

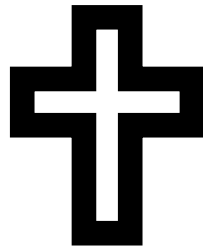
Twelve Lessons

on

Esther

by

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ESTHER – KEYS TO UNDERSTANDING THE BOOK – LESSON 1

Introduction: In Major W. Ian Thomas's book, *"If I Perish, I Perish."* he said, "Jesus is the Truth," John 14:6. The fundamental characteristic of truth is consistency: it must fit every known and unknown fact and situation, and is absolute. One of his students wrote the greatest lesson to help students of the Bible to clearly understand truth. I will incorporate that letter in the following:

"I get the picture in my mind of a giant jigsaw puzzle; if I have anything but the truth, at least one of the pieces will not fit and others will need forcing into place. The fundamental idea behind 'Jesus is the Truth' was that Jesus is the key to the understanding of all things, and almost the first thing you said was that the Lord Jesus Christ is the final exegesis of all things. Thus God prepared my mind.

"As I listened, as I copied up my notes and as ever since I have read my Bible and thought about it, pieces of the jigsaw puzzle have been falling over each other in their eagerness to tumble into place!

"It is as if I had been collecting pieces for the past four years but just flinging them into the box without any real thought of fitting them together. Now each time I come across one of these pieces it seems to fit into the total scheme of spiritual life and into the whole scheme of things in general, from verses of Scripture to insignificant things of everyday experience.

"I find it difficult to describe this sense of being utterly at one and in harmony with the Lord Jesus. Spiritual wisdom has become part of the sum total of experience rather than something detached and fragmented."

Lesson Goals:

1. To analyze the correct interpretations of Scripture according to 1 Cor. 10:11.
2. To examine the typology of the men and women in Esther.
3. To discuss the sovereignty of God in the affairs of a nation.

Definitions of Important Terms/Phrases:

1. Providence – The continuous activity of God in His creation by which He preserves and governs. The doctrine of providence affirms God's absolute lordship over His creation and confirms the dependence of all creation on the Creator. It is the denial of the idea that the universe is governed by chance or fate.
(Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright (c)1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)
2. Inspiration – A technical term for the Holy Spirit's supernatural guidance of those who received special revelation from God as they wrote the books of the Bible. The end result of this inspiration is that the Bible conveys the truths which God wanted His people to know and to communicate to the world.
(Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright (c)1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)
3. Canon – The word canon means a "rod"-specifically, a rod with graduated marks used for measuring length. This word refers to the list of individual books that were eventually judged as authoritative and included as a part of the Old Testament and the New Testament.
(Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright (c)1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF SYMBOLISM

A. Key Scripture for Interpretation – 1 Cor 10:11 – *"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."*

1. Literal Interpretation – *"Now all these things happened..."* Not fictionally or figuratively but factual.
2. Typology Interpretation – *"...unto them for ensamples."* Types, symbols, allegories.
3. Practical Interpretation – *"...and they are written for our admonition."*
4. Prophetic Interpretation – *"...upon whom the ends of the world are come."* The consummation of the ages (also Matt 13:40). The plural seems to point out how one stage succeeds another in the drama of human history. In a sense the ends of the ages like a curtain have come down to all of us. (from Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament)

B. Key Symbols for Interpretation – The Holy Spirit as Author of the Bible has chosen particular people, nations, countries, animals or inanimate objects as symbols with which to convey certain different spiritual meanings.

1. All saved men and women represent the Trinity and righteousness.
2. All lost men and women represent Satan and sin.
3. Key Symbolic People in Esther:
 - a. Esther – A picture of the Church, the redeemed of the Lord, believers in Jesus Christ.
 - b. Vashti – A picture of Israel, set aside for the Bride, the Church.

