

## The Providence of God: A Study of the book of Esther

### Chapter 3 - Study Questions

“While Esther has all the ingredients for a good story, what makes it even more fascinating is that it is a book of the Bible, which means it is a book “breathed” by God – inspired, recorded, and preserved for eternity. A divine work ordained by the One and Only True God. And because of that, Esther has a purpose beyond being simply a fascinating story...As it says in Romans 15:4, (this) was written for your instruction – so that you might have encouragement and hope for your life.” (Precepts)

- Begin with prayer – ask the Spirit of God to lead you into all truth and to use His Word to help you know Him better and to understand His ways.
- Read the first 3 chapters of Esther. Don’t mark a single thing in chapter 3 at this point; rather just absorb what is happening. Please don’t read beyond chapter 3! (Suggestion: print out the chapter on a separate piece of paper. This may be helpful as you observe, mark, and take notes.) Have fun digging into the precious Truth that is God’s Word!

#### Observation:

1. Get the facts:
  - a) **Who** are the main characters in Esther chapter 3?
    - Who comes front and center in this chapter and what kind of a man is he?  
Without going back to the text, answer this question. See what you remember from just one read.
2. **What** is happening? (Main events)
3. **Where?** Does the chapter indicate where the events are happening?
4. **When?** Any references to time?
5. Take note of repeated words/phrases. If it is helpful, mark or color code them. (Words and phrases are repeated because they are important!)
  - a. Has *edict* been used before in Esther? Where? Why? What was it? Go back to chapter 1 or 2 and look for this same word.

- b. Let's take a look at the edict—the one decreed in chapter 3. List everything you learn about this edict (who, what, when, where, why, how).
  - c. The edict, as you saw, was to annihilate all the Jews (3:13). Does the king know it is the Jews who are to be annihilated? Read the chapter carefully and record your answer.
  - d. When is the edict going into effect and how was the date determined?
6. In one phrase or sentence, summarize the main event of each paragraph in Esther chapter 3. This will help you determine the overall theme of the chapter.

3:1-6 (example: *Mordecai refuses to honor Haman*)

3:7-11

3:12-15

**Interpretation:** (Using your paragraph summaries and observations, determine the subject, theme and purpose of this chapter.)

Subject: (What is the author's general topic?)

Theme: (What specifically about the subject is being discussed?)

Purpose: (This is the purpose the Holy Spirit had in mind when He inspired the passage. Ask yourself, *why is this in the Bible?*)

\*\*\*To help you determine the subject, theme, and purpose of this text, **ask questions of the text.**

Below are some examples to help you start:

7. Why would Mordecai refuse to bow to Haman? We do not want to “suppose”—but we also don't want to miss any clues. Are there any clues? Let's start in Esther chapter 3 and then look at other passages of Scripture to see what we can learn.

- a. What reason does Mordecai give the king's servants for not bowing to Haman?
  - b. How does God describe Haman when He introduces him into the affairs of Ahasuerus's kingdom in 3:1?
  - c. How does God again describe Haman in 3:10?
  - d. According to the text, why doesn't Haman just take out Mordecai?
8. Let's see if Scripture might interpret Scripture for us. Find a concordance and see if there are any other references to Agagites in any other book of the Bible. There are not. But what about Agag? If you look up Agag, you'll find him mentioned in Numbers and in 1 Samuel. Let's start there!
- a. The first mention of Agag is in Numbers 24:7. To put this verse into context, read 24:3-7 which, as you see, is an oracle of Balaam regarding Jacob. What do you learn about the relationship between the two—Jacob and Agag? Who's on top?
  - b. Let's go to the only other place Agag is mentioned in the Bible. Read 1 Samuel 15:8 and then read 1 Samuel 15. Look for every mention of Agag, Amalek, and the Amalekites. What do you learn about Agag in this chapter (who, what, when, where, why, how)?
  - c. One of the things you saw about Agag was that he was an Amalekite. The Amalekites came from Amalek, which those who have studied Exodus recognize as an enemy of Israel. Read Exodus 17:8-16, giving attention to verse 16. What do you learn?
  - d. Finally, when were the above books written? Before or after Mordecai lived? Could Mordecai have had access to or knowledge of those writings?
  - e. Now, then, do you have enough information to give a plausible reason as to why Mordecai wouldn't bow to Haman, the Agagite? Is it a good reason? Any insight onto why Haman wanted all of the Jews destroyed? Write out your insights.
9. Read Proverbs 6:16-19 and list those things the Lord hates. Then put a star next to any that compare to what you have learned about Haman the Agagite so far.
10. Now when, according to the text, does Mordecai make his nationality known? Think about the circumstances in the light of what you have just studied.

**Application:**

11. Think about the lessons of chapter 3. Is there a new idea that was introduced to you, or one that reinforced what you already know? What were you challenged to do in light of this? Did the chapter point out any error in your attitude or actions? What changes does this require in your life?

- a. Think of how this chapter relates to you and list some specific actions you will take as a result.
  
12. In times of unbiblical laws and leaders, what are some lessons we can learn from Mordecai's conduct?
  
13. Review the list of things the Lord hates from Proverbs 6:16-19. It was obvious which of these Haman struggled with. Are there any sins on this list that you need God's help to fight? 1 John 1:9 tells us that we will receive God's forgiveness when we are willing to confess. Repent, confess and seek God's help in fighting these sinful and destructive tendencies. Consider asking a godly woman to hold you accountable in this area. And praise God that He is greater than our sin, and willing to forgive those who come to Him in humility and repentance!