



No.16 Esther -A woman for the time

Esther 1-4 and 5-10

This fantastic girl has a whole book of the Bible written about her, along with her cousin Mordecai. This study shows what our wonderful Almighty, all knowing, all powerful God can do with one small insignificant life that is given, even if rather timidly, to Him. How He takes the foolish things of this world to confound the wise (**1 Corinthian 1:27**)

God has such a big plan and only He can see all facets of the picture at the same time. For God to have His person in the right place to save His people at that time, Vashti is removed. There are many different opinions

on Vashti's behaviour, but make sure when your husband asks you to do something, and you are chatting to your girl friends, do not refuse and so humiliate him however hard that may be for you. We are blessed that our husbands cannot just cast us off and never see us again, for such an action, but something can die in him when we behave like Vashti. We need to respect one another even if it means being humiliated ourselves at times. Respect does not come from forced obedience as the King's men suggested (**Esther 1:16-20**) but from humility and God-like love. What position has God got you in, with a far-reaching plan that you cannot see or even imagine, at this time?

Esther was a Jewish girl, as a refugee in the foreign land of Persia. All the Jews had been free to return to Jerusalem fifty years earlier (**Ezra 1:2**) but had chosen not to. Both her parents had been killed and her only living relative was her cousin, Mordecai. He adopted her after the loss of her parents, and treated her as his own daughter. Esther had a disadvantaged beginning, which could have been an excuse for poor behaviour and self-pity. But she never chose to be a victim of her circumstances. She grew up obeying Mordecai, which was great training for when she was under pressure in the palace, she knew the best thing to do was take his advice (**Esther 2:10; Esther 2:20; Esther 4:8**)

Beauty Salon plus!

Esther was physically a beautiful girl, shown in the fact that she received great favour in the King's harem. What amazing beauty treatments, special food and extra service she received for twelve months, to prepare her to be the wife of the wealthiest and most powerful King of the time. "Esther won the favour of everyone who saw her" **Esther 2:15**. "Now the king was attracted to Esther more than any of the other women, and she won his favour and approval more than any of the other virgins. So he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. And the King gave a banquet.....proclaimed a holiday..... distributed gifts, with royal liberality." **Esther 2:17-18**. She really had arrived, the first lady to the King.

Several years passed and the position had not changed Esther's character. Mordecai still stayed close to the Palace to give her the support and encouragement that she needed (**Esther 2:11**) He certainly did not compromise his stand of worshipping the one true God and refused to bow down or pay honour to Haman, the King's chancellor, **Esther 3:5**.

As a result of Mordecai's refusal to bow to Haman, he made a plan to destroy all the Jews in all the 127 Provinces. The edict is sealed by the King (**Esther 3:12**) so there is no way of revoking it, **Esther 8:8**. All the Jews are told that in eleven months they will be destroyed. The plan is an Old Testament holocaust.

What would you do if you only had 11 months to live?

What priorities would you change? What relationships would you sort? What needs to be said? Esther is the key to God's plan to save His people. This time God has chosen to use a frail person rather than a miraculous event to deliver His people.

Shall we, shan't we? Shall we, shan't we?

When faced with the opportunity to speak up for the Jewish people to the King, Esther has a choice. She could have chosen the easy way and secured her own personal safety by relying on her charm and beauty to keep her in the Palace. Her immediate reaction was one of concern that no plan, including hers, would work, and she knew that if she went to see the King without his request **she could die**. If she had done her own thing she would have stopped God's plan for her own life, through selfish ambition, and outright disobedience to what she knew was right. God takes many years to prepare us for His service (like Joseph, Moses and Paul) as He wants us to make the right choices and have the best foundation of character. Jesus was prepared for thirty years to give three years service on this earth!

Mordecai had amazing faith that God would deliver His people somehow, whatever was Esther's decision. He spoke directly the outcome and so created, with his words, what God's plan was, "...For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place...." **Esther 4:14**. When responding to a call by God to do something with Him, we can be the most miserable. It can be in torture, agony of spirit, there can be loss of joy, confusion of mind, until we finally say 'I will'. Mordecai challenges Esther with the words that speak to our own hearts today "...**you have come to a royal position for such a time as this.**" **Esther 4:14**. It was in losing her life, "..... if I perish, I perish" **Esther 4:16**, that Esther actually found her life's purpose, to save God's children. Likewise for us as we choose to follow Jesus Christ and give Him our all. "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will find it" **Matthew 16:25** Obedience brings the joy of a right relationship with God (**Proverbs 16:3**)

We all need to consider our position at this time in the **very last days of this world**, as we know it. We need to make sure we are totally available to the direction of the Holy Spirit, so God can use us in this generation even if it does mean we have to lay down our physical lives. Only God could have enabled the King to be sleepless and find the place in the enormous chronicles where Mordecai had saved his life, **Esther 6:1-3**

Having made her decision to obey Mordecai, Esther recognised that she was just an ordinary weak person, so she immediately turns to prayer and fasting. She calls all the Jews to join her. She is well aware of her desperate need of God's wisdom and favour, when approaching the King. God gives Esther a plan (**Esther 5:4**), which she certainly would not have thought of herself, if she had responded to her emotions. Fasting certainly shows her faith in the mercy and plan of God, and enables her to use self-control waiting for God's timing, which was so vital to the success of the plan. Mordecai and Esther had a real revelation of who their enemy was, which enabled Esther to trap Haman. We need a revelation of our enemy, the devil, so we can be proactive and trap him, so he can go no further with his destructive plans.

