

Esther - Courage

Background

The outstanding feature of the book of Esther is the complete absence of any explicit reference to God, worship, prayer or sacrifice. However, it appears that this literary style was the deliberate intention of the author to heighten the fact that it is God who controls and directs all the seemingly insignificant coincidences that make up the book of Esther. God's sovereign rule is assumed at every point!

The author of Esther is unknown, but the book is dated back to approximately the time that the events that took place occurred (~460BC). The purpose of the book of Esther is to remind the Jews about their deliverance from genocide and to record the institution of the annual festival of Purim as a result. The book is set during the reign of Xerxes, who ruled the Persian Empire between 486-465BC, in the fortified palace of Susa (the winter residence of Persian kings) ch. 1v1-2.

Who was Esther?

We have split the story of Esther into four sections, though we will be focussing specifically on chapter 4 and 6, due to their significance in the book. *Get your 5.20 to read through all of Esther during the week before the study to prepare them to answer questions and have some context from the book!*

The problem

Why did Haman desire to kill the Jews? Ch.3 v2-6

What was the plot? Ch.3 v13-14

Esther's Response – read through chapter 4

How do Mordecai and the Jews respond? ch.4 v1-3

In v8 Mordecai urges Esther to act, but what is Esther's problem? v11

Read v13-14. Where does Mordecai's confidence lie in the deliverance of the Jews?

What does the latter part of v14 teach us about God's sovereignty and His will? Discuss.

In light of this, what situations (i.e. with hall mates etc) has God placed us so that we may be instruments for His kingdom? Is He calling you to a particular place so that He may use you? Has he called you to "a position for such a time as this?" Discuss.

How did Esther respond to God's call? v16

Read the latter part of v16 again. Are we as courageous as Esther to step up to the mark that God has set us in the situations we are in despite the consequences? Discuss.

God's Intervention – read chapter 6

What was the outcome of fasting? Ch.5v2

How do we see God's intervention in ch.6?

Do we believe that God is in complete control of our lives? God has bought us back into relationship with Him through Jesus; therefore do we trust that He has a plan for us? Discuss.

Esther's Petition and Solution

Read ch.7 v3-6. and v9-10. What was Esther's petition and what was the result?

However, although Esther and Mordecai are now safe the genocide of the Jews has not yet been averted. Read ch.8 v5-8. How is this averted? What is the outcome of this new edict? ch.9 v5-10

God delivered the Jews from genocide through a series of seemingly insignificant circumstances, which ultimately had crucial significance in His plan. Looking back, do we see God working through such circumstances in our lives? Discuss.

Application: Courage to step out in faith. God is sovereign over all things, do we trust him? God has a plan for each of us, are we letting Him use us in the situations that He has placed us in? Are we salt and light to those around us?

Pray: Take time to look back over your life and praise God for His sovereignty and for the way that He has worked through the little things as well as the big to bring you closer to Him.

Do we petition God about His plan for us, our circumstances and for those around us? Pray and petition the Lord for these things and ask for His guidance in the situations that you are in.

Are we maybe clinging to areas of our lives that we feel we cannot entrust to God? Pray for Esther's courage so that we may lay our lives down at His feet and say 'If I perish, I perish, but I am yours God, use me as you see fit.'

Thank God for Jesus; that He is God's ultimate plan for our lives and that our hope and security is found in Him.

Memory Verse: *"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."* **Deuteronomy 31:6**