***Godly Women Series 2019 Part 7***

Esther: “For Such A Time As This”

Prepared by Nathan L Morrison for Sunday July 21st, 2019

Text: Esther 4:14; 5:1-4

# **Intro**

1. There are examples both good and bad in the Scriptures.
2. Men and women alike can provide us with sources of strength and inspiration.
   1. Eve: “Mother of all living” (Gen. 3:20) and an example of moving past sin!
   2. Sarah: Mother of nations (Gen. 17:16), Mother of saints (Gal. 4:26,31), Mother of godly wives (I Pet. 3:6), and is an example of faith and overcoming one’s weaknesses!
   3. Ruth: An example of faith and virtue (Ruth 1:16-18; 3:11)!
   4. Abigail: An example of faith, respect, wisdom, and concern! (I Sam. 25)
   5. Proverbs 31 Woman: Her relationships, behavior, and character were “excellent” (“virtuous”) and she was a woman of great faith! (Prov. 31:10-31).
   6. The Shunammite Woman: She served God with the abilities she had! She was hospitable, content, & had faith in God! (II Kings 4:8-37)
3. Godly role models are greatly needed today!
4. The book of Esther reads like an action story (or movie) with suspense, intrigue, betrayal, conspiracy, treachery, romance, murder, jealousy and anger!
   1. Esther is the central character
   2. The plot of the book centers on Mordecai’s refusal to bow to Haman, the king’s second-in-command!
   3. Israel vs. Amalekites (Finishing what King Saul started in I Sam. 15)
5. Esther chapters 1-2
   1. Ch. 1: About 50 years after King Cyrus released the Jews from captivity (536 B.C.) in the reign of Ahasuerus (Persian name), who was Xerxes I (Greek name), and reigned 486-465 B.C. (son of Darius the Great), he threw a huge drunken party that lasted 180 days. Wine flowed freely, and everyone was given what they wished. On the 7th day he called for Queen Vashti to come be displayed, which she refused. Out of fear her refusal would embolden women to disobey their husbands she was removed from being queen and a decree went out stating men were in charge of the homes!
   2. Ch. 2: A massive beauty contest was enacted to find the next queen! Could have been titled, “Who Wants To Marry A King?” Virgins from all over the kingdom were taken (by force) to the king’s harem in Susa, and Esther is introduced (Esther 2:5-7).
   3. Esther (Persian name, “star” from “Ishtar,” a Babylonian goddess, perhaps because of her beauty) was a Jewish orphan (Hadassa, “Myrtle”) taken in by her cousin Mordecai. She was a virgin and was beautiful in form (figure, or body) and face.
   4. Mordecai (Persian name for the Babylonian god, “Marduk”) was a Benjamite, a descendant of those taken into captivity with King Jehoiachin (597 B.C.), and a cousin to Esther and raised her as his own daughter.
6. Esther is an example of loyalty, trusting in God, and doing what is required to serve Him!
7. **A Humble Virgin**
8. *Esther 2:1-18*
   1. The young virgins gathered from the kingdom were brought to Susa and placed in the care of Hegai the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women, and given all the rites of purification.
   2. Esther was a virgin, was found and was brought to Susa. *She never pushed herself forward to seek the crown of Vashti.*
   3. They were all given special privileges and allowed all they demanded. *But Esther only asked for what Hegai thought she should have.*
   4. In this way she won, not only his favor, but that of all who looked upon her.
   5. *She found favor with the king and he made her his queen! (2:16-18)*
9. Esther 2:19-20
   1. She was an obedient daughter!
   2. When she was taken for the beauty contest he advised her not to reveal her Jewish heritage (2:10).
   3. “Esther did what Mordecai told her as she had done when under his care” (2:20).
10. From humble means, she became Queen Esther! (Esther 2:16-17)
    1. The book of Esther has many parallels to the account of Joseph in Gen. 41-46.
    2. God has plans for our lives! *(Often, we are placed where we need to be!)*
11. She would not have been there nor found favor if she was not a virgin, and not humble!

### **A Faithful Wife**

1. Esther 2:21-23
   1. Mordecai uncovered a plot to kill the king and told Esther.
   2. She informed the king, her husband, in the name of Mordecai.
2. The two responsible were hanged.
3. Mordecai’s actions were recorded in the King’s annals.
4. Though she gave Mordecai the credit for the plot discovery, she was faithful to save her husband!

