

CLASS NOTES -- ESTHER

ESTHER AND RUTH

Both books are named for women. The entire period of the kings is bracketed between these two books. Notice some of the comparisons and contrasts:

* In **Ruth**, a Gentile woman, brought into the land of Israel by love, married a Jewish man and became great grandmother to David the king. In **Esther**, a Jewess, having failed to go home to the land of Israel, married a Gentile and became a queen.

* In **Ruth** the outstanding type is Boaz -- a type of Christ. In **Esther**, it is Haman -- a type of Anti-Christ.

* In **Ruth**, Boaz is a type of Christ as Kinsman Redeemer, redeeming from the condemnation of the **Law**. In **Esther**, Mordecai is a type of Christ as the One on the throne, delivering his people from the power of **Satan**, as expressed in Haman, a type of Anti-Christ.

* In **Ruth**, redemption was through payment of a **price**. In **Esther**, it was through the exercise of **power**.

* **Ruth** reveals a godly remnant hidden among sinful Israel. **Esther** reveals God working, hiding Himself behind the scenes, for a people who had refused to return to the land under Zerubbabel (in the book of Ezra).

* **Ruth** took place when there was **not yet** a king in Israel, and "every man did that which was right **in his own eyes**." **Esther** took place when there were **no longer** kings in Israel, and they had been **chastened** for continuing to do that which was right in their own eyes -- kings and all!

* In **Ruth**, a **Gentile** was redeemed **through a Jew** who typifies Christ. In **Esther**, a **Jew** (and his whole nation) was saved **from a Gentile** who typifies the Man of Sin.

* In **Ruth**, a Gentile was blessed, and became eligible for redemption, because she was kind and loving toward a Jewess who was undergoing chastening (Ruth 2:11, 12). Compare Matt. 25:34 - 36 and Zech. 14:16). In **Esther**, a Gentile was cursed and judged (Esther 7:9, 10 with Gal. 3:13) because he was cruel to a Jew who was in captivity (compare Matt. 25:41 - 43 and Zech. 14:12 - 15).

FIVE is held to be the number of GRACE.

Notice how many times the number five occurs in this book, a book which displays so wonderfully God's grace to His sinful people:

* The name of God is hidden in the Hebrew of the book in five places (in acrostic form). (1:20; 5:4; 5:12; 7:5 and 7:7). See Appendix number sixty in the "Companion Bible."

* There are five principal characters in the book -- Esther, Mordecai, King Ahasuerus, Queen Vashti, and Haman.

* There are five feasts in the book. The feast of Ahasuerus (1:5); the feast of Vashti

(1:9); the feast for Esther, when she became Queen (2:18); the feast of Esther for the King and Haman (covering two days -- 5:5; 6:14; 7:1); and the feast of Purim (9:20 - 22). There was feasting in the provinces themselves, but those were not planned and **formal** feasts.

* There were five decrees which went out to the empire. The decree concerning Vashti (1:22); concerning the selection of a new queen (2:8); the decree to destroy the Jews (3:12 - 15); the decree that the Jews could fight back (8:8 - 14); and the decree establishing the feast of Purim (9:20 - 32).

* Five times Haman is called the Jews enemy (3:10; 7:6; 8:1; 9:10, 24).

The reason why the name of God is not found openly in the book of Esther is given in Deut. 31:16 - 18. "- this people will arise and play the harlot with the strange gods of the land, into the midst of which they are going, and will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. Then My anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and **HIDE MY FACE** from them, and they shall be consumed, and many evils and troubles shall come upon them; so that they will say in that day, 'Is it not because our God is not among us that these evils have come upon us?' But I will surely **HIDE MY FACE** in that day because of all the evil which they will do, for they will turn to other gods." (NASB). The hiding of His face is symbolized by the hiding of His name -- but it is hidden **five times** in the Hebrew text to symbolize that in great grace He is still watching over them to protect them. His hand is also hidden -- for there are **NO MIRACLES** in the book. But His hand is there, unseen, working in a mighty way through His mastery of "all things" (compare Rom. 8:28), through His providence.

Perhaps the main purpose of Esther is to warn the nations against anti-Semitism. During the times of the Gentiles God is not dealing with Israel in open favor, for they are under chastening. But let no one think because God seems out of the picture (as His name, prayer, etc. are omitted from this book) that He is not watching over His people! The question of Rom. 11:1, "Hath He cast away His people?" has an emphatic answer in the book of Esther. Just let any power on earth lay its hand on the Jews and it will see! God may use the nations to chasten Israel, but let them beware of "enjoying their job" -- for Israel is still the "apple of His eye"!! Notice Esther 8:7. Haman is called "the enemy of the Jews" or words to that effect -- using the word "enemy" -- **FIVE TIMES!** (3:10; 7:6; 8:1; 9:10, 24).

