

## ESTHER: OBEYING GOD IN LEAN AND LONELY TIMES

### Part II: Encouragement To Influence OTHERS To Heed God In Lean And Lonely Times

(Esther 1:1-2:23 with 4:1-17)

#### 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* not only **heed** God, but **ALSO influence others** to do so even if carnality in himself, in other believers or evil in the world around him seem to make it futile:

#### II. Encouragement To Influence OTHERS To Heed God In Lean And Lonely Times, 1:1-2:23; 4:1-17.

- 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 encouraged **all** the Hebrew people toward **influencing OTHERS** to heed the Lord:
  1. As we previously learned, events in the book unfold, showing God let the evil Haman threaten the very existence of the Hebrew people in Persia so they might be motivated to return to Israel, Esther 3:1-15.
  2. Besides appreciating God's work to support the example of personal obedience to God in Mordecai's act to refuse to bow to Haman as a deity (Esther 3:2-5 with Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, fn. to Esther 3:2), a matter which comprised our former lesson, Hebrews hearing of the events in Esther would have been encouraged to **influence each OTHER** to heed God regardless of sinful weakness within or without:
    - a. When Mordecai learned of Haman's decree to destroy Persia's Hebrews, he publicly dressed and loudly mourned to exhibit deep distress before the king's gate so Esther would learn about it, and be concerned for Mordecai's matters, Esther 4:1-2.
    - b. When Esther learned of Mordecai's distress, and failed to alleviate his distress when she sent him a change of clothes, she finally found out what bothered Mordecai via royal courier, Esther 4:3-9.
    - c. Esther replied to Mordecai that she would gravely risk her life even to make an appeal to the king if she approached him uninvited, implying she could do nothing about the crisis, Esther 4:10-12.
    - d. In response, Mordecai revealed Esther herself, being a Jewess, would not necessarily escape death were she not to try to approach the king about the matter, Esther 4:13. Indeed, Mordecai claimed were Esther to do nothing, God would provide deliverance through another channel, and that Esther needed to see this crisis and her positioning as queen as a calling to deliver the people of God by approaching the king with a request for deliverance, Esther 4:14.
    - e. Having been **influenced** by Mordecai's *words*, Esther agreed to approach the king and seek to see matters overturned regarding Haman's decree for the deliverance of the Hebrews, Esther 4:15-17.
    - f. Esther's appeal to the king was the cause of the king's turning the tide to punish Haman and give deliverance to the Hebrews, cf. Esther 7:1-8:9.

***Lesson:*** *The Book of Esther reveals GOD makes it WORTHWHILE for individuals to INFLUENCE OTHERS to heed God as Mordecai influenced Esther to go to the king, and that though, at the TIME, it seems futile in view of one's OWN weakness or the sin of others around him or in the world.*

***Application:*** *WE must learn from Mordecai's experience the VALUE of INFLUENCING OTHERS of God's people (like Esther) to heed Him even if (a) evil opponents (Haman) are strong and (b) others of God's people (Esther) or (c) we ourselves (Mordecai) have failed the Lord (by staying in Persia)!*