

LESSONS FROM ESTHER

Int.

1. Aim: To tell the story of Esther and then draw some lessons from the book.
2. Esther - A beautiful Woman
 - a. In her life
 - b. In her actions
3. The book of Esther - Two unusual facts
 - a. It does not contain the name of God
 - b. It has the longest verse in the Bible - Esther 8:9 = 81 words
4. The cast of Characters
 - a. Ahasuerus the king - known in history by the name Xerxes
 - b. Vashti - his queen
 - c. Mordecai - a Jew living in the land
 - d. Esther - her Hebrew name was Hadassah
 - e. Haman - a prince of the king
 - f. Hatach - messenger for Esther
5. Background to the book - Map of Persian Empire
 - a. Jews had been living in the land of Babylon - taken into captivity
 - b. After 70 years they were allowed to return to Israel
 - c. But not all Jews chose to go back. Some were too old and feeble to make the trip.
 - d. Others wanted to stay in the land.
 - e. Such was the case with Mordecai and his family.
6. This story takes place in the time of the Persian Empire.

Discussion

I. THE STORY OF ESTHER

A. Persian empire -

1. Shushan the capital - the city was also called Susa
2. Ruins - drawing - beautiful palace

B. Feast for all his officials

1. Lasted for six months
2. After this he had a feast for all the people of Shushan - lasted 7 days
3. On the last day the king and the other men were drunk and he called for Vashti his queen to come show her beauty.
4. She refused to come and he was angry.
5. Decided to dethrone Vashti as queen

C. Search for a new queen

1. Searched throughout the land to find a beautiful young woman to be his queen
2. Mordecai lived in Shushan.
 - a. He was a Jewish man He had taken Esther as his own daughter after her parents died. Her Hebrew name was Hadassah
 - b. She was invited to be one of the young women considered for the new queen of the land of Persia.
 - c. Mordecai advised her to not tell anyone that she was a Jew.
3. After 12 months of preparation the young women came before the king and he chose Esther to be his new queen and wife. She was crowned and they held a feast in honor of the new queen.

D. Mordecai's Service to the King (2:21-23)

1. Mordecai overheard two eunuchs plotting the King's assassination.
2. He reported it and the men were hanged.
3. Mordecai's name was recorded in the Chronicles of the King.

E. Haman's Promotion and Plot (chapter 3)

1. Haman was promoted and all people were to bow down to him.
2. But Mordecai did not bow.
3. Haman plotted to destroy the Jews.
4. Haman convinced the king to kill all the Jews because they spoke against him.
5. He promised to pay 10,000 talents of silver to have all the Jews killed.
6. This was to be done on the 13th day of the 12th month, Adar

F. The Proclamation of Destruction (4:1-14)

1. Mordecai learns of this proclamation and adorns himself in sackcloth and ashes.
2. Esther hears about this and sends messengers to find out why he was disturbed.
3. She had not been called in to see the king for the past 30 days. And if anyone went without an invitation they could be killed.
4. Mordecai warns Esther that she will not escape unless she does something.
5. Esther 4:13,14 "And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: "Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. 14 "For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?""

G. Esther's Plan

1. She and her maids would fast and pray for 3 days
2. She sent a message to Mordecai asking him to request that all the Jews in Shushan fast and pray also.
3. Then she would approach the king and she said, "If I perish, I perish."

H. Esther's approach to the King

1. As she approached the throne where the king was sitting no doubt Esther was nervous because she did not know what he would do.
2. He looked up and saw the beautiful Queen Esther and held out his golden scepter to show that she was safe and he would see her.
3. He told her that she could make any request up to half the kingdom.
4. She invited the king and Haman to a banquet that afternoon.
5. At the banquet King Ahasuerus asked her what she requested. Her reply was that she wanted to have another banquet for Haman and King tomorrow afternoon.

I. Haman's attitude

1. He felt very proud because he was invited to the banquet with the King and Queen.
2. He even bragged to his family about these things.
3. On his way into the palace all the other servants bowed down to him, but again Mordecai refused to bow down.
4. He was angry. So he decided that he would build a gallows on which to have Mordecai hanged the next morning. He would go and request this deed from the king.

J. King Ahasuerus

1. That night he could not sleep. So he asked one of the scribes to bring him the records of important events in his kingdom.
2. He read about how Mordecai had saved his life by telling about the plot to have him killed.
3. There had not been anything done to honor him for this.
4. The next morning when Haman came into the Palace the king asked him what should be done for a man that the king wants to honor.
5. Haman thought it was going to be him. He suggested that the man have the king's crown put upon his head and the royal dress on him. Then he should be led about the streets of Shushan on a horse so all the people could see him.
6. The king commanded Haman to do this for Mordecai. Of course Haman was very upset and furious about this event.

K. The next banquet

1. That evening Ahasuerus and Haman attended the banquet of Esther.
2. The king asked her to make known her request.
3. She explained that her and her people had been sold to be killed.
4. The king was shocked and wanted to know who has done this.
5. Esther stared at Haman and said: "The enemy is this wicked Haman."
6. The king was so angry he got up and took a walk in the palace garden.
7. Haman went nearer to Esther and begged for his life.
8. When the king returned and saw him near Esther he declared that Haman must be killed.