The attempt, in Esther, to destroy the whole nation is but one of many attempts made by Satan, working through men, to destroy those who would be involved in bringing the Seed (Gen. 3:15) into the world. Other instances of his hatred for God's people, and attempts to prevent the coming of the Savior, include the following: The murder of Abel; the contamination of the race by fallen angels in the days of Noah (Gen. 6:1 - 4); the slaying of the boy babies in Egypt; the destruction of the seed royal by Athaliah (2 Kings 11:1); this genocide attempted by Haman; and the attempt made by Herod to slay the infant Jesus. When the Seed finally arrived, in spite of all his efforts to prevent it, he made one last vain effort to turn Him aside from the Cross when He was tempted in the wilderness. Finally, in frustrated hatred, he inspired men to crucify Him and, in doing this, he sealed his own doom. He continues his hatred toward Israel even today. We have seen an attempt at genocide, by Hitler, in this century. He will seek to destroy that nation during the Tribulation (Rev. 12:12, 13) and, again, in one final and futile effort, at the close of the Millennium (Rev. 20:7 - 9. Compare Psalm two).

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES:

1:1. Ahasuerus was known as Xerxes in secular history.

1:3, 4. Darius, father of Xerxes, had been defeated in his war against Greece at the battle of Marathon. During this six months (in the year 483 bc.) Xerxes was planning another invasion of Greece. He assembled the largest army ever put in the field to that time and a huge fleet for the campaign.

1:18. The leaders of the powerful Medo-Persian empire were afraid of their wives. They were afraid of a possible "Women's Lib" movement!

1:19. There is no indication that Vashti was slain. These wise men would have been very unwise to suggest such a drastic solution to the problem.

1:22. Compare Gen. 3:16; Eph. 5:24; Col. 3:18.

2:1. There is a time lapse of about three years between 1:22 and 2:1 (compare 1:3 with 2:12, 16). During this time Xerxes waged his unsuccessful war against Greece. He won a victory at Thermopile, but lost his fleet in the battle of Salamis.

2:1. Evidently Vashti had not been executed, as some commentators suggest, for here, three years after the first decree, the king evidently becomes lonely for her -- but remembers that she is forbidden by his own decree from coming into his presence. If she had been dead three years this verse would be meaningless.

2:3. No evidence seems to exist that either Mordecai or Esther had any choice here. This edict cannot be refused. This was no "Miss Universe" contest open only to volunteers. See v. 8.

2:5, 6. Mordecai's great grandfather, Kish, had been carried away in the captivity some 115 years earlier. Mordecai was a cousin of Esther but, evidently, much older.

2:7. Esther was physically beautiful (2:7); had a winsome (charming) personality (2:9); and was obedient to Mordecai (2:10), even after she became Queen (2:20). She was modest and gracious (2:15); grateful (2:22; 4:4); courageous (4:16); wise (see note on 5:4) and sensible (9:13 -- She saw the need for completing the job -- its too bad king Saul had not seen that in connection with Amalek centuries before).

2:8. It doesn't say she was brought by Mordecai. The officers of v. 3 who were to gather the beautiful women together for the king probably brought her.

2:10. Though Mordecai was not afraid or ashamed to show his own nationality (3:4) he evidently gave Esther this instruction for her own safety.

2:11. He couldn't keep her from being taken but, due to his position at the court, he

could watch out for her welfare -- and he did (see v. 5).

2:12. Compare Eph. 5:25 - 27. Xerxes had the women "purified" that they might win his love, but Christ loved us when we were yet ungodly, sinners, and enemies, and gave -- not His servants and His wealth -- but Himself to perfect us. Compare also His relationship with Israel (Ezek. 16:3 - 24; Rev. 19:7). Christ took me to His heart when I was an ugly, defiled and worthless sinner, but now, in great love and grace, He has been working on me for over 60 years to purify me -- and He is still at it. See Rom. 8:29.

2:14. These women became members of the king's harem. Our loving relationship to the King is not on a "trial basis" -- but forever: not just for a chosen **one**, but for **all** of us who are in Christ. As the Body of Christ we are, collectively, the chosen **one** -- not His Bride, however, but His Body.

2:15. So, to please our King, we need only what is assigned to us by the Holy Spirit. These things will also make us gain favor with men. See Col. 3:10, 12 - 14; 1 Pet. 3:3, 4; 1 Tim.2: 9, 10.

2:19. The first gathering together was in 2:8 -- for the beginning of the beauty contest. This one is for the banquet celebrating the coronation of the Queen.

2:20. A lapse of about five years exists between 2:20 and 3:1. The events of 2:21 -23 took place during that time.