- c. Mordecai – A picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, the kinsman redeemer.
 - d. King Ahasuerus – A picture of the sovereign God the Father.
 - e. Haman – A picture of the Devil, also the Antichrist who will prophetically in Esther who opposes and tries to destroy the Jews in the Tribulation.
4. There are types or foreshadows of characters in the book of Esther that reveals how God saves old sinners.
 - a. The King – Represents the lost sinner.
 - b. Mordecai – Represents the Saviour.
 - c. Haman – Represents Satan.
 - d. Esther – Represents the Saint or Saved person or you, if you are born again by God’s Spirit.
 5. There are types in Esther that show the struggle between the Flesh and the Spirit.
 - a. King Ahasuerus – Represents the soul of man – The king living in the palace where decisions are made, policies declared, and decrees published.
 - b. The Kingdom – 127 provinces will represent the human body. The conduct of the people (or the body) and the way they behaved was affected by the king living in the palace.
 - c. Haman the Agagite – Represents the flesh. From the onset of the story Haman is already deeply entrenched within the palace, firmly established in the king’s affections and enjoying his confidence, for he *“advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him.”* (Vs. 1) Haman was an Amalekite who were bitter enemies of God's people. Amalek was the grandson of Esau who was born after the flesh (Gal. 4:22-29). In Exodus 17:16, the Amalekites are the enemies of God. In 1 Samuel 15, Saul is instructed to destroy all the Amalekites but he spares King Agag who is later slain by Samuel. The remnant of Amalekites escape from the area of attack including a woman who is carrying Agag's child. (1 Sam. 15:6-9; 1 Sam. 27:8; 2 Sam. 1:1; 8:12; Psa. 83:7). Saul's failure and disobedience lead to future problems for God's people. We find Haman the Agagite in Esther 3:1
 - d. Mordecai – Vs. 2-3 – He is sitting in the king’s gate outside the palace and having no access to the king, and exercising no influence whatsoever over him. He refused to bow in the presence of Haman. Mordecai will represent the Person of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the long-established enemy of the flesh. *“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other.”* (Galatians 5:17).

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF SYNCHRONIZATION

A. Controversy – Question: How can Esther be inspired?

1. The name of God is not even mentioned.
2. The book has only two moral teachings:
 - a. Implies that Israel is God's chosen and undefeatable people.
 - b. The belief that justice will eventually prevail.
3. The New Testament makes no mention of Esther.
4. Promotes a Jewish secular holiday, the celebration of Purim.
5. Who is the author? Esther, Ezra, or Mordecai. The book does not say.

B. Canonicity

1. The Jewish Council of Jamnia accepted it in AD 90 as a part of the Old Testament.
2. The Jews still celebrate Purim and have a veneration and love for the Book of Esther.
3. The Jews have always accepted the book as canonical.

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF SOVEREIGNTY

A. Sovereignty in Theology

1. A theological term which refers to the unlimited power of God, who has sovereign control over the affairs of nature and history (Isa 45:9-19; Rom 8:18-39).
2. The Bible declares that God is working out His sovereign plan of redemption for the world and that the conclusion is certain. (Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary).

B. Sovereignty in Time

1. Esther was included in the Biblical account to show how God's chosen people were spared extermination during their exilic years.
2. The major purpose of the book of Esther is to show how a host of Jews living in exile were saved from being exterminated by the hand of a Gentile monarch.
3. Though no name of God appears in the book, the divine Providence permeates the story.

4. The Providence of God is seen mightily in the history of the Jews:
 - a. Providence preserved the nation of Israel in the oppression of Pharaoh and through such devastating judgments as those of the wilderness journeys.
 - b. Providence had a hand in the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions, the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and Hitler's mad slaughter of the Jews during WW II.
5. The word "providence" is mentioned only one time in the Bible and spoken of a man, Herod. Acts 24:2 – *"And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence,"* Providence means "to provide." In deed, we see this in Gen 22:8 – *"And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together."* And God did provide a ram to die in the place of Isaac. Nineteen hundred years later God provided a Lamb on that same mountain ridge that goes through Jerusalem.
6. J. Vernon McGee best describes providence: Providence means that the hand of God is in the glove of human events. When God is not at the steering wheel, He is the backseat driver. He is the coach who calls the signals from the bench. Providence is the unseen rudder on the ship of state. God is the pilot at the wheel during the night watch. As someone has said, "He makes great doors swing on little hinges." God brought together a little baby's cry and a woman's heart down by the River Nile when Pharaoh's daughter went to bathe. The Lord pinched little Moses and he let out a yell. The cry reached the heart of the princess and God used it to change the destiny of a people. That was providence. That was the hand of God. The theme of the book of Esther could be "It just so happened."