

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

Chapter 1 - 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 – asking God to lead and guide you into all truth.

Read Esther chapter 1. (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. Identify the type of literature the book of Esther is. Historical narrative (Ezra), poetry (Psalms), prophecy (Isaiah), wisdom literature (Proverbs)?

2. Get the facts:
 - a) Who are the main characters in Esther chapter 1? Describe these characters.

 - b) What is happening? (Main events)

 - c) Where? Does the chapter indicate where the events are happening?

d) When? Any references to time?

e) How does the passage describe the feasts given by King Ahasuerus?

3. Take note of repeated words/phrases. Are the words there 1x, 2x, 4x? If it is helpful, mark them-color-code using markers, highlighters, etc.

(Words/phrases are repeated because they are important. Remember, in biblical times individuals didn't have their own copies of God's Word.

Scriptures were read to them; one of the ways to help people get the point was to hear it over and over.)

4. In one or two sentences, summarize the paragraphs in Esther chapter 1. This helps in finding out the theme of the paragraph.

1:1-4 (example: During the third year of his reign, King Ahasuerus displayed his riches and power by giving a banquet for all his princes, officers, and nobles.)

1:5-9

1:10-12

1:13-20

1:21-22

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:

5. What do you surmise about King Ahasuerus's character, the way he rules, and his values when you look at the feasts he put on?

6. When you think about the reign and power of the king, why is it significant that the Queen disobeyed his command?

7. What do the seemingly random events in chapter 1 tell you about God?
8. One comforting theme of the book of Esther is the providence of God. How do you see this in chapter 1? Give specific examples from the text.

Application:

9. Though God is not mentioned in the book of Esther, it is evident that His loving hand was providentially working behind the scenes to bring about His good purpose. How has God's providence been displayed in the details of your life?
10. What should your response to God be for His care for you? What does Scripture say your response should be to God? (example: Romans 12:1-2, Psalm 105:1-7)
11. "God and His Kingdom are different from King Ahasuerus and his kingdom. God demonstrated his love for his people and his glory (John 3:16); Ahasuerus demonstrated his love for himself and his comfort. The holy kingdom of God and the worldly kingdom of Ahasuerus—and earthly kingdoms of our own day—have different goals and means to accomplish those goals." (J. Roach) **Which kingdom do you seek? As you look at your life, which kingdom is displayed?**

Be encouraged! With eyes of faith, we can see God moving in every circumstance of our lives to bring about His glory and our good. The providence of God brings us true comfort because it speaks of His love and concern for us. As we continue our study of the book of Esther, may we be encouraged to have a greater trust in God's providence!