2:21. Bigthan may have been the "Bigtha" of 1:10. See 6:2 where it is "Bigthana." "The door" is probably the king's bedroom door. Xerxes later lost his life through a conspiracy between Artabnus, captain of his guard, and Aspamitrus, a eunuch and chamberlain (Pulpit Commentary, article on Esther, page 55).

3:1 In Esther a Benjamite, son of Kish, came up against an Agagite. Surely this is intended to focus our attention back to a time earlier in the history of Israel when Saul, son of another Kish, a Benjamite, was told to utterly destroy Amalek (1 Sam. 15:3). If, at that time, Saul the son of Kish had fully obeyed God when he came up against Agag and had not spared "the best" -- there could have been no Agagite, an Amalekite, to hate Mordecai, son of Kish, and try to destroy all of Israel. Full obedience in First Samuel could have prevented the crisis in Esther! We also see why God was so intent on the complete destruction of the Amalekites. He knew what was ahead!

3:2. So, also, Christ refused to bow down to Satan (Matt. 4:9, 10). After Haman and his plans were destroyed, Mordecai wore a "great crown of gold" (8:15). After the total defeat of Satan and his plans, Christ will wear the crown of the "King of kings."

3:4. The word "matters" should be "reasons." Since the reason Mordecai would not bow before Haman was because he was a Jew, Haman sought to kill all Jews (3:6). Satan was surely behind this attempt to destroy all Israel -- because of his hatred for the Messiah who had been predicted as coming into the world through that nation.

3:6. Haman's purpose, if carried out, would have meant death to the remnant in Jerusalem also. Little did the Jews in the Land, under Ezra and Nehemiah, realize their lives were in danger more from events at the palace of the empire than from events in Jerusalem. So our greatest danger is from bitter animosity in the heavenlies, not from our problems down here (Eph. 6:12).

4:16 That they did not also **pray** is inconceivable -- yet **mention** of it is kept out of the record.

5:4. It was very wise of Esther to invite Haman also to the banquet! With the accusation being made in his presence, he must answer at once. He will have no chance to compose himself, make up an alibi, or flee from the king. His startled reaction no doubt proved his guilt to the king. Also Esther's willingness to make her accusations with Haman standing by proved to the king that she was not merely engaging in gossip.

6:1. What a busy night this was! The king couldn't sleep (probably he was wondering what could be so important to Esther that she was willing to risk her life to tell him about it -- 4:11). Haman was busy building a scaffold -- and evidently came into court before dawn because he just couldn't wait to execute Mordecai (5:14; 6:4). It is doubtful if Esther got much sleep for thinking about her (possible) loss of courage at the first day of the banquet, and wondering how things would go on the morrow. If Mordecai knew about the first day's banquet and plans for the second -- and he no doubt knew about the scaffold being built for him, for the Chamberlain knew -- then he probably didn't sleep well either!

7:1. By the second day of Esther's banquet **all was changed!** --

- * The king's interest had been intensified by having to wait to see what her request would be.

- * Esther's determination was strengthened by the knowledge that Haman was planning to kill Mordecai -- not in the coming months (the fate of all Jews under the decree) but **at once**. She dared not put off action again!

- * Haman was fearful, and in no condition emotionally to "play innocent." See Esther 5:14 and contrast 6:12 - 14.

- * The King had just been reminded of the value of the one Jew who had been the chief object of Haman's rage (7:9).

- * The gallows were now ready **for Haman**.

- * The King should have had a hint by now of Haman's personal ambitions (evidently **to become king!**) because of his suggestion for how the King should honor a man. Surely the King realized that Haman expected to be the one honored. That kind of conceit is hard to hide!

6:6. Haman's pride was his outstanding characteristic -- even as it is of Satan, and will be of the Anti-Christ. Notice his boasting before his friends and family (5:11, 12).

6:10. What a shock this must have been to Haman! He couldn't complain about what he had to do for Mordecai -- it was his own idea. He had talked too much!

6:11. Mordecai did not refuse this apparel as he had that sent by Esther earlier (4:4). Perhaps he saw there was no more need for mourning, as deliverance from their dreadful plight was on the way. This show of glory was a foreshadowing of the glory that was to be his later, as the Prime Minister. Significantly, it came just before the defeat of Haman. So, also, the show of glory at the transfiguration was a foreshadowing of His coming glory in the kingdom (2 Pet. 1:16 - 18). Similarly, the show of Christ's glory came just before the Cross - where Satan met his defeat.

7:3. Esther mentioned herself first because she knew her life was more important to this self centered king than the lives of the whole nation of Israel. Compare his reaction in 7:5 with that in 3:10, 11.

