

Correspondence Bible Study

Lesson #15 – Esther

PRAYER:

Lord, thank You for Esther who saved the Jewish people and preserved the hope of the Savior. Thank You for ordinary people that You use to preserve Your Church on earth today. Lord, I ask You to use me in the ways I can best be of service to You. I always pray in the name of Jesus Christ, who makes all things possible. Amen.

Notes on Esther:

Esther is a lot like the Book of Ruth in the way it reads as a short story. The main characters are easy to understand. The Book shows also like Ruth, that God uses ordinary people in His extra-ordinary plan of salvation. A central purpose of the narrative is to record the annual festival of Purim, a yearly reminder of God's faithfulness to His people. The word Purim comes from Chapters 3:7. Somehow Haman cast lots (Purim) to determine when his decree to exterminate the Jews would take place. The festival of Purim is still celebrated among the Jews today.

The time frame is close to that of Ezra and Nehemiah. In fact, historically, Ester is sandwiched in between the events of those two prophets.

Here are some dates to remember:

KING OF PERSIA – B.C.

Cyrus 559-530 B.C. (In 538 he captured Babylon and made it part of the Persian Empire)

Darius 530-486 B.C.

Xerxes 486-465 B.C.

Artaxerxes I 465-424 B.C.

Zerubbabel, who returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple did so under Cyrus and Darius. (Temple completed 516 B.C.) Both Ezra and Nehemiah would return to the holy land during the reign of Artaxerxes I. Apparently nothing major happened in Judah during the relatively short reign of Xerxes – 486-465. The best that can be determined Esther was queen from 479-473. There is no biblical information beyond the events of this book. She might have fell out of favor as did Xerxes' first queen.

Questions:

1. These were the days before women could do as they pleased. What do you think about Xerxes actions toward Queen Vashti in Chapter 1?
2. Chapter 2 – Esther won the beauty contest to be the next queen. Why do you think Mordecai told her not to tell anyone she was a Jew?

3. Chapter 3 – Today, when the story of Esther is read at Purim, whenever Haman’s name is mentioned everyone boos and hisses. He is the ultimate bad guy. What was his problem with the Jews?
4. Chapters 4 & 5 – Mordecai and Esther had to act wisely. What were some of the actions taken by them to be sure King Xerxes would act favorably?
5. Chapters 6 & 7 – The Lord takes care of Haman. What things happened to put him in his place and then finally eliminate him?
6. Chapter 8 – What does Esther do that would be similar to the work of Jesus in behalf of all people?
7. Chapter 9 – When the Jews were able to defend themselves and kill their enemies, what did they not do that probably surprised many people and also gave others a high regard for them?
8. The Book has a happy ending. How was Mordecai similar to Joseph in Egypt (Genesis)?

Your questions on Esther...

Begin reading Job.