### **A Brave Queen**

1. Esther 3
   1. After 4 years *(Esther 2:16-17; 3:7)* Haman is made the king’s favorite (3:1).
      1. Haman was an Agagite, a descendant of the kings of the Amalekites (Agag was a royal title). The Lord had declared perpetual war against Amalek (Ex. 17:16). The Book of Esther relates the last recorded battle in that war!
   2. Mordecai refuses to give him the honor he demands (3:2-4: Won’t bow; 5:9: Won’t rise).
      1. Persian law allowed for kings and high-ranking officials to be bowed to not only as reverence for the office, but worshiped as a god. It is likely Haman demanded this type of subjection and that is what Mordecai would not do.
      2. Jews not forbade to bow in honor or respect to people of authority:
         1. Gen. 37:10: Joseph dreamed his brothers bowed down to him (Came to pass in Gen. 42:6).
         2. Gen. 49:8: Jacob prophesied Judah’s brothers and their descendants would bow to him (From Judah came the Davidic line of kings – II Sam. 7:14)
         3. I Sam. 20:40-41: David bowed 3 times to Prince Jonathan.
         4. I Sam. 24:8: David bowed to King Saul.
         5. II Sam. 24:18-20: Araunah bowed to King David (David buys his land).
         6. I Kings 1:16, 31: Bathsheba bowed to King David.
         7. I Chr. 29:20: Multitude of people bowed in homage to God and King David.
         8. I Kings 2:19: King Solomon bowed to Bathsheba, his mother.
         9. II Kings 1:13: The 3rd Captain of 50 bowed to the prophet Elijah.
         10. II Chr. 24:17: Officials bowed before King Joash (24:1).
      3. Whatever the case here, Mordecai would not bow to Haman!
   3. Some have suggested: Mordecai was of the tribe of Benjamin, the tribe of king Saul, who fought the Amalekites and was charged with their complete destruction (I Sam. 15), and here he refuses to bow to an Amalekite.
      1. If the case, far-reaching consequences of King Saul’s disobedience (I Sam. 15)!
   4. Haman, for his sake, vows to be revenged upon all the Jews (3:5-6).
   5. He, upon a malicious suggestion, obtains an order from the king to have all the Jews massacred upon a certain day (3:7-13, subtly omits the identity of the people – 3:8).
      1. Another attempt by Satan to cut off the people of God to stop the “seed” (Gen. 3:15) from coming to pass.
   6. This order is dispersed through the kingdom (3:14-15). (King and Haman drink while city is thrown into confusion, Jew and non-Jew alike)
2. *Esther 4:1-9*
   1. Mordecai learned of the plan, and put on sackcloth and ashes and wailed and wept loudly!
   2. Esther sends messenger to find out why and hears what Haman has planned, and finds out Mordecai wants her to talk to the king!
3. Esther 4:11-14
   1. Esther reminded Mordecai that anyone that goes to the king not summoned will be put to death unless he holds out his golden scepter. She had not been summoned for 30 days!
   2. Mordecai responded with that she will perish too, despite being queen.
   3. Then he said, “If you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?”
      1. He had trust in God’s promises to save His people (Jer. 24:6-7).
      2. Similar conclusion Joseph came to – Gen. 45:5-7
4. Esther 4:15-17
   1. Esther told Mordecai she would go after three days of fasting.
      1. She told them to fast, which often included praying, for her for 3 days.
      2. She said, “I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.”
      3. A lesson here for us, when making big decisions, not to leave God out! (Js. 4:15)
5. Esther 5:1-4
   1. Esther braved the law and entered the king’s throne room. She found favor and touched his outstretched scepter.
   2. The king offered her anything and she invited him and Haman to a banquet!
6. Even if dangerous, we must be ready to do the work God has called us to do!

### **A Clever Hostess**

1. *Esther 5:4-14*
   1. At the banquet, Esther requested the king and Haman attend another banquet the next day.
   2. 5:11: Haman gathered his friends and family and recounted the “glory of his riches, and the number of his sons, and every instance where the king had magnified him and how he had promoted him above the princes and servants of the king.”
   3. Haman was depressed and angry again at seeing Mordecai, who wouldn’t rise in his presence *(5:9: Mordecai wouldn’t bow either – 3:2-4),* so he listened to his wife and friends and built a gallows 75 ft. high (50 cubits) to hang Mordecai on it.
2. Esther 6
   1. The night of the 1st banquet, the king couldn’t sleep, has the annals read to him and finds out he never rewarded or honored Mordecai for saving his life.
   2. That moment Haman appears seeking permission to hang Mordecai and the king asks what to do for one he wants to honor.
      1. Irony: The king omits the name of the man as Haman had left out the name of the “certain people” who were a threat to the kingdom (3:8).
   3. Haman says for the man to wear one of the king’s robes, ride the king’s horse while wearing a royal crown, and be led through the streets by one of the king’s princes, publicly declaring that this is how the king honors whom he desires to honor.
   4. It sounded good to the king, and he promptly ordered Haman to do all that he suggested to “Mordecai the Jew.”
      1. A lesson here from Mordecai: Sometimes we are not rewarded immediately, but the reward is always greater when in God’s time, for God does not forget.
      2. Irony: Haman went to the king to hang Mordecai and ends up personally honoring him for the king!
3. Esther 7
   1. At the 2nd banquet, Esther reveals she is a Jew and that Haman has plotted to annihilate her people, jeopardizing her life! (“A foe and an enemy is this wicked Haman” – 7:6)
   2. The king angrily leaves the room, and Haman falls upon her couch begging for “his life” and the king comes in thinking he is assaulting the queen in his own home! (7:7-8)
   3. Haman’s face is covered and he is hanged on the gallows he erected for Mordecai.
   4. Later, Haman’s 10 sons were also hanged on the gallows (9:14).
4. When God calls you to use your gift for His glory, don’t hesitate to risk everything for God!

