **a book about redemption and salvation**. It is an actual Old Testament story, an event during which God is indeed present and overturning the evil schemes of man. More than this, however, it is a wonderful nutshell of the condition of the world that attempts to eradicate God's people (both the Jews and those who love Jesus), and what will be the result of those wicked plans. This book, probably more than any in scripture, is also a clear warning to anyone who sets their sights on attempting to destroy Israel. It won't happen. God, the Almighty, stands on the side of Israel – every time. Though she may endure dark days, she will triumph in the end and never be destroyed. The one who seeks to destroy Israel will be destroyed instead.

1	<b>The King's Party and the Queen's Refusal:</b> Ahasuerus' threw a huge 180-day party to show off his wealth, then made a feast for 7 days. Vashti (queen) also had a feast for the women. On the 7th day, the king commanded Vashti to show off her beauty for his male party, but she refused. The king was very angry and asked his princes what to do to the queen according to the law, since she wouldn't obey him. They suggested she be removed from the throne to serve as an example to other women to obey their husbands. He sent letters to all his provinces that every man should rule in his own house. Vashti is deposed as queen and sent packing.
2	<b>Beauty Contest and New Wife:</b> Xerxes had recently battled with the Greeks and lost. After his defeat he returned to his palace depressed. He missed his queen and knew that the law of the Medes and Persians could not be altered. The servants knew something must be done and decided on a beauty contest. Beautiful virgins were chosen for a year of purification and beautification. They were brought before the king to choose one to be queen in the place of Vashti. Esther was entered in this "contest" by Mordecai, and she is chosen. She doesn't tell anyone she is a Jew, because Mordecai had told her not to. Later, Mordecai saved the king's life by exposing a plot against him. Mordecai told Esther, who then related it to the king. The story was checked out and found to be true, and the two men were hung. This was then written in the book of the king's chronicles. Mordecai was not rewarded or recognized for his service. Certainly he deserved it. God is directing this entire affair.

3	<p><b>Haman's Evil Plan:</b> Haman is promoted above all the other princes, and all the servants were to bow to him — but Mordecai didn't bow. Mordecai wouldn't obey the commandment of King Ahasuerus because he obeyed the commandment of THE King of kings. Servants told Haman of Mordecai's refusal to obey. Haman was furious. Rather than deal just with Mordecai, Haman wanted to annihilate all the Jews. Haman decided to exterminate an entire race of people and deceived the king with the promise of money (didn't tell him his plan was against the Jews, but said that the people to be killed had wealth that could be added to the treasury), and the king walked right into Haman's plot, telling Haman to do whatever seemed good to him. Letters were sent out, sealed with the king's ring, which meant they could not be revoked (Laws of the Medes and Persians). They informed the Jews that they would all be killed in one day, twelve months after the letters were sent out. The city of Shushan was confused. The Jews were not traitors. They had not committed any great crime.</p>
4	<p><b>The Jews fasted. Mordecai told Esther to intercede for her people:</b> When the Jews learned of the plot against them, they mourned and fasted, including Mordecai. Hearing that Mordecai sat in the gate with sackcloth, Esther sent a messenger to find out why he was mourning. Mordecai sent a copy of the decree to Esther, urging her to go to the king and plead before him for her people. Esther hadn't known about this decree. She sent word to Mordecai that she couldn't go to the king without first being called. <i>(Even though she was the queen, Esther didn't have the right to approach Ahasuerus unless he sent for her. She could take a chance and go uninvited, but unless he held out his scepter, she would die.)</i> Mordecai reminded Esther that she was also a Jew. Although she lived in the king's house, she also would be killed. And he added, <i>"Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"</i> (14b) Esther sent Mordecai word that she would do as he asked: <i>"And if I perish, I perish."</i> (16b) But first, she wanted all the Jews in Shushan to fast three days for her.</p>
