

Esther(3)

August 4, 2022

The book of Esther is about Esther and her adoptive father, Mordecai. They were Jews who were living as exiles in the kingdom of Babylon, which had been taken over by the Medes and Persians. King Ahasuerus was king over the new kingdom. The following points address some of the things that came to mind during this study.

Takeaways

- While King Ahasuerus was celebrating himself for all of his glories, his ego was offended when Queen Vashti refused his command to present herself—to show off her beauty for his benefit—before him and the people. I'm afraid that a fragile ego is common of men who are in power (and in a lot who aren't in power). We'll look at pride in more detail in the account of Haman. Incidentally, there is no indication that Queen Vashti was the king's wife; she appeared to be only filling the position of the queen.
- The king made an edict throughout the kingdom that the man be master of his own house; i.e., over his own wife. This was in a negative context, because the man was to be dominant or authoritarian over his wife and family. God has established that the husband is the head of his wife, as Christ is the head of the church, which is His body. He is to love his wife as Christ loves the church (Ephesians 5:22-25, 28-31). Brethren, that is selfless love (Philippians 2:3-8). Also, fathers are to raise their children with discipline, but not so as to aggravate or drive them to frustration (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21; Proverbs 22:6). Discipline should be implemented through love and not through authoritarian or vengeful motives.
- Because Mordecai raised Esther as his own daughter, we can consider that Esther was adopted. Therefore, she had full rights as a child of Mordecai. If we believe that Christ died for our sins, then we have been adopted by God. We are in Christ and have the full rights as a child of God (Romans 8:15-17; Ephesians 1:5-6, 13-14, 18-21). Who were we before being adopted by God? We were children of wrath; that is, we belonged to Satan (Ephesians 2:1-3).
- The relationship between Mordecai and Esther is inspiring. From all appearances, Mordecai dealt with Esther in such a way that Esther wanted to do as he asked, even after she became queen.
- Esther demonstrated great dedication in all things. She was devoted to Mordecai and obeyed his instructions, as Ruth was devoted to Naomi and obeyed her instructions; we should obey the instructions to us as members of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:1-3; Colossians 3:1-17; II Thessalonian 2:15). Esther also apparently served the king with honor and integrity for the king respected her, wanted to hear her petition, and was willing to give her half of his kingdom. He did grant her request. We should serve those in authority over us in the same way, working for them as if we were working for the Lord (Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:22-24; I Timothy 6:1-2).
- There is no indication that Esther married the king or had sexual relations with him—this would have been contrary to the Law of Moses because the king was a Gentile (Deuteronomy 7:1-6). It appears that the exiled people of Israel generally maintained their worship of God during their exile because they were perceived to be following their laws (the Law of Moses) and not the king's laws.¹

¹ I say *generally*, because during their exile in the kingdom of Babylon, many of the Jewish men married Gentile women. When the people returned from exile to Jerusalem and Judah, they were to leave their Gentile wives and the children born to them to conform with the Law of Moses (Ezra 9 – 10).

- Mordecai remained faithful to God by not bowing down to Haman. There are many forms of idol worship, even in our everyday lives today, and we must be very careful to avoid them (I Corinthians 5:11; 10:7). Common forms of idol worshiping today include idolizing specific people, specific nations, money, fame, nature, etc.—anyone or anything that diminishes or replaces God in our lives.
- Haman’s pride was hurt when Mordecai didn’t bow down to him as required. He considered himself so important that he plotted to kill not just Mordecai, but all of the Jews in the kingdom. His pride was demonstrated even further when he assumed the king wanted to honor him instead of Mordecai. Not only were Haman and his family put to death (as commanded by the king), but all of the people who rose up against the Jews were killed by the Jews. We are warned that pride brings dishonor and that it precedes destruction (Proverbs 11:2; 16:18; Psalm 10:2), and are exhorted to humble ourselves before God, not think too highly of ourselves, and treat others with humility (I Peter 5:6-7; Romans 12:16; Colossians 3:12-13).
- Esther demonstrated great courage by approaching the king on behalf of her people. She was willing to be put to death in an effort to help others. Christ is our greatest example of selflessness when He humbled Himself to the point of death on a cross in our place and for our sakes (Philippians 2:5-8). We, too, are exhorted to consider others as more important than ourselves (Philippians 2:3-4).
- Esther and her attendants, as well as Mordecai and the Jews of Sosa, fasted for three days. By doing so they were humbling themselves before God and relying on Him in their time of need. We are to humble ourselves, too, as noted above. Humbling ourselves is mostly through our attitude, by taking our focus off of ourselves and putting it on God. For example, humility comes from acknowledging that all we have is from God through Christ, God is in control, He is working through us, and He provides for our needs (Romans 11:33-36; Ephesians 1:3-6; 2:8-10; Philippians 2:12-13; 4:19). Fasting may be a beneficial way of humbling ourselves before God today, but it can very easily become a source of pride (e.g., “I fasted for the Lord,” or “It was a great way to lose weight.”²). It might be best to humble ourselves in ways that can’t be observed by others.³
- When the king requested the reading of the chronicles, perhaps he thought that reminding himself of his greatness would calm him down. However, it was the Lord who motivated the king to have them read so that He could begin instituting His plan for Mordecai. King Ahasuerus, as all government leaders before and after him, had no idea that God was working out His will through him (Proverbs 21:1; Isaiah 46:9-10).
- The king elevated Mordecai to Haman’s former position, which was second in command of all the kingdom. This is similar to what the Pharaoh of Egypt had done for Joseph (Genesis 41:38-44). Both Joseph and Mordecai were exiled in a foreign land and were used mightily by God for His purposes. However, we have no promise or directive to influence our government. Never did Christ, His twelve apostles, or the Apostle Paul say that believers should become involved in government matters or try to influence government issues. People in the Caesar’s own household and among his palace guard in Rome were saved through Paul’s testimony while he was being held as a prisoner (through his words and deeds—Philippians 1:12-13; 4:22), and yet we have no indication that the Caesar was influenced in any positive way; in fact, Paul was put to death (II Timothy 4:6-8).

