



STORY

Esther

TEACHER PRAYER

Grant me, Lord, greater insight in the working of your providence which works all things for my temporal and eternal good.

VOCABULARY

Proper Nouns - Ahasuerus - Xerxes - Esther - Star

Political nouns - Satrapy - Province

OUTER AIM

To understand that the might of the nations are but pawns in the hands of the Almighty.

INNER AIM

To be comforted in the knowledge that all things work out for good for God's people.

BACKGROUND

Time Frame - The history recorded in the book of Esther took place during the era that the Jews were under the Persian Empire, specifically between the sixth and seventh chapters of Ezra, that is after the return of Zerubbabel, but before the return of Ezra. (As there had been three deportations, so there were three returns--538, Ezra 1-6; 458 or 7, Ezra 7-10; and 445, Nehemiah 1-13).

King Xerxes - attempted to conquer Greece. His father Darius failed, being defeated in the battle of Marathon in 490 BC. Xerxes likewise failed, being defeated in the sea battle at Salamis and the land battle at Platea. To get his army into Greece Xerxes had a pontoon bridge built across the Hellespont. A storm destroyed the bridge. Xerxes was enraged, had his construction engineers executed, and the seagods chained and whipped! Example of his hotheaded, irrational behavior.

Characters-Plot: Xerxes held a banquet, ordered Queen Vashti to appear so he could show off her beauty, but she refused to come. Xerxes had her deposed as queen and ordered an empire-wide beauty contest to be held to find a new queen. Esther was chosen. She was a cousin of Mordecai who appears to have been a minor official in the Persian Court. Enter Haman, an officer of the King who hated Mordecai because he refused to honor him by bowing down to him. Haman plotted the destruction of all Jews in the empire. His plot backfired to his own destruction and blessing for the Jews.

STUDENT PRAYER

Lord, grant me grace to take all my cares to You, for You have assured me that you care for me.

PRESENTATION

1. Xerxes' banquet, his deposing Queen Vashti, the beauty contest with Esther being crowned Queen.
2. Mordecai had exposed the assassination plot against the King. His action had been officially recorded.

3. Xerxes couldn't sleep one night, ordered chronicles to be read, discovered that Mordecai had not been honored, ordered Haman to arrange a suitable honor. Haman thought he was to be honored, but ended up bestowing his prescribed honor on Mordecai.

4. Xerxes acknowledging Esther, offering her up to half of his kingdom, accepting her repeated invitation to her banquet. Haman accused, executed. The Jews saved. Mordecai elevated to a position of power. (Joseph, Daniel, and Mordecai--Jewish statesmen in earthly kingdoms.)

APPLICATION

Features of the Book:

1. No mention of God in the book. No reference to Esther in the NT or Dead Sea Scrolls.
2. Pride precedes the fall. ""Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall," I Cor. 10:12.
3. Man proposes; God disposes! God's providence achieves His purposes in history.
4. God blesses earthly empires with God-fearing leaders--Joseph, Daniel, Mordecai.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Gen. 50:20 - But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

Ps. 37: 5 - Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.

HYMN CHOICES

Jesus, Lead Thou On - TLH #410

Jesus! and Shall It Ever Be - TLH 346