

Seven Bible Studies 2017

History

December 19: Esther 1-5 (Nick Hermon)

HISTORY: Esther 1-5

Today our study focuses on the first half of the book of Esther. I know this is one of the favorites for a few people so I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this book in the comments! :)

The book is set about 100yrs after the Babylonian exile in the city of Susa, the Persian capital.

Chapter 1- Queen Vashti Banished

Xerxes, the ruler of Persia, held a 7-day banquet in his garden where he displayed his tremendous wealth (just read verses 5-8... wow!). In high spirits from wine on the seventh day, he orders Queen Vashti to come before him so he can show off her beauty to his attendees.

She refuses and with the advice of his wise men, decides to cast her from the palace and orders that "every man should be ruler over his own household."

Chapter 2- A New Queen & A Conspiracy Debunked

When Xerxes fury had subsided, one of his attendants proposed that beautiful young virgins should come to the palace and let the one that pleases him become the next queen.

To no surprise, Xerxes likes this idea.

Esther was a beautiful young woman adopted by Mordecai who fit these qualifications. She was taken to the palace and placed under the care of Hegai. She won his favor and he provided her with beauty treatments and special food along with attendants.

She would check in with Mordecai along the gates every day and eventually gained the favor of Xerxes enough for him to choose her to become the new queen.

But she had not revealed her nationality... a Jew! (whoa... mind blown)

One day while Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, he heard two of the king's officers angry and plotting to assassinate King Xerxes. He warns Queen Esther, who in turn reports to the king, giving credit to Mordecai.

Chapter 3- A Massacre in the Making

King Xerxes honored Haman, the Agagite and the royal officials at the king's gate kneel and honored him... but Mordecai would not.

This frustrates Haman to the point that he not only wants to kill Mordecai but all Jewish people.

He convinces King Xerxes that these people have strange customs which do not align with the king's laws and he plans to utterly destroy them.

Xerxes grants him permission to pursue the Jews and him and Haman roll die to determine the date. A copy of the text of the edict was passed out to all nationalities that on the 13th day of the 12th month that all Jews, young and old, women and children, are to be annihilated on a single day.

This news is devastating to many people.

Chapter 4- A Plea to Queen Esther

Mordecai and many others laid in sackcloth and ashes when they hear the order of the annihilation of their people. He goes weeping and wailing up to the king's gate and the distress catches Esther's attention. Through her attendants, she asks what is wrong and is presented a copy of the text for the annihilation of her people.

She responds that it is the law that if anyone goes to the king in the inner court without being summoned, they are to be put to death... even her. But Mordecai reasons with her that she may not be safe either and that those of her nationality depend on her.

She complies and orders a fast for three days and when that is done she will go to the king, "And if I perish, I perish."

Chapter 5- Esther's Request of the King

On the third day, she goes to Xerxes and stands in the inner court in front of the king's hall. He is pleased to see her and asks what her request is. She asks the king to come to a banquet together with Haman that she has prepared for them and she will let her request be known then.

Xerxes agrees and inquires of Haman to go with him to the banquet. Haman, happy and in high spirits, is ecstatic about being specially requested by the queen to attend a banquet. He sees Mordecai, who does not honor him and turns to rage, but restrained himself. He boasts that he is the only one who Queen Esther invited but says he still has no satisfaction as long as he sees that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king's gate. Haman's wife, Zeresh, suggests that in the morning to have Mordecai impaled on a pole and to go enjoy the banquet later.

Boom! Cliffhanger... what happens next?
Tune in next week

Comments:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, Nick!

Comments:

Charles Fry:
Studies have been written and taught on Joseph, Daniel and Jesus, and rightly so. Perhaps there should be such a message on Joseph, Daniel, Esther and Jesus. There are numerous parallels, similar language in the Joseph/Esther stories, but at the same time Esther is almost the antithesis of Daniel, perhaps as a woman is the antithesis/complement of a man, the bride different than the husband, the church as both body and bride.

Feasting.... the king, the queen, the Jews...
The writings.... Edicts, records, warnings, promises, salvation....
The enduring conflict, Amalekites attacking the Jews and being defeated...

Comments:

Marc Hermon:
Hah! Cliff"hanger". Funny!

Comments:

Marc Hermon:
I couldn't help myself. I had to read on to find out what happened! You'll never believe the irony! I'll give you a hint.

Go to <http://www.hangman.no> and enter code hnzjcdcbhmac

Comments:

Ginger Hermon:
Love this captivating story of old! If we all have the mentality of Mordecai, "Who knows but that you have come to a royal position for such a time as this?" Powerful lessons in Esther about courage, obedience, divine timing, fasting, meditation and God's supreme love. Thanks for the great summary, Nick!

December 26: Esther 6-10 (Nick Hermon)

As we finish our history study for the year, I just want to say that it has been an absolute pleasure reading through these books. I've learned a lot from these readings and hope to continue to grow as much in wisdom in 2018 as I have from this study in 2017.

We started the history study in the book of Joshua and now conclude in the book of Esther.

Throughout this year, we have encountered many fascinating stories and lessons:

Joshua- The story of the conquest and distribution of the Promised Land.

