



The Chosen Life Studies in Esther

Session 11 – Inconspicuous Providence | Introduction to Esther

Esther's story makes for great reading—but it is more than an ancient tale of intrigue and how events came together for one courageous woman to help save her people. God's name is never mentioned but as events unfold, it is obvious that God is hiding in plain sight.

Goals for this Session:

- Discover where Esther's story fits into the timeline of Old Testament history.
- Consider why we can trust God's active presence, power and plan for our lives.
- Pray for insight and opportunity to see, and be used, by God this week.

Ice Breaker

Can you give an example of being *in the right place at the right time* for God to use you?

The Back Story

Having just finished our study of Nehemiah, the next book in the Bible is Esther. But Esther's story is actually a prequel to Nehemiah. Without her part in history, Ezra and Nehemiah's families would have been casualties of Haman's plot to exterminate the Jews.

Esther was a young Jewish girl who was raised by her cousin, Mordecai. She lived in Susa, the capital of Persia during the reign of King Ahasuerus (also known as Xerxes) who ruled from 486 to 465 BC. This was long after the initial decree given by Cyrus allowing Jews to go back to Jerusalem. The first wave of exiles to return (led by Zerubbabel) settled in Judah, but most Jews chose to stay in Persia. At the time, Darius was king and he treated the Jews favorably. When his son Ahasuerus came to power, he vowed to avenge his father's defeat at the battle of Marathon by the Greeks. Ahasuerus gathered his political and military leaders to plan an invasion. This is where the book of Esther begins.

But this isn't a lesson in ancient Persian history—it's the remarkable story of God at work behind the scenes, faithfully and actively involved in the lives of His people. If you have ever looked at the circumstances around you and wondered *where is God in all of this*, you're in good company. The book of Esther shows us how to live by faith, not by sight.

For Group Discussion

The Book of Esther tells the story of a Jewish girl who became queen of Persia and saved her people from a plot to destroy them. The writer isn't identified, but he had insider knowledge and narrated events in great detail.

1. Although God is never directly mentioned by name, His sovereign activity is seen all the way through the narration. This literary technique would've been familiar and fascinating to ancient readers. On the surface, all these random events appeared to be caused by fate. The common worldview was that life was controlled by some impersonal force and nothing a person could do would change that. The Bible teaches something different.

What does Romans 8:28 say?

It's been said that destiny is not a matter of chance—it's a matter of choice. How does the choice to trust and obey God shape our outlook and affect every other choice we make?

2. Do you believe that God is present and active in your life, even when you can't see the big picture? Why or why not?

“To the child of God, there is no such thing as accident. He travels an appointed way. The path he treads was chosen for him when, as yet, he existed only in the mind of God.”

3. What is one takeaway point that you got from today's teaching?

A.W. Tozer
We Travel an Appointed Way

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