Haman/ Satan

Haman in this story is such a picture for us of all the characteristics and tactics of the devil.

He is full of his own importance (**Genesis 3:1-6**), proud (**1 John 3:8**), devious (**Revelation 12:9**), liar (**Matthew 4:8-9**), angry (**Revelation 12:12**), steals and destroys, (**1 Peter 5:8-9**). He can only be in one place at a time, (**Job 1:6-7**). He cannot see into our mind or foretell the future (**Job 1:9-11**) His plans backfire on him in the end (**Galatians 6:7**) and he is limited in his effect on us (**Luke 22:31-32; 1 Timothy 1:19-20**), if we resist him, **James 4:7**. Recognise that the very thing the devil plans to use to destroy us is the very thing that God will use to be powerful in our effect on other lives, (**Hebrews 2:14; Ephesians 4:27**). We no longer belong to the Kingdom of darkness as Jesus approached the Father and paid the price with His life for us, so we can be free and no longer in fear and bondage to sin.

If Haman had not been so full of his own importance, with pride, encouraged by his wife Zereth to vanity and wickedness, they would have seen that he was being set up. Just like Satan, who would never have crucified Jesus if he had known about Pentecost, (**1 Corinthians 2:8**).

Today we are here in the 21st Century for such a time as this.

It is not time for us to live our small-minded lives nursing our hurt emotions because we have suffered abuse or rejection, or not had the right upbringing, or got abundant money. This is our right time to fulfil our potential and rise up into God's calling for our lives. Recognising that of ourselves we are nothing but in Christ we really can do all things that are in our heart to do, **Philippians 4:13**.

- Esther had a divine assignment which only she could do, although if she had not agreed to follow God's instructions He would have saved His children another way. She was God's number one choice, what has God chosen you to do? Rise up to the starting blocks and prepare to enter into all the power and authority God has for you to complete the task. Remember not everyday is spectacular but everyday can be supernatural.
- We need to see the possible in the impossible as we follow His directions, **Matthew 19:26**.
- Esther had a great price to pay to follow God's directions, and after some thought and prayer she was more than willing to pay that price. Am I willing to pay the price for what God has asked me to do for my generation? Lose my reputation, pay packet, time for myself, holidays, discomfort; TV programme, etc: just so one person can have eternity in Heaven rather than hell!! Esther did.
- Esther kept right relationships with even her enemies. Are we willing to forgive and pray for them so we can be a clean channel of blessing to all people we have contact with?
- Emotions did not dominate Esther's decisions. We must make sure we seek God's will above our feelings or these could result in long term problems. She kept her mouth shut just as Mordecai had instructed her, **Esther 2:20**. Do we know when to keep our mouths shut?

- Keep our sight on God at all times. Recognise we can enter into the King's presence at any time, He will always listen to our request and He will never cast us out. **Esther 4:11**
- Fasting is so helpful when wanting to hear direction from God. It will not change His mind or bend His arm but it will bring our thoughts in line with His will, **Proverbs 16:3**
- Be persistent, pushing towards your vision at all times. Esther did not give up, she was so bold and courageous even when in danger. Feel the fear and do it anyway! **Esther 5:1-8**
- Remember God will restore all the devil has stolen from us. When we are faithful to God and willing to give up everything God is no man's debtor we will be rewarded, just like Esther.

What if? The planned day of the holocaust turns to a day of great rejoicing, which is still being celebrated by Jews today at the feast of Purim when the book of Esther is read. Thirty years later Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, which would have been impossible without Queen Esther. If she had not been obedient there would not have been a Nation of Israel for the Messiah to come from and without a Messiah the world would have been lost. What an effect one young woman had, being available to God for His purposes at the right place and time.

No.16 Esther -A woman for the time. Challenge Questions

Read the Notes about Esther

1. What encouragement do you take from how God uses the most unexpected person to do a job for Him?
2. What sort of battle do you imagine she went through when she found out about the decree against the Jews and why Mordecai was so upset? **Esther 4:1-11**
3. a) Write down how you think she must have felt when she realised how laying down her life for her people, had turned out. b) Can you apply this to your situation? c) Is God asking you to do something today that will ask for sacrifice on your part?

Read Luke 10:38-42.

4. What did Mary do while Jesus was at her house? b) What did Martha do?
5. Describe Martha's reaction to her sister's behaviour?

a) Who does she try and get on her side with her problem? b) How?
6. What is His reaction? b) What do you think Jesus means, in your own words?

Read John 11:1-44

7. Who is Martha's brother and what happens to him?

8. What does Jesus speak out is the whole reason for Lazarus' problem? **John 11:4**

9. What is Martha's reaction to Jesus and how long has Lazarus been dead before Jesus arrives? **John 11:17: John 11:20-27**

10. What does Jesus promise her? How does Martha react to this? **John 11:23-25**

11. What emotion does Jesus show at this time and why do you think He did? **John 11:35**

12. What reason does Martha give for Jesus not going to the tomb? What is Jesus' response? **John 11:39-40**

13. What does Jesus pray? Does His prayer imply that He had already been in touch with the Father and knew His will? **John 11:41-42**

14. Describe what happened to Lazarus in your own words. **John 11:41-44**

15. What do you think would have been Martha's reaction? Who do you think would help to untie the grave clothes?

16. Sum up in one short sentence what has encouraged you from this wonderful woman.