"But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD" (24:15)

Judges- Israel enters a cycle of turning from God, falling captive to nations, calling out to God, and being rescued by leaders God sends their way

"But when they cried out to the LORD, He raised up for them a deliverer." (3:9)

Ruth- Two widows lose everything and find hope in God... leading to a very important lineage

"...Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God." (1:16)

1 & 2 Samuel- Israel demands a king and is disappointed until David, a man after God's own heart, becomes king

"The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (1 Sam 16:7)

1 & 2 Kings- Solomon rules Israel, the nation splits and both kingdoms turn from God resulting in the people of Israel being conquered by Babylon

"Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you..." (1 Kings 22:23)

1 & 2 Chronicles- Listing of the history from Adam to David to the Babylonians taking over

"...The Lord is with you when you are with him..." (2 Chr 15:2)

Ezra- Return of the Jews from Babylon and rebuilding of the temple

"Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws" (7:10)

Nehemiah- Rebuilding of the wall around the city
"...the joy of the Lord is your strength" (8:10)

Esther- Jewess who becomes queen of Persia to save the Jewish people from destruction

"Who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" (4:14)

Finally, today's study...

HISTORY: Esther 6-10

We left off last week with a cliffhanger:
Haman vs Mordecai

Haman convinced the king to plan a date to annihilate the Jews because of his hatred for Mordecai. Esther asks the king and Haman to join her. Haman is excited to have special treatment, but wants the day to be REALLY good so he plans on having Mordecai executed by being thrown on a sharp pole the morning of the banquet.

6- Major Plot Twist

The night before the banquet, King Xerxes couldn't sleep so he had the record of his reign read to him. It was read how Mordecai exposed two officers conspiring to kill the king and Xerxes asked what recognition was given to Mordecai.

When the attendants told him "nothing," Haman happens to come to the king's door to ask the king to let him kill Mordecai. So Haman asks the king, "What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?" thinking that there's nobody to honor more than himself. He tells the king that he ought to have a royal robe placed on him as he rides a king's horse through the city streets as it is proclaimed, "This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!"

The king agrees... but tells Haman to do so for Mordecai!

It would have been hilarious to see the look on Haman's face when Xerxes told him that!

So Haman robes Mordecai and leads him through the streets making the proclamation he suggested.

Absolutely humiliated, he returns home and hurries off to Esther's banquet.

7- Death by Own Device

At the banquet, Esther tells the king that she is a Jew and asks him to spare her people. Xerxes asks who is responsible for destroying the Jews and she tells him, "This vile Haman!"

The king is furious and has Haman impaled on the pole he had set up for Mordecai.

8-10 Mordecai & Jewish Nation Elevated

The king took the signet ring of Haman and presented it to Mordecai and Esther appointed him over Haman's estate. Esther begs that the Jews be saved as well. The king's edict grants the Jews in every city the right to defend themselves.

Interestingly, "many people of other nationalities became Jews because fear of the Jews had seized them."

When the day comes around, the Jews destroy the enemies and Haman's sons. The Jews held a celebration called Purim ((pur is the lot (dice) used to determine the date for the Jews destruction). It is a major moment in Jewish history and is said that, "These days should be remembered and observed in every generation by every family, and in every province and in every city. And these days of Purim should never fail to be celebrated by the Jews—nor should the memory of these days die out among their descendants" (9:28).

This is a fascinating and unique story in that it is the only book in the Bible where God is never mentioned by name.

So why?

My thoughts are that it either has to do with the circumstances the book was written (under the rule of the Persian empire) or that it has something to do with the moral issues happening here. There is a lot of drinking, sex, and murder... all violations of the Torah.

Despite the lack of acknowledgement, it is clear that God's work is at play behind the scenes.

It goes to show that God has not abandoned His promises, but protects His people.

May He protect you as well this upcoming year!

Comment:

Charles Fry:

Good reminders of the path behind, where we've been, and the story at hand. Thank you, Nick Hermon.

Comment:

Beverly Schoonover Wattenbarger:

Thank you, Nick, for all your time and effort this year. It has been interesting. Looking forward to next year. God bless you and your family

Comment:

Kevin Crittenden:
Thank you, Nick!

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, Nick!

Comment:

Marc Hermon:
Thanks for the excellent review. All year long I have been filling out chapter titles in my Bible. Here are my 10 chapter titles for Esther:

- 1.) Vashti Vanquished
- 2.) Esther Elected
- 3.) Haman's Holocaust
- 4.) Mordecai's Mourning
- 5.) Haman's Hubris
- 6.) Mordecai Magnified
- 7.) Haman Hanged
- 8.) Edicts Exchanged
- 9.) Purim Prescribed
- 10.) Mordecai's Mastery

Replies:

John Morris:
A lot of alliteration there.

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:
Love this book!!! Next to impossible to put it down and not read from beginning to end. You were blessed to teach some of the most exciting lessons from the Bible, Nick. Can't thank you enough for all the edifying posts. You had great summaries each week and now great reminders of each book. It brings great joy to reflect back on the year. I encourage you and all of us to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" during 2018. "To Him be glory both now and forever; Amen!" Thank you again. We are well pleased with you, son. ❤️

Comment:

Theresa Jo Brady:
Delighting in God's word this morning! Like Esther, who knows for what position and purpose we have been put in to be of help to God's people. Thank you Nick!

Comment:

Yvonna Hartman:
Thank you for your work. It has been very edifying.

