

The Miracle of Esther

With God's help, I am going to discuss the story of Esther with practical application in one day. There are so many outstanding, near catastrophic and yet wonderful things that happen in this most unusual book of the Bible. Two things stand out. In all the books of the Bible this book stands alone in the unique fact that nowhere do you find the name God or LORD mentioned anywhere in this book. Another fact is that all the scholars agree that they do not know who penned the book. There are a lot of guesses, but no one knows. All of this bears witness to the Sovereignty of Almighty God. God's workings are so apparent in this book that an open-minded person cannot miss God if he or she is looking for Him. The authorship is not disclosed so that we might focus on the true author of the whole Bible, the Holy Spirit. It was a time in the history of the Jew that genocide was not only a possibility, but plans had already been drawn up for this wicked activity to be accomplished. The Lord used His servants Esther and Mordecai (the first cousin and adopted father of Esther) to save their nation. Even to this day the saving of Israel is celebrated in the Feast of Purim. Throughout the world, the evening of February 28th through the evening of March 1st the Jewish people will once again celebrate their national deliverance.

1. THE REMOVAL OF QUEEN VASHTI

Ahasuerus, better known in history by the Greek name Xerxes, ruled the Persian Empire in cruelty and sensuality. In Esther 1:10 and 11 we see the king after a lengthy celebration while under the influence of alcohol sends forth a command that Vashti place her crown on her head and come before his drunken friends. It appears from the text and historical commentary that in this presentation she would be required to compromise her modesty. Vashti refused and the king became livid (Esther 1:12).

We see in Proverbs 16:4 that God can take the most wicked people and move around and through their decisions to bring to pass His ultimate purpose and our eternal good. David, while fleeing from Saul, was able to say in Psalm 57:2, "I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me." So Vashti was removed permanently as queen and the scene is now set for the deliverer, Hadassah or better known by her Persian name, Esther to step forward.

2. THE CORONATION OF QUEEN ESTHER

A search was made throughout the land among the virgins for a replacement of the deposed queen. It comes down to a beauty contest and Esther becomes "Miss Persia" and finally queen (Esther 2:15-17). There is a joke that has a husband

asking his wife, “Why did God make you so beautiful, but yet so dumb?” She replied, “Honey, God made me beautiful so that you would love me and He made me dumb so I could love you.” This is only a joke, but we can certainly say that Esther was aesthetically pleasing to the eye, but also a brilliant young lady. In reality, God doesn’t put the value of a person on their appearance. God says in Proverbs 31:30, “Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.” God puts the premium on who a person is on the inside. I Peter 3:3 and 4 points out that there is hidden beauty that comes from inward holiness. Esther’s beauty could have been something that even wicked King Ahasuerus did not recognize, and that is the beauty of holiness (Psalm 29:2).

3. THE LOT IS CAST Who is Mordecai?

In Esther 3:2 Mordecai refused to bow before Haman, King Ahasuerus’ new best friend. Haman is now an advanced prince. We see in Scripture that the kings of Israel were honored with a tributary bow (II Samuel 14:4; I Kings 1:16). The problem for Mordecai is that when one bows before royalty in Persia this means recognition is ascribed to them as a divine being. Therefore, he cannot and will not bow. Haman’s response is out-of-control anger. Then he assigns the astrologers and magicians to cast the lot or “Pur” to determine the day of the year that destruction of the Jewish people would begin. The anti-Semite Haman is not familiar with Prov. 16:33: “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.”

4. THE CHOSEN FAST

When Mordecai and the Jewish citizenry heard that on a certain day the massacre of the Jews would begin, they mourned in sackcloth and ashes with fasting. Mordecai sent this most famous word to Esther in Esther 4:14, “For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” Esther’s response was classic. Esther 4:16: “Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.” Isaiah 58: 6-12 explains the power of God’s chosen fast.

5. ESTHER’S FIRST BANQUET

Courageous Esther now comes before the king in jeopardy of her life. The king accepts her and is so pleased with her that he promises her half the kingdom. She simply requests audience with him and Haman at a banquet she will prepare. At the banquet the king again promises her anything. Her only request is that the king and Haman come once more to another banquet. When Haman returns home he is filled with pride, bragging to his wife and friends of his importance (Esther

5:11). Haman is the perfect commentary of Proverbs 16:18, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." He tells his family and friends that all of his promotion means nothing to him as long as Mordecai is sitting at the king's gate. So Haman ordered the construction of a gallows 75 feet high to hang Mordecai.

6. MORDECAI IS HONORED

The king could not sleep so he had the chronicles of the kingdom read to him. These were records of events done during the days of his reign. Then the most marvelous thing happened. He discovers that two of his chamberlains had planned his assassination, but Mordecai was the one who thwarted their plan and saved King Ahsuerus' life (Esther 6:1-3; Esther 2:21-23). So the king called his "trustworthy" friend Haman to come and help him determine what should be done to a man the king wanted to honor. Haman did not hold back what he thought the king should do (no doubt thinking it was himself). He suggested the most extravagant means, even to using the king's apparel and crown and riding horseback through the street of the city to show all that this is the man the king wants to honor. Can you imagine the deep humiliation to discover it was Mordecai? Even his wife knew his proverbial "goose was cooked" (Esther 6:14).

7. ESTHER'S SECOND BANQUET

The king and Haman now come to Esther's second banquet (Esther 7:1). Again Esther is promised by Ahasuerus anything up to half the kingdom (Esther 7:2). Then the tables are turned as Esther requests the life of herself and all her people and then she reveals to the king the wicked Haman's "Purim plot", i.e., to destroy the Jewish people (Esther 7:3-6). Haman begs for his life, but to no avail, he ends up at the end of the noose he had planned for Mordecai (Esther 7:10).

8. THE HAPPY ENDING

In chapters 8 through 10 Mordecai takes the ring and authority that had been Haman's and Esther 9:1 describes the outcome: "Now in the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them)."

By the law of Medes and Persians the king's decree could not be revoked, but another law ordained by the king could be made to neutralize the effect of the first decree. The Jews could now take up arms to defend themselves (Esther 8:11). Seventy-five thousand enemies of Israel were destroyed and Haman's ten sons died on the same gallows their father died upon (Esther 9:13 and 16). The genocide plan failed. God protected His people.

And from India to Ethiopia, in all 127 provinces, peace and truth was granted to all Jewish people by order of her Majesty, Queen Esther in the second letter of Purim! (Esther 9:26-30).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.