

ESTHER: OBEYING GOD IN LEAN AND LONELY TIMES
Part I: Encouragement To PERSONAL Obedience In Lean And Lonely Times
(Esther 1:1-2:23 with 3:1-15)

I. Introduction

- A. Sometimes the absence of godliness in God's people **around** us tempts us away from heeding the Lord: if nobody *else* heeds the Lord, an individual may ask **WHY should he** do so, revealing his own slackness!
- B. The Book of Esther faces this subject, revealing the awesome **sovereignty** God holds over **all** His people; this makes it **imperative** that the *individual* believer **heed** Him even when carnality in other believers, carnality in the believer himself or evil in the world around him seems to make it fruitless to do so:

II. Encouragement To PERSONAL Obedience In Lean And Lonely Times, Esther 1:1-2:23 with 3:1-15.

- A. The Book of Esther records events that took place when God's people were spiritually weak, and when personal obedience **humanly** seemed *laborious* for the **individual** Hebrew:
 - 1. Though some of the Hebrew people had returned from the Babylonian exile under Cyrus' decree, due in part to their **own** lack of spiritual vitality, they had taken 21 years to rebuild the temple, Bible Know. Com., O.T., p. 699; cf. Ezra 1:1-11; 4:1-6:15 with the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah.
 - 2. Also, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah reveal these exiles had not followed "the Deuteronomic Covenant and therefore were under God's curse rather than . . . His . . . blessing," *Ibid.*, p. 700.
 - 3. Besides, many "disobedient people" of the Hebrews had failed to return to Palestine where God wanted them, *Ibid.*, p. 701. Thus, for those who had returned to the land, considering so many had stayed in **comfortable Persia** would have discouraged them in their **hardships** of trying to heed God.
- B. In such a setting, God's sovereign arrangement of events to preserve and prod His people to heed Him would have acted to encourage **all** the Hebrew people toward **PERSONAL obedience** as follows:
 - 1. As events in the book unfold, it is evident God allowed the wicked man in Haman to threaten the very existence of the Hebrew people in Persia so they might be motivated to return to Israel, Esther 3:1-15:
 - a. God allowed Persia's king Ahasuerus (Xerxes) to promote Haman above the other princes, Est. 3:1.
 - b. However, the Hebrew, Mordecai, refused to bow to Haman as did the other servants of the king, something Mordecai knew was necessary to heed Exodus 20:5 in that Haman had apparently claimed some sort of divine attributes to elicit such a bow, cf. Ryrie St. Bib., KJV, fn. to Esther 3:2.
 - c. When Haman learned of Mordecai's refusal to bow to him, to solve the problem as Haman saw it, he planned to destroy not only Mordecai, but all Jews who held to such an Ex. 20:5 belief, Est. 3:3ff
 - d. Thus, Haman led the king to produce an edict to destroy all the Hebrews under the guise that they were rebellious to the king in general, Esther 3:7-15a. This upset the city of Shushan where there were so many Hebrews under the king as well as the Jews throughout Persia, Esther 3:15b.
 - e. Such events would have made Persia's Hebrews think **seriously** about **returning** to Palestine!
 - 2. Those Hebrews who heard of these events in the Book of Esther would **also** have appreciated **God's sovereign work** to **SUPPORT** the **example** of **PERSONAL obedience** to God in Mordecai's actions:
 - a. From the Esther 6:1-2 events, the Hebrews would have seen a critical turn of events to support the deliverance of them as a people and the demise of Haman come because **GOD** had kept the king awake so he would be read the report of how **Mordecai** had rescued him from assassination!
 - b. This rescue had occurred by **God's** sovereign control **BEFORE** Haman's rise, cf. Esther 2:21-23.
 - c. Then, when queen Vashti had been defrocked by the king and Esther had been put in her place (Esther 1:1-2:20), **God** had arranged for Esther, an orphan to be heavily influenced by her cousin, **Mordecai**, who had raised her, Esther 2:5-7.
 - d. Thus, **GOD** made **room** even for "disobedient" Mordecai (who still lived in Persia) who lived in a spiritually slack time for God's people to be able to **disobey** Haman to **heed GOD**, a move that humanly seemed foolhardy to do so, only to be **BLESSED** in the **end** for it **because of God!**

Lesson: *The Book of Esther reveals that GOD makes it WORTHWHILE for INDIVIDUALS to HEED Him EVEN THOUGH, at the TIME, it seems futile in view of man's own sin or the evil around him.*

Application: *WE must learn from Mordecai's life the VALUE of PERSONALLY heeding God even if (a) evil opponents are strong and (b) others of God's people or (c) we ourselves have spiritually failed!*