

Lesson 5 – Esther 1-4

Text: Esther 1-4

Main Characters: God, Ahasuerus, Mordecai, Esther, Haman

Key Passages:

- Esther 3:12-13 – Haman, with the blessing of Ahasuerus, wrote a decree to destroy the Jews.
- Esther 4:14 – Mordecai wondered if Esther had been put on the throne to save the Jews.

Main Storyline:

Following the reconstruction of the temple, Ahasuerus became the king of the Medo-Persian empire. In the third year of his reign, he decided to hold a feast for 180 days, during which all of the leaders of the empire could come to see his riches and splendor. After that feast was over, he held another feast for 7 days for the residents of the citadel in Shushan, the capital. On the last day of the feast, when Ahasuerus was drunk, he ordered that his wife, Queen Vashti, come and show off her beauty to those at his feast. Vashti refused, so to make an example of her, Ahasuerus dethroned her.

After Ahasuerus had calmed down, he decided to start looking for a new queen. His servants suggested that they search for beautiful, young, unmarried women to replace the queen. After going through beauty preparations, they could be presented to the king, and the king could choose which woman he wanted to be the next queen. Ahasuerus agreed to this suggestion, and the search began.

In Shushan, there was a Jewish man named Mordecai who was raising his uncle's daughter (cousin), Esther, whose parents had died. Esther was young and beautiful, and so she was taken to the king's palace for the king's inspection. Esther was a lovely person, and she won the favor of the man in charge of the women, who, as a result, gave her a few extra items besides her allowance. Esther did not tell anyone that she was Jewish, since Mordecai had instructed her not to do so. After 12 months of preparation, she was presented to Ahasuerus, who loved her more than all the other women. Ahasuerus set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen.

At some time later, Mordecai heard that two of the king's eunuchs were plotting to kill Ahasuerus. Mordecai told Esther, who told the king. An investigation was performed, and the two men were hanged. The king made a note in the book of chronicles that Mordecai had saved him.

Later, another man, Haman, won favor in the eyes of the king, and was promoted above all of the princes in the kingdom. All of the king's servants bowed down and worshipped Haman except for Mordecai. Haman became very angry and plotted to kill him and all his people (the Jews). Haman went to Ahasuerus and explained that there was a rebellious group of people scattered amongst the empire that did not keep the king's laws. As a result, he said, they should be destroyed. The king agreed, and Haman was given the king's signet ring to seal the decree. For Ahasuerus's cooperation, Haman put a large sum of money into the treasury. The Jews were to be destroyed on the 13th day of the 12th month.

When Mordecai learned about all that had happened, he was very upset, and he began weeping in the middle of the city in sackcloth. When Esther heard of it, she sent one of the king's eunuchs to find out what was troubling Mordecai. Mordecai explained all that had happened, and instructed Esther to go to the king and plead for the people. Esther was afraid because she knew if she went to the king without being requested, she could be killed. Mordecai suggested that perhaps she had been put on the throne for this purpose. Esther decided to do as Mordecai had said, as she would die either way.

Lessons/Applications:

- 1.) Even when the risk is great, we must obey God and fulfill his purpose for our lives.
- 2.) God is involved in our lives whether we see Him clearly working or not.