7:10. "Gallows" is literally "tree" in the Hebrew. This "tree" was erected by Haman for Mordecai -- but Haman himself was hanged on it against his will. Another "tree" was set up for the sinner (Barabbas -- **and me**) but the heavenly Mordecai was hanged on it **by His own choice, in love for the sinner.** See Gal. 3:13. "Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." Haman was hung on a tree. He is literally cursed to this day by Jews as the epitome of all evil. Yet Christ was made a "Haman" for me! He was **made to be sin, bearing sin, for me!**

8:3. The execution of Haman might pacify the King (7:10), but it could not solve the problem of the Jews -- or of Esther. The deadly, unalterable decree still remained. So the defeat of Satan was not enough, there must be salvation for those he had brought under the sentence of death. Satan is already a defeated foe -- he met his doom at the Cross (the "tree" -- 1 Pet. 2:24. Also the "prince of this world" in John 16:11 is a reference to Satan's defeat at the Cross in fulfillment of Gen. 3:15). But that, in itself, did not save men. It was the fact that Christ paid our penalty as our substitute on that Cross that laid the foundation for the decree of redemption and salvation.

8:15. Esther didn't realize that the existing decree couldn't be cancelled. So also the decree against **US**, "the soul that sinneth it shall die," couldn't merely be repealed. It took another decree that honored -- but off-set -- the first one. The "law of sin and death" was not repealed, but I am delivered from it by the law of the Spirit, "Life in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:2). The first law was honored by Christ giving His life, **under that law**, but for **me** (Rom. 3:31). Both in Esther and today the first decree is the "ministration of death." Men must know of this decree or they will have no interest in the second one which "giveth life" (2 Cor. 3:6). But they must hear of the second decree or they will die. No wonder the "posts ... hastened and pressed on" in Esther's day (Esther 8:14) and we must take God's message to the whole world today. ¹

8:8. The plan to allow the Jews to defend themselves was Mordecai's, **not** Esther's. She only wanted her people spared. She was not a "vengeful woman" as some have taught. Also it was the plan of Christ, our heavenly Mordecai, that redeemed us -- **not OURS!**

8:9. While, of necessity, this decree must cover every part of the former one (compare

¹ See chapter ten in "A City of Two Tales" (a book on Jonah and Nahum)-- by W. P. Heath, published by Scripture press, Grand Rapids, Mich.

the wording of 8:11 with 3:13), yet it was not dated **before** the other, as it could have been. It was for defense, not for offense. Dated a day earlier the enemy would have been defenseless against **attack** by the Jews! A day later than the first decree and there would have been no Jews left to defend themselves. With both decrees effective on the same day they can **defend themselves**, rather than maliciously attacking their enemies. Mordecai also was not "vengeful," but he was inflexibly determined his people should not perish!

8:11. This decree is not permission to seek out and attack, but to gather together and **defend themselves**. In the decree of Haman, the destruction of **all Jews** was in view (3:13). Here it is destruction **only** of those who attack them. Although women and children were included in both decrees, there is no evidence that a single woman or child was killed. The Hebrew word for "men" in 9:6, 12, 15 is a word which denotes a **male**. So the sons of Haman were slain and hanged on the tree, but there is no word about his wife being killed. They had the right to take the spoil also, but it is specifically recorded that they did not take it (9:10, 15, 16). This is quite notable when you consider the circumstances, and remember how "money hungry" some Jews have been at times.

8:14. Salvation has been provided -- now the **word** of it **must** go out (2 Cor. 5:18 - 20).

8:17. God's people have been rescued -- though they are still in a conflict with the forces of evil. They are more than conquerors through the help of the King's men (9:3; Zech. 12:8, 9; 1 Thess. 1:6 - 8; Rev. 19:1 - 14). The foe (Haman) has already been totally defeated (see John 16:11; Rev. 20:1 - 3). "All Israel" has been saved (physically in this case. See Isa. 61:2, 3; Zech. 12:10; Rom. 11:26 for the spiritual counterpart). Their leader has been exalted over Gentiles, and even the Gentiles are rejoicing and are glad (8:15). A beautiful millennial picture!

9:13 - 15. The deliverance must be completed, the work finished. The **leadership**, in the palace, of this anti-Semitism must be completely dealt with. They must not make the mistake made by King Saul when **he** was told to utterly destroy Amalek (1 Sam. 15:9).

9:14. There may be a connection between Haman's ten sons and the ten kings at the close of the revived Roman Empire during the Tribulation. Just as Haman's sons would be his obedient supporters in his program against Israel, so the ten kings will give their kingdoms and their power and strength unto the Beast (Rev. 17:12, 13, 17). In both cases the followers share the fate of their evil leader (Rev. 19:21).

10:3. Mordecai, like Joseph and Daniel, became Prime Minister over a Gentile kingdom.

--- William P Heath

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