9. One of the king's servants told about Haman building a gallows on which he wanted to hang Mordecai.
10. The king commanded that Haman be hanged on the gallows he had built for Mordecai.

L. Esther pleads for her people

1. The laws of the Persians could not be changed.
2. The king promoted Mordecai to take the place of Haman.
3. Now Mordecai wrote a new law that would allow the Jews to defend themselves against their enemies. This law was sealed with the ring of Ahasuerus and sent throughout all the land.
4. When the Jews heard this they were rejoicing and happy that they would not be killed.
5. When the day of Haman's law came, many people who were not Jewish helped those who were under attack.
6. Not only did God grant them protection through the king's second decree written by Mordecai, they also had help from their fellow citizens.

II. LESSONS WE CAN LEARN

A. Beauty is as Beauty does

1. Among all the other beautiful young girls, Esther stood out.
 - a. There was something different about her. She had an inner beauty.
 - b. Her faith in God gave her a radiance and charm that the other girls did not have
2. 1 Pet. 3:1-5
 - a. V. 3 & 4 "Do not let your adornment be merely outward--arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel-- 4 rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God."
 - b. **The inner man;**
 - (1) that is, the soul, with the whole system of affections and passions.
 - (2) The word "hidden" here means that which is concealed; that which is not made apparent by the dress, or by ornament. It lies within, pertaining to the affections of the soul.
 - c. **A meek and quiet spirit]**
 - (1) That is, a mind that will not give provocation to others, nor receive irritation by the provocation of others.
 - (2) Meekness will prevent the first; quietness will guard against the last.
 - (3) The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. Of a calm temper; a contented mind; a heart free from passion, pride, envy, and irritability; a soul not subject to the agitations and vexations of those who live for fashion, and who seek to be distinguished for external adorning.

(4) The proper ornament of a woman is that which becomes her best. This is neither gold, nor pearls, nor scarlet, but those things which are an evident proof of gravity, regularity, and modesty."--

d. **Great price.**] All the ornaments placed on the head and body of the most illustrious female, are, in the sight of God, of no worth; but a meek and silent spirit are, in his sight, invaluable, because proceeding from and leading to himself, being incorruptible, surviving the ruins of the body and the ruins of time, and enduring eternally.

3. In Esther's case she was naturally endowed with physical beauty. But her beauty was more than skin deep.

B. Providence of God - For such a time as this

1. Mordecai explained to her: "Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14b
2. You are in the right place at the right time.
3. Rom. 8:28
4. Providence - God working to provide something through a chain of events.

C. **She looked to God for deliverance**

1. She was going to fast and pray
2. Asked the people to fast as pray for her - Est. 4:15,16
3. Similar to Paul's request for prayers - Eph. 6:18-20
4. David fought Goliath by depending upon God - 1 Sam. 17:45-47
5. We must always fight our battles the same way. - Eph. 6:10-12

D. Was A woman of bravery and courage

1. Approached the king, not for self, but for her people - Esther 4:4-17 8:3-11
2. She could have been killed herself. The law was death for those who approached this way, with one exception: the king extending the scepter.
3. This is an example of faith, not that she would not die, but that it was the right thing to do regardless of the outcome.
4. She said "If I perish, I perish." If I die, I die.

E. There is a time to speak, not to keep silent

1. Esther 4:14
 - a. The life of the Jews was threatened
 - b. She must speak up and do something
 - c. She had an opportunity and it was time to do her duty
2. Mordecai told her that maybe this was the reason she was allowed to be in the kingdom.
3. God's cause was not dependent upon her, but she must speak or perish.
4. Silence would have indicated fear and weakness.
5. Eccl. 3:7 "...a time to keep silence, and a time to speak..."
6. We are here for a purpose today
 - a. All of us have duties which no one else can perform
 - b. If we neglect them we will be held accountable - James 4:17
 - c. God has allowed us to live and to be here for a purpose. Let us fulfill it.

F. Sin always catches up with us

1. Haman was hanged on the very gallows he had made for Mordecai.
2. Though for a while he seemed to be getting away with his sin, yet he was really losing.
3. That is the way it is with a person who exalts himself and is lifted up with pride and wickedness.
4. David said in Ps. 37:12-13 NKJV "The wicked plots against the just, And gnashes at him with his teeth. 13 The Lord laughs at him, For He sees that his day is coming."
5. Paul says: " Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life." Gal. 6:7-8
6. God always has the last word, not man.
7. It is much better to go God's way, and do His will.
8. For those who go God's way, the Bible says, "For the end of that man is peace."

Psalms 37:37

Conclusion

1. Esther was a beautiful woman - Lessons we can learn
 - a. Beautiful in appearance
 - b. But more beautiful in action, her inner beauty

2. Esther's original name was Hadassah, which means myrtle, while Esther is a Persian name which means "star," suggestive of the form of flower that the myrtle tree bears.
 - a. The beautiful daughter of the Hebrew race at the court of a Persian king, born in captivity, was called Myrtle.
 - b. In all likelihood her father named her Hadassah, because the myrtle tree had become the sign and symbol of the race.
 - c. The Persians called her Star, to indicate that she was the flower of the myrtle tree, full of beauty, full of grace.

3. This is the only book in which God's name is not found, yet his presence is felt throughout.

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