5	<p><b>Esther goes before the king. Haman plots to have Mordecai killed:</b> On the 3rd day, Esther put on her royal robes and went to the king. He held out his golden scepter for her to approach. When he asked of her request, she said she wanted to have a banquet for him and Haman. At the banquet, the king asked her again what she requested, saying he would give her up to half of his kingdom. She invited the king and Haman to come to another banquet, and there she would give her request. Haman was happy with all this special attention, but when he saw Mordecai still refusing to bow for him, he was angry. He went home and told his wife and friends of his promotion and his riches, how he had been advanced above all the princes, and how he was the only one Esther invited to the banquets, other than the king. <i>"Yet all this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."</i> His wife and friends suggested he make a gallows and ask the king to hang Mordecai. He did.</p>
6	<p><b>Haman honors Mordecai:</b> The night before the 2nd banquet, the king couldn't sleep, so he had the records of the chronicles read. He heard how Mordecai saved his life by reporting the plot against him, and he asked what had been done to reward Mordecai. Just then, Haman came into the court to ask that Mordecai be killed. But before he could, Ahasuerus asked him what should be done to a man the king wanted to honor. Haman thought he was talking about him. Haman told the king to put his own robe on the man, set him on the king's horse, and lead him on horseback through the street of the city, proclaiming before him, "This is done to the man whom the king delights to honor!" So the king told Haman to hurry and do this for Mordecai! After this, Haman rushed home in mourning. He told his wife and friends about it. His wife warned him, <i>"If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish descent, you will not prevail against him but will surely fall before him."</i></p>
7	<p><b>Another Banquet and Haman's End:</b> At the banquet, the king asked Esther again what her request was. She told of the plot to kill her people, asking that he save them and her. He asked who would dare presume to do such a thing. The king still didn't know Esther was a Jew. She told him it was wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid. The king was very angry and went for a walk in the garden. Haman knew he was in trouble and pleaded with Esther. He fell all over Esther, and was seen that way when the king returned. The king accused Haman of attacking Esther. He was told of the gallows that had been made for Mordecai, and he ordered Haman to be hung on them.</p>
8	<p><b>Law against Jews reversed, given permission to kill anyone who attacks them:</b> House of Haman given to the queen. The king gives his royal ring to Mordecai, but couldn't reverse Haman's judgment against the Jews (Law of Medes and Persians). He gives Esther and Mordecai authority to write a letter to reverse the law, in the king's name, sealing it with the king's ring. Letter sent throughout the provinces. The Jews were given authority to kill all those who had determined to do away with them. Mordecai went out, dressed in royal apparel, and the city of Shushan rejoiced.</p>
9	<p><b>The enemies of the Jews were destroyed. The feast of Purim was instituted:</b> Instead of being wiped out of existence, the Jews went on the offensive. They rejoiced in victory. The king asked Esther what else she wanted done, and she requested that Haman's 10 sons be hung. The Jews then rested, making it a day of feasting and gladness. The feast of Purim instituted, to be kept the 14th and 15th days of the month Adar. It is very interesting to note something here, as we are given the names of Haman's sons. This looks like something to be investigated, based on how we have seen God work before. Here's the translations: <b>PARSHANDATHA</b> (Curious Self, busy-body), <b>DALPHON</b> (Weeping Self, self-pity), <b>ASPATHA</b> (Assembled Self, self-mobilized; self-sufficiency), <b>PORATHA</b> (Generous Self, self-indulgence), <b>ADALIA</b> (Weak Self, self-consciousness; inferiority), <b>ARIDATHA</b> (Strong Self, assertiveness; one's way), <b>PARMASHTA</b> (Preeminent Self, ambition; desire for preeminence), <b>ARISAI</b> (Bold Self, imprudence), <b>ARIDAI</b> (Dignified Self, pride; haughtiness), <b>VAIZATHA</b> (Pure Self, worst of all: self-righteousness) They are all about SELF. Hmmm, wonder if there could be a little lesson there? SELF has been put to death here!</p>
10	<p><b>Conclusion:</b> Mordecai is promoted as prime minister and seeks prosperity and peace for all Jews.</p>