

The Book of Esther

Lesson 3

In the previous lesson, two of the five main characters were introduced to us in chapter two. These characters are Mordecai and his younger cousin Esther, who is taken into the King's harem as part of his plan to select someone to replace Queen Vashti. Mordecai and Esther enjoy a close relationship of mutual love and respect in which Mordecai serves as a surrogate father for Esther, while she honors and respects him for watching over and protecting her.

After twelve months of preparation in the harem, Esther wins the King's heart and favor and is crowned queen. Meanwhile, Mordecai uncovers a plot against the King, which while noted in the annals of the king is not rewarded at the time. This oversight figures prominently in the rest of the story.

Chapter two also notes the right of a sovereign to allow into his presence only those he summons by name. This reminds us that our Sovereign King, the Lord Jesus Christ, knows each of His own by name and summons and calls them into His presence. As our Good Shepherd, Jesus lays down His life for us, taking our sin upon Himself, giving us in exchange His righteousness and promising never to leave or forsake us.

In chapter three, we meet the fifth and final major character. Before beginning your study, would you take a moment to pray and ask God for help in understanding His Word?

Haman Plots to Destroy the Jews

1. Read Esther 3:1-4.
 - A. What is the name of the fifth major character?
 - B. Whose son is he?
 - C. What does King Xerxes do for Haman?
 - D. What does the King require of all the other royal officials and nobles regarding Haman? Why do you think he does this?
 - E. From verse 2, how does Mordecai respond to the King's command?
 - F. From verses 3 and 4:
 - (1) What do the royal officials ask of Mordecai?
 - (2) What action do they initiate toward him?
 - (3) What is Mordecai's response to them? Why?

(4) In light of Mordecai's response, what else do the royal officials decide to do? Why?

2. Read Esther 3:5-6.

A. What does Haman observe about Mordecai?

B. What is Haman's reaction to Mordecai's behavior? Do you think his reaction is justified? Why or why not?

C. What does Haman propose to do to Mordecai and his people? Why the intense animosity?

3. To better understand the animosity between Haman and Mordecai (including all of the Jews) and to illustrate the principle of the sovereignty of God, read Romans 9:1-18, Malachi 1:1-5 and Genesis 25:19-34.

A. As you reflect upon these passages, what most stands out to you?

- B. Contrast how Jacob and Esau differ in attitude toward birthright. Why do you think the Lord had regard for Jacob but not Esau?
- C. Read Genesis 36:9-12, Exodus 17:8-16, Deuteronomy 25:17-19 and 1 Samuel 15:1-35.
- (1) How are Esau, Amalek, the Amelikitites and King Agag related to one another?
 - (2) From Exodus 20:4-5, 1 Samuel 15:1-35 (particularly verses 12 and 22-23), what did King Saul do to displease the Lord?
 - (3) How do these passages illustrate the truth that “sin has its consequences” and “to obey is better than sacrifice”?
 - (4) How are the long-term consequences of sin and disobedience realized in Esther 3:5-6?

D. Personal Application: Have you ever been faced with the challenge to obey rather than sacrifice? If so, which did you choose? Why? What happened? What did you learn from your experience?

4. From 1 John 1:8-9, Psalm 32:1-7 and Romans 5:8, 8:1 and 8:31-39, how are we to deal with sin? Why does God tell us this?

5. Read Esther 3:7, Leviticus 16:1-10 and Proverbs 16:33.
 - A. What does it mean to “cast the pur” (i.e. cast the lot) and how was it used in the Leviticus passage?

 - B. According to Proverbs 16:33, who is responsible for the outcome of the lot?

- C. Read Jonah 1:1-17. Describe how the principle of “the lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord” is realized in this passage.

- D. Read Acts 1:12-26. How is the casting of lots used in this passage?

- E. Have you experienced the casting of lots or its equivalent? If so, please describe the circumstances and outcome.

6. Read Esther 3:8-15.

- A. What accusations does Haman make to the King? Were these charges true? Why or why not?

- B. What other individuals in the Bible were falsely accused?

- C. What does Haman propose to the King?

- D. How does the King respond to Haman's proposal?

- E. What does Haman do? What orders does he give to the King's satraps, province governors and nobles?

- F. After the edict was issued, what did the King and Haman do?

- G. What was the reaction to these orders in the city of Susa? Why do you think the city reacted as it did? What is your reaction?