

Esther 1:1-8 A Contrast in Glories

Today we are beginning a study in a very interesting yet unique book of the Bible. **The book of Esther –**

A) **The Uniqueness of the book is this: The name of God is not mentioned in this book at all.**

B) **There are no prayers – no sacrifices – no offerings – no pictures of the cross or of Christ.**

C) **Despite the absence of the name of God - God is at work all the way through the book.**

1) **He is writing throughout the book – “I am God and I am here. I am working things out according to my divine plan.”**

The major theological point of the book of Esther is that God fulfills his covenant promises through what theologians call *the providence of God.*

A) **Providence that is an interesting word and concept**

B) **It comes from the Latin, providentia. Pro means “before” or “ahead of time”; videntia is from videre, meaning “to see,”**

C) **Put them together, and you have “seeing ahead of time,” which is what Almighty God does.**

D) He sees the events of life ahead of time— something which we of course can never do.

We’re great at history. Our hindsight is almost always 20/20.

A) **But we’re lousy at prophecy, lousy at foreseeing the specifics of the future.**

B) **We have no real clue what will ultimately happen tomorrow, or next month or this time next year.**

C) **Not knowing drives some of us folks crazy. It sends us into extremes of highs and lows.**

D) **But our invisible God, in his providence is continually, constantly, and confidently at work.**

1) **He never changes. He never wavers, He is never absent even when we feel like He is**

The Story of Esther stands as a wonderful reminder of how God is often at work behind the scenes

A) **He is working in unseen ways in the events of our lives**

B) **And sometimes when God is working the things that he is doing are not really for today.**

1) **They are for 2 yrs from now or 5yrs down the line.**

C) **And it is not until we get to that point 5 yrs later that we are able to see clearly what God was doing at that time. 5 yrs before**

D) He was fulfilling the truth of Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

E) **And then we say, Now I get it! - Now I understand**

Esther is one of those kinds of stories where God is laying out years in advance for His purposes to be fulfilled at a strategic moment of history.

A) **There are five main Characters in the story:**

- A Pagan King – **Ahasuerus** also known as Xerxes
- Strong minded Queen – Vashti
- **A wicked officer named Haman** – Instrument of Satan to try and exterminate the Jewish race.
- A older Jewish man named Mordecai

B) **A young Jewish orphan named Hadassah also called Esther**

C) **Esther’s story is a beautiful message here for anyone who has ever experienced brokenness,**
1) **for anyone who has ever been crushed by life,**

D) for anyone who has ever felt that their past is so discolored, so disjointed, so fractured

1) **that there is no way in the world God can make reason and meaning out of it.**

E) Imagine this little girl who must of cried her heart out at the death of her parents

1) **Who years later would become the key instrument to the very survival of her people, the Jews.**

The setting of the story is Persia: (Modern day Iran)

A) A little bit of History as to how we got here is helpful

B) Babylon (Modern day Iraq) was the ruling power in the middle east for 400yrs

C) During the time from 605BC – 562 BC King Nebuchadnezzar was the leader of the Babylonian Empire

D) In 586BC – He invaded Jerusalem and took a bunch of bright young Jewish people captive. – Daniel & friends

E) Israel's captivity in Babylon was the fulfillment of what God had warned the people of Israel would happen if they rebelled – idols

1) They would go into captivity

During the Babylonian invasion by King Nebuchadnezzar –

A) The Jewish temple in Jerusalem was destroyed

B) The temple in Jerusalem had been built by Solomon

1) Symbolized the zenith of Israel's glory.

C) The destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the subjugation of God's people to a pagan power

1) signaled the end of the glory that was ancient Israel.

In 539 BC Cyrus the Great led the Persian armies to defeat Babylon

A) This was the fulfillment of an amazing Prophecy – that Isaiah the prophet prophesied

B) In Isaiah 44:28- 45:1-7 Isaiah prophesied that the Babylonian empire would be overthrown by the Persians –

1) Isaiah named the leader of this army from Persia who would defeat the Babylonians – Cyrus –

C) Here is the amazing thing: Isaiah penned those words 150 years before Cyrus was even born –

D) In 539BC – it happened exactly as Isaiah predicted and Army from Persia led by a leader named Cyrus – defeated the Babylonians

E) Secular history even verifies that all of these events came true.

