

Through the Bible Course

February 1947

Esther

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Key Word: Providence

Key Verse: 4:14

The Purpose: To show God's providential care of His people even in captivity. It also illustrates the nature and ways of divine providence.

The Time: During the period of the restoration recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah. Probably about 30 years before Nehemiah's history begins.

Principal Characters:

1. Xerxes or Ahasuerus – famous Persian monarch who marched against Greece and tried to chain the Hellespont. He was father of Artaxerxes who helped Nehemiah.
2. Mordecai – a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin who lived in Shushan and an intimate at court. A devout Jew who refused to bow down to any save God. He was first cousin of Esther.
3. Haman – a man high in court of Xerxes and an officer of the king who had entrusted to him the king's signet ring of high authority; wealthy, vain, and greatly prejudiced against the Jew.
4. Esther – who became Queen of Xerxes. She was step-mother of Artaxerxes and probably influenced him to help Nehemiah.
5. God – His name does not appear anywhere in the book, but His presence and power are constantly manifested in the book.

I. Esther made queen – chapters 1-2

1. Queen Vashti dethroned – chapter 1
2. Esther made queen – chapter 2

II. Haman's plot and its defeat – chapters 3-8

1. Haman plots the destruction of the Jews – chapter 3
2. The Jews' danger and Mordecai's plea to Esther – chapter 4
3. Esther has banquet for Haman and the king – chapter 5
4. Mordecai highly honored for former service – chapter 6
5. Esther's plea granted and Haman hanged – chapter 7
6. Jews allowed to defend themselves and Mordecai advance – chapter 8

III. The Jews' deliverance – chapters 9-10

1. The Jews' enemies slain – chapter 9:1-16
2. Memorial Feast of Purim was instituted – chapter 9:17-32

- a. It continues to be an important Jewish feast until this day and is observed each year in February or March.
3. Mordecai made prime minister – chapter 10

Since the important lesson to be found in the book is providence and since we find it so wonderfully illustrated by the events which take place in this book, let us notice some things about providence.

1. It means “foresight” but has acquired the meaning “activity resulting from foresight.”
2. God is infinitely wise and lovingly patient. He providentially guides all things for good of His people.
3. Notice illustration of fact that providence deals with minute details even to whims of a king, care for Jewish orphan exile, a sleepless king, the prejudice and vanity of a man. Providence never neglects what men are disposed to regard as of no moment.
4. The wisdom of providence – fate is blind; providence has eyes. Fatalism says, “whatever is must be”; providence says, “whatever God ordains must be.” God never ordains anything without a benevolent purpose.
5. Notice also the absolute power of God.
6. God providentially rules so that the remnant of Jews would not be destroyed so Messiah could not be born of seed of Abraham and seed of David.