



# BIBLE IN A YEAR 2020

## ESTHER



**FOR SUCH A  
TIME AS THIS**

# Monday 7 December: Esther 1-3

Where is God? Liz Nixon writes:

## What did I like about today's reading?

This King knows how to party! A total of 187 days of feasting and drinking, showing off his splendour and wealth - the guests would have been incredibly drunk, so I don't blame Queen Vashti for refusing to come out and parade in front of them!

I like the small details in the Bible which change my view on a story and it's clear that this was more than a beauty contest – this was a contest to see who could satisfy the King in the bedroom! After an evening with the King, Esther left the place of the virgin women and moved in with the other concubines of the King. It's a murky start for Esther but it's not the end!

A villain arrives in the shape of Haman. He is a descendant of King Agag of the Amalekites. In 1 Samuel, Saul was told to destroy the Amalekites, but he failed to do so, costing himself the throne, and enabling the Amalekite line to continue all the way through to Haman. It's easy to imagine the dislike between the Amalekites and the Jews down through history. So, when Jewish Mordecai refuses to bow down to Haman, we see Haman's animosity and dislike fan into flames of hatred and murderous plots of genocide.

## What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

Given that God isn't mentioned in the book at all, it's an invitation to search through the chapters and see where He is working to save individuals and His people. Like the book of Ruth, there are way too many God-incidences for Him not to be involved and up to something!

Here's a few just from these first chapters: Esther is naturally very beautiful; she is taken to the place; Esther wins favour with everyone who sees her and gets special privileges; she pleases the King, who has the most beautiful women in the empire to choose from; Mordecai happens to overhear a plot to kill the king and in telling Esther, the assassination plot is thwarted with his name credited for it. That's too many co-incidences for them not to be God ordained!

It would be easy for the Jews to think God had abandoned them, given that they had been exiled from Israel for the last 50 + years. But God had been moving his people into position at the right time – He had created Esther to be incredibly beautiful, knowing her beauty would please the King and that he would make her his Queen, able to save God's people.

## What am I going to do differently as a result?

Accept God's invite to see where He is at work and work with Him, expecting He'll give me the favour I need for doors to open.

## Who am I going to share this with?

My husband.

## **Tuesday 8 December: Esther 4-6**

God at work behind the scenes. Liz Nixon writes:

### **What did I like about today's reading?**

I love Mordecai's confidence that relief and deliverance will undoubtedly come for the Jews – he is a godly man who knows exactly who God is, that He does not abandon His people and will come to their rescue. I love that he challenges Esther, suggesting that perhaps she has been elevated to Queen of Persia “for such a time as this” to deliver the Jews. Mordecai has a kingdom mindset, speaking into Esther's destiny, pointing to who she could be, encouraging her to step out of her comfort zone and partner with God to save His people.

I really admire Esther's bravery. Once she decides she will speak to the King, she organises a prayer team to fast and pray for her. She knows that she desperately needs God's favour for the King to be willing to speak to her. Even as a Queen, she could not just go and speak to King Xerxes, this was no modern marriage! She had to wait for him to ask for her, which hadn't happened for more than a month. Or she could request to see him, but he could refuse and then execute her for even asking! But she is willing to die in trying, saying “if I perish, I perish”.

I've also enjoyed the irony that Haman assumes the King wishes to honour him and makes extravagant suggestions of how the king could do that. Then the brilliant twist that the King wishes to honour Mordecai, and Haman must lead the honouring of him, with all the things he had meant for himself!

### **What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?**

Just because God is silent, it does not mean He is uninvolved and sat idly by watching things unfold. Whilst Haman is scheming to murder Mordecai, God is at work setting things in motion. The king is unable to sleep and asks for his record book to be read to him, revealing that Mordecai had saved his life. This key event happens the very night before Haman plans to hang Mordecai – clearly God uses sleepless nights to fulfil His purposes!

It's also a reminder that God loves to partner with His people, ordinary people like Mordecai, Esther and me! We get invited to participate as His sons and daughters in the family business of bringing forth the kingdom and pushing back the evil in this world. God could have easily dealt with Haman Himself, but He chose to give opportunity to Esther and Mordecai, who accepted His invite and worked with Him to save His people.

### **What am I going to do differently as a result?**

I would love to have Mordecai's confidence in God, assuming God will intervene. So, I'm going to pray and ask God to increase my confidence in Him.

### **Who am I going to share this with?**

Those friends that I spend the most time with.

# Thursday 10 December: Esther 7-10

God, The Rescuer Liz Nixon writes:

## What did I like about today's reading?

How things have changed for Haman! He had just been promoted higher than any other official with people bowing to him but now, he suffers the humiliation of having to parade Mordecai around the city on a horse!

Whilst enjoying himself at a second banquet, where he thinks he's been invited as guest of honour, Haman is revealed to be the enemy of Esther's people. Haman begs the Queen for his life but somehow, embarrassingly falls down on the couch where she is sitting – the King walks in at that exact moment and thinks Haman is trying to molest her! He is sentenced to death upon the very gallows he had built for Mordecai. Not a good day, but this villain has got what he deserved!

I also like how things turn out for Esther - the Bible tells us she has had a challenging start to life: she was living in exile and her people were scattered across the Persian empire; an orphan, raised by her cousin; taken to the palace, most likely without her consent; had to sleep with the King to see if she was suitable for marriage; faced life as a concubine, stuck in the palace and unable to marry, available only to the King whenever he wanted; risked execution for asking to meet with the King.

Esther starts the book as a captured sex slave, the property of the king, but by the end, she has helped saved God's people, has power and authority to issue her own decree about the celebration of Purim and a book of the Bible is named after her!

## What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

Firstly, God is sovereign. I can trust that God is always at work, often in unseen ways, to save His people. He sees the evil that is carried out on the earth and does much to stop it and punish the evildoer. His eye is on those whose hearts are soft and He chooses to partner with ordinary people to fulfil His extraordinary purposes and plans.

The book of Esther is a mini version of the whole of God's story and it's a reminder that God is about rescuing and saving people. That's His heart in every story, including mine.

Secondly, it reminds me that God has a history of raising up His "ordinary" people into incredible positions of power within foreign, ungodly nations – think of Joseph as Prime Minister of Egypt; Moses as Prince of Egypt; Daniel as Chief Minister; Esther as Queen of Persia; and finally, Mordecai is promoted to second in rank only to King Xerxes.

## What am I going to do differently as a result?

I want to pray for more people of faith being raised into positions of power and authority. The world needs men and women who are compassionate, just, and full of God's wisdom to lead and make decisions.

## Who am I going to share this with?

My family.