Once in power God would moved on the heart of Cyrus to issue a decree to let the Jewish people return to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple.

A) Cyrus even offered to use Persian finances to pay for the construction

Ezra 1:1-4 give us insight into that time

B) Here is what is interesting about that decree –

1) A remnant went to Jerusalem but the majority stayed behind in Persia

C) See most of the Jewish people were comfortable in Persia – they had settled into their lives there.

1) They had jobs, houses, some were more Persian than they were Hebrew.

D) To enjoy the success and wealth of the people in Persia all they had to do was play their cards right, abide by the rules,

1) and fade into the fabric of the culture.

This provides a stark picture for us. – The Bible makes it clear that this world is not our home.

A) We belong to another Kingdom –

¹³ For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, ¹⁴ who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins. Colossians 1:13

B) Over and over again in scripture the Lord admonishes us to not get to comfortable in this world – this kingdom.

C) Find the Balance – being in the world – but not of the world –

1) Make an impact in this world – but don't get to attached to it

The book of Esther takes place about 50 yrs after the decree of King Cyrus to go and rebuild the temple

A) **Ahasuerus** the grandson of Cyrus is now on the throne in Persia –

B) He is the Father of Artaxerxes who will be reigning during the time of the book of Nehemiah

C)With that has our backdrop Lets begin the story

Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus (this was the Ahasuerus who reigned over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, from India to Ethiopia),

A)Huge land mass – take a Map of the US – stack another on top of it – give you an idea of the amount of territory he ruled

2 in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the citadel,

B)Shushan was the winter palace for the Persian king. It is in a desert area.

C)It gets much too hot to stay around there in the summer,

1)But it was the place to be much of winter and Spring

D)Ahasuerus ascended the throne in November 486 BC at the age of thirty-two.

3 that in the third year of his reign he made a feast for all his officials and servants — the powers of Persia and Media, the nobles, and the princes of the provinces being before him — 4 when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty for many days, one hundred and eighty days in all.

Can you believe that? A 180-day banquet!

A)We're talking six full months of partying.

B)This would make today's celebrity blowouts look like stingy potlucks!- Backyard BBQ

C) For six months, every kind of exhibition was put before these people to display the majesty and glory of King Ahasuerus.

5 And when these days were completed, the king made a feast lasting seven days for all the people who were present in Shushan the citadel, from great to small, in the court of the garden of the king's palace.

A)Ahasuerus brought the banquet to a climax in the last seven days- he invited all the people small and great to attend

B)In V.6-8 we are given a description of the beauty and grandeur of his palace

6 There were white and blue linen curtains fastened with cords of fine linen and purple on silver rods and marble pillars; and the couches were of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of alabaster, turquoise, and white and black marble. 7 And they served drinks in golden vessels, each vessel being different from the other, with royal wine in abundance, according to the generosity of the king. 8 In accordance with the law, the drinking was not compulsory; for so the king had ordered all the officers of his household, that they should do according to each man's pleasure.

Ahasuerus was thirty-five years of age and rich beyond imagination.

A)When Alexander the Great later entered the palace at Shushan

B)what he discovered, in today's dollars, was the equivalent of \$54.5 billion in bullion

1)And 270 tons of minted gold coins.

The purpose of this 6 month party to put on display the greatness of Ahasuerus!

A)Archaeologist excavating Shushan have found inscriptions in which this king refers to himself as the great king, The king of kings.

B)The king of the lands occupied by many races. The king of this great earth."

1)Little bit of an Ego trip right – Look how great I am

C)ALI – I am the greatest ... Superman

D)The Purpose of this 6 mth extravaganza was impress the leaders from the 127 provinces –

E)Ahasuerus wanted to launch a military campaign against the Grecian empire

1)and he knew he would need the support of all 127 provinces to win.

The interesting thing is Persia would lose that war

A)The Kingdom of Persia would be defeated and taken over by Greece

B)This is what neither King Ahasuerus nor anyone who was mesmerized by the opulence of that Banquet could fathom

1)The Glory of this Kingdom was wasn't going to last.

C)Always the case: The Kingdoms of this World don't last –

Greece led by Alexander the Great would defeat Persia –

A)But then Rome would come along and defeat Greece.

