

STUDY GUIDE FOR BOOK OF ESTHER

I. INTRODUCTION.

- a. Book is 3rd division of the Hebrew canon, "Sacred Writings".
- b. Named for the Jewish orphan girl, Esther, who became Queen of Persia (guided by her uncle Mordecai).
- c. Events of book fall within reign of Persian King Ahasuerus (486-465 B.C.) and fit in the 60 year interval between the 6th and 7th chapters of Ezra. (Per J. Hopper & R. Shelly)

II. BACKGROUND OF BOOK OF ESTHER.

- a. When permitted by King Cyrus, not all Jews returned to their homeland.
- b. Among many thousand who chose to stay in Persia were Esther and Mordecai.
- c. Writer of book is unknown—possibly Mordecai.

III. MESSAGE OF BOOK OF ESTHER.

- a. Book gives historical background for Jewish "Feast or Celebration of Purim".
 - i. Haman's plot to destroy the Jews in Persia. (Esther 3:5-6)
 - ii. Cast lots (*pur*) to select best time to do evil deed. (Esther 3:7)
 - iii. Esther's intervention resulted in decree allowing Jews to protect themselves. (Esther 8:11-12 and 9:11-15)
 - iv. Because of this deliverance, Jews urged to keep month of Adar, day 14 and 15 as a memorial ("our" February-March). (Esther 9:20-22)

IV. MAJOR THEMES/ISSUES IN BOOK OF ESTHER.

a. THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

- i. "Providence" may be defined as the "foreseeing care and guardianship of God over His people".
- ii. The stories of Joseph and Esther are examples that show the providence of God.
- iii. Example of Esther. (Esther 4:14b and Romans 8:28)

b. RACIAL PREJUDICE AND HATRED.

- i. As shown by Haman toward the Jews. (Esther 3:6)
- ii. As shown in modern day—Nazism—Estimated 6M Jews exterminated.
- iii. When faced with persecution, Jews turn to reading of book of Esther.
- iv. Teachings of New Testament. (Matthew 7:12, Galatians 3:28 & Mark 12:28-31)

V. BRIEF OUTLINE OF BOOK OF ESTHER.

a. ESTHER BECOMES QUEEN (CHAPTERS 1 AND 2)

b. HAMAN'S PLOT AND ITS DEFEAT. (CHAPTERS 3-8)

c. THE JEWS' DELIVERANCE. (CHAPTERS 9-10)

VI. CONCLUSION.

- a. One clear message of the book—"There is a God and He is involved in the lives of His people".
- b. Study of book of Esther concludes the "historical section" of "English" Old Testament.
- c. Next—study of Poetic books of Old Testament, beginning with Job.
- d. Key verse: "...who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"