# **Conclusion**

1. Esther 8-9
   1. The king’s order can’t be reversed *(Daniel 6:8)* so a new one is also made that the Jews can be armed and fight for their lives, their lands and their properties (2 mos. And 10 days after Haman’s edict was signed, Est. 3:10-13).
   2. Mordecai is given Haman’s office and his estate – 8:1-2 (All his riches he boasted in were given to “Mordecai the Jew” – 5:13).
   3. It is a complete success and the enemies of God’s people are routed and killed (8 mos. and 20 days later! – Est. 9:1) – 500 men killed in Susa, including Haman’s 10 sons, and 75,000 men killed throughout the provinces.
   4. The battle between Benjamin (Israel) and the Amalekites is over, with Israel the victor, and now they enjoy a rest from their enemies.
   5. Esther and Mordecai establish the Feast of Purim to commemorate the salvation of the Jews, on the 14th-15th of Adar (March 14th-15th).
   6. Purim is from Pur, that is to cast lots (Haman had cast lots to determine the date of their destruction, 3:7) – 9:24-26
2. Esther 10
   1. Mordecai was given Haman’s old position, 2nd only to the king! (10:3)
   2. A Babylonian cuneiform tablet from Borsippa near Babylon mentions a scribe by the name of Mardukaya (Mordecai), saying he was a minister (or accountant) to Xerxes I at his palace in Susa *(See Sources below).*
3. The providence of God can be seen clearly throughout the book, despite His name never being mentioned (see also the account of Joseph, who recognized it was the hand of God – Gen. 50:20).
   1. When things seemed bleak, in Esther 6 small incidents from the earlier narrative come to play an important part in the reversal of fortunes for Haman.
   2. From the king unable to sleep, reading the annals, Haman showing up at the right time to honor Mordecai, the hand of God being in control over all events is evident!
4. Lessons from Esther
   1. Remember, no matter what, God is in control! (He was putting the right people in where they needed to go to accomplish His will of saving His people!)
   2. Never forget who you are! (She could have kept it hidden) – Rom. 8:15-17
   3. God’s promises are trustworthy *(II Sam. 7:14; Luke 1:32-33: The Messiah would come from Judah, from David’s family)!* (When all seems bleak, remember God’s promises)
5. When the time comes, be brave, and do what is required – we all have a part to play!
   1. Joseph knew he was elevated to save his family (God’s people) – Gen. 45:5-7; 50:20
   2. Esther came to know she was elevated to save her people (God’s people) – Est. 4:14
6. Queen Esther stands as an example to all of bravery to do what is required, and trust in God!
7. If you are not a Christian, you are not serving God but yourself. Repent and be baptized!
8. If a Christian, perhaps you haven’t been serving Him to the best of your ability. Repent!
9. Whatever your requests may be, come forward ***NOW***and let them be known while we stand and sing.

**Additional Notes:**

* According to the Jewish Encyclopedia the story as "a historical record must be definitely rejected.” If this is the case, then why would Jews celebrate Purim to this day?
* The Greek historian Herodotus wrote that Xerxes I sought his harem after being defeated in the Greco-Persian Wars (483-480 B.C.). Esther was made queen in his 7th year, which would have been after the Greek defeat in 479 B.C. (Esther 2:16).
* The Septuagint and many other histories connect Ahasuerus with Artaxerxes II (405-358 B.C.).
* Many shrines and memorials, and even a tomb designated as belonging to Esther and Mordecai exist in Hamadan, Iran, still to this day.
* Iranian Jews consider themselves descendants of Esther. On Purim, Iranian Jews visit the tombs of Esther and Mordecai in Hamadan. Some women pray there in the belief that Esther can work miracles.
* As early as the fifth century, there was a custom to burn an effigy of Haman on Purim. The practice continued into the 20th century. In the early 1950s, the custom was still observed in Iran and some remote communities in Kurdistan where young Muslims would sometimes join in.
* The Targum connects the name Esther with the Persian word for "star", ستاره setareh, explaining that Esther was so named for being as beautiful as the “Morning Star.” In the Talmud (Jewish O.T.), Esther is compared to the "morning star," and is considered the subject of Psalm 22 because its introduction is a "song for the morning star."
* Hitler made a connection to his regime to Haman, and outlawed Purim in Germany. For many years on Purim he would hang, shoot, or similarly execute ten Jews out of vengeance for the hanging of Haman’s ten sons. He also outlawed the Book of Esther, and anyone found to possess a copy were executed.

**References:**

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