B)Rome would implode from inside and destroy itself

C)Modern Dynasties and Kingdoms – Don't last

1)Germany was defeated – never the same

D)Former USSR collapsed –

America is on the decline – Morally, economically, militarily and spiritually

A)We have a Governor who thinks he is all that the Ultimate power

B)We have leaders in our country who think they are calling the shots

C)God is on the throne – He is Sovereign in the affairs of men –

1)His plan will ultimately be carried out

D)Remember that – dark days

The Remainder of our time today – Contrast the Glory and Kingdoms of man with the Glory and Kingdom of God

A)The Glory of man is fleeting - *“All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away. 1 Peter 1:24*

B)Man's glory is always fading.

C)The Glory of God is permanent: Psalm 2

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One.

“Let us break their chains,” they say, “and throw off their fetters.” The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.

Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,

“I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill.”

The Kingdom of man are meant to cause envy.

A)Look how great I am – so much greater than you –

B)Like IG Post – right? Perfect life –

1)Imagine Ahasuerus IG post – all his cool stuff – Gold cups – each different design

C)Look How cool I am – how rich I am -

The Kingdom of God is meant to cause wonder - Psalm 19:1-2 -The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship.

²Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known.

A)Today at Sunset – all up and down the coast – people today doing this – camera – gazing

B)Not just here but all over the world

CS Lewis – Nature creates a longing in the soul of man -that it cannot fulfill –

C)Invitation into something bigger than ourselves

The Glory of God is meant to bring a confidence to our hearts –

A)the God of Glory – is on the throne – on my side

B)David's view of Goliath after writing Psalm 19

The Kingdom and glory of man is guarded.

A)It is only put on display in situations like this

B)Summed – Invitation – couldn't just roll into the party

C)High School – curfew – Hotels – Wedding receptions and Proms –

1)Chased out by security

D)Listen you had to receive an invite to the party – but you were also expected to be there – KING

1)Where were you – better have a good excuse

E)But as I said earlier – the whole deal was an opulent attempt at Manipulation

1)Need your support for this war

The glory of God is meant to be shared -

Turn to Isaiah 6

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. 2 Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

3 And one cried to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!” 4 And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

Great display of Glory – Holiness and Ominous of God - Notice Isaiah’s reaction

5 So I said:“Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.”

Six chapters the prophet was Woe is you and you..

A)See’s God – Woe is me – I am undone – toast –

B)What happens next is so incredible

6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. 7 And he touched my mouth with it, and said:

“Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged.”

C)Picture of God’s heart – I will do what is necessary to draw you near ! – Pic of the Gospel

God was saying I want you to share in my Glory!

A)Who can ascend unto the hill of the Lord – Holy temple – clean hands and a pure heart

B)That eliminates me – ALL OF US

1)Sin separated us

C)I am going to deal with your sin – Sent Jesus

Whosoever will let Him Come –

A)All are invited – but there is a criteria

B)Entrance through One name – JESUS

1)WHOSOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM – not PERISH everlasting life

C)It is finished Veil rent – COME BOLDY....

D)God gives us a another glimpse of his Glory - Sending his son

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14

E)Jesus comes on the scene – perfect blending of truth – Holiness of God

1)Also Grace – God’s heart to forgive, RESCUE and RESTORE

F)After Isaiah is purged of his sin notice what happens next V.8

8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.”

A)Isaiah is invited into partnership with God

B) Jesus did the same with us Commissions us – Go into all the world

Question how are God’s people to live in a godless society?

A)Blend in? Assimilate?

B)No we were made to stand out and to assist – we were made for this moment –

C)But we have to see this world for what it is – and our calling to the next

Moses understood this: Son of Pharaoh’s daughter –

A)Position power – prominence

B)Moses realized he belonged to another Kingdom

²⁴ By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, ²⁶ esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. Hebrews 11:24-26

C)Guys, we belong to another Kingdom

We get to be image bearers of the glory of that Kingdom

¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. ²
Corinthians 3:18 ESV

COME BOLDLY TODAY – THRONE

We are called to be bearers of the Glory of God

⁹ But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. 1 Peter 2:9-10

¹¹ Beloved, I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, ¹² having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

1 Peter 2:11-12

C)Grace and Mercy to help in our time of need