² A friend of mine said this after she fasted for a religious reason I can’t remember.

³ The last examples of fasting are in Acts 13:1-3 and Acts 14:23, where the Holy Spirit was working in a way that He doesn’t do in this dispensation of grace (i.e., He doesn’t talk to us). There is only one mention of fasting for a spiritual purpose after the book of Acts, and that is in the *Kings James Version* of I Corinthians 7:5; the word *fasting* is left out of this verse in most other Bible versions.

- Many people were killed by the Jews. These people were enemies of the Jews who intended to kill them. Some interpret this as God being a murderer. Beginning with the flood of Noah's day and throughout the Old Testament, countless people were killed by the will of God. Furthermore, countless people will be killed during the tribulation judgments and at the end of the millennial kingdom. This is difficult for us to explain or comprehend, and those who aren't saved use it to blaspheme God, but I will briefly try to provide my thoughts for your consideration:
 - It was mankind who turned against God, and not the other way around (Romans 1:18-32).
 - During the time of Noah's flood, all the people of the nations (the descendants of Adam) were evil and violent (Genesis 6:1-7, 11-13); in truth, they were worshiping everything but God—they were serving Satan (Romans 1:18-25; Ephesians 2:1-3).
 - During Israel's sojourn in Egypt, the Pharaohs and their people abused the people of Israel out of jealousy or fear, and refused to let them return to their land (Exodus 1:8-14; 5:1-9).
 - All of the nations in the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were ungodly idol worshipers—as descendants of Noah they had known God but had become enemies of God (Exodus 34:11-17; Deuteronomy 20:16-18).
 - The people being killed by God or by the Israelites through the power of God were the enemies of God and His people—they were serving the purposes of Satan.
 - In this dispensation of grace we have no command, nor have we been given authority, by God to kill His enemies. Israel has been temporarily set aside in God's prophetic plan and there is no nation of God today (Romans 11:25-32). Instead, as individual members of the body of Christ, we are to endeavor to overcome evil with good and leave vengeance to God (Romans 12:14-21; I Corinthians 12:12-13, 27).
- Why didn't the Jews plunder the possessions of the people that they killed as the edict entitled them to do? Perhaps it was to demonstrate that they were carrying out the vengeance of God and not killing for the sake of money, possessions, or their own liberty. When the day was over, the people of Israel were still subject to King Ahasuerus and still lived among the people of the kingdom. As believers, we are children of God and have all of the blessings of God through Christ, but we should never *lord it over* the nonbelievers with whom we live and associate. Instead, we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, speak with grace, and be good ambassadors for Christ (Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:13-15; Colossians 4:5-6; II Corinthians 5:20-21; I Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:6-8).
- The working of God through Mordecai and the Jews led many of the people to become Jews—they were the Old Testament version of proselytes (Acts 2:5-11). We are ambassadors for Christ and are exhorted to live for Christ. God uses us to spread His word and works through us to save those whom He has chosen (Romans 10:14-17; Ephesians 1:13-14; II Thessalonians 2:13-14). It should be our desire, therefore, to walk worthy of our salvation (Ephesians 4:1-3; Colossians 1:9-12).
- God worked through Esther and Mordecai to accomplish His will through the king. Although we may not even realize it, God is using us to work out His will in others.
- Neither Esther nor Mordecai sought the positions in the kingdom that they attained. They obtained them by the will and working of God and were used for His purposes (to preserve His people and to demonstrate His sovereignty), and they maintained their uncompromised faith in God. Their examples are very similar to the examples of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego under King Nebuchadnezzar and subsequent kings earlier during Israel's exile in the kingdom of Babylon (Daniel 1:3-21; 3:1-30; 6:1-28). We are to stand firm in our faith, also (I Corinthians 15:58; Romans 12:1-2; Galatians 5:1).

- God protected His people during their exile. Nothing could prevent the fulfillment of His promises to Israel. God will miraculously preserve them again during the great tribulation, culminating in the fulfillment of all of His promises to Israel when He establishes His prophesied kingdom with Christ as King. The body of Christ is not a nation and we don't have such promises—our promises are different. For example:
 - We can do all things through Christ (Philippians 4:11-13; II Timothy 4:16-17).
 - We can know the grace and peace of God (Philippians 4:6-9; II Corinthians 9:8-11).
 - There is no temptation greater than we can bear (I Corinthians 10:13).
 - We will suffer for Christ if we live for Him (Philippians 1:29; II Timothy 3:12).
 - God will finish the work of salvation that He began in us; He is working through us according to His will (Philippians 1:6; 2:12-13).
 - All things work together for good for His children in Christ (Romans 8:26-28).
 - Nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 8:31-39).

Summary

I learned through this study that there is far more to the book of Esther than I had previously thought. Both Esther and Mordecai are wonderful examples of faith and devotion, as well as how the relationship between parent and child should be. As I look back through my notes, I'm also reminded of the dangers of pride and the importance of humility. What else in this book made an impression on you?