



Esther's Rise to Royalty



Esther Chapter 2

THE SEARCH FOR A NEW QUEEN (VERSES 1-4)

As we step into Esther Chapter 2, we see a significant passage of time—about four years—since the events of the first chapter. Now, King Xerxes' anger has subsided, and his advisors have a plan: a royal beauty pageant to find a new queen. Isn't it intriguing how God uses even the worldliest strategies to set His divine plan in motion?

As we read these verses, let's remember these words from Isaiah 55:8-9 as they remind us His thoughts aren't always in line with our own, and that His wisdom is greater than ours,

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

The relevance of these words is evident throughout the book of Esther, and while it might seem unconventional for God to use a beauty pageant to set His plan in motion, it's not unusual to see Him work in unexpected ways.

THE UNLIKELY HEROINE (VERSES 5-7)

In this chapter, we're introduced to Esther, a Jewish orphan girl being raised by her cousin Mordecai, though some interpretations alternatively describe Mordecai as her uncle. In a society where lineage and parents played a significant role in one's status, Esther would have been considered insignificant. And so, the fact that God chose to use her, underscores His ability to use anyone for His purpose.



The resounding message of God using ordinary people in extraordinary ways, resonates profoundly in my own life. I can't say I've ever stepped foot in a palace, but like Esther, God has used me in spite of my weakness.

Did you know?

There's an interesting link between Esther's Hebrew and Persian names. The Hebrew 'Hadassah' translates to 'myrtle,' a tree that blossoms with star-shaped flowers. Her Persian name, 'Esther,' fittingly means 'star'.

From the earliest years of grade school, it was apparent that reading and writing was not my strong suit. The world of written words was a maze that bewildered and confused me.

While my peers raced ahead, forging connections with the magic of words, I stayed back, laboring over the contours of each letter.

Books were the enemy—a constant reminder of a hurdle I couldn't overcome, and so, I found solace in the world of magazines where vibrant pictures and fewer words painted a story I could follow.

Reflecting on these challenges today, I find myself in awe of the mysterious ways of our Lord. It's remarkable, isn't it, how God uses our struggles to reveal His power within us?

It underscores an important spiritual truth: our inadequacies do not limit God's ability to use us. As I look over at a bestselling book on my desk, I know that it's more than just luck. It's a testament to God's grace, a demonstration of His power, and a reminder that He works through our struggles and transforms them into strengths.

When I think of Moses, who was said to be slow of speech, I'm astounded that he was chosen to lead an entire nation. I'm moved by David, the shepherd boy who toppled a giant with a sling and a stone. And then there's Gideon, the least in his clan and the weakest in his family, who was chosen by God to deliver Israel from the Midianites. As I read about them, I can't help but see that their stories align with ours. We are all testimonies of God's grace and His power to turn our struggles into strengths. In 2 Corinthians 12:9, Paul writes,

But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

Your weakness, whatever it might be, is not a stumbling block; it's a steppingstone, paving the way for you to experience God's power and strength. Our limitations don't define us; they refine us, preparing us for His divine purpose. Like Esther, our lives can serve as a testament to God's extraordinary grace.

Did you know?

The timeline of events in the Book of Esther takes place between the sixth and seventh chapters of Ezra.

ESTHER'S PREPARATION AND PRESENTATION BEFORE THE KING (VERSES 8-18)

The Bible tells us that Esther, upon being taken to the king's palace, underwent twelve months of extensive preparation: six months with oil of myrrh and another six months with perfumes and cosmetics. While this might initially appear to be a course of physical beautification, the substances used suggest another interpretation.

In biblical times and many other cultures, myrrh, with its antimicrobial properties, was utilized not just for its aromatic qualities, but also for its purifying abilities. Healthline.com notes that myrrh could kill bacteria and halt the spread of diseases. This application aligns well with the first half of Esther's preparation. The second half involved "sweet odors," likely referring to a variety of perfumes and cosmetics. Although their primary purpose could have been to enhance physical attractiveness, it's worth considering that aromatic substances often held symbolic and spiritual significance in ancient cultures.

The significant roles of Esther's preparation and Hegai's guidance echo our own spiritual journey. In the same way Hegai provided Esther with resources and guidance, the Holy Spirit nurtures us, molding us and providing wisdom as we prepare ourselves to meet our Heavenly King.

Did you know?

Myrrh comes from the Commiphora Myrrha tree. The interesting thing about myrrh is the way that it's extracted: the tree is pierced, and the myrrh bleeds out in droplets. Many Christian historians believe that this symbolizes the suffering of Christ.



This time of purification offers a striking parallel to our own process of sanctification. The oil of myrrh, the spices, the cosmetics—these elements of Esther's preparation symbolize the trials, the challenges, and the spiritual growth we undergo, anointed, and cleansed by the Holy Spirit.

It all serves to refine, purify, and prepare us for the moment we stand in the presence of our King in His heavenly Kingdom.

Verse 15 says,

When the turn came for Esther...to go to the king, she asked for nothing other than what Hegai, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the harem, suggested.

Can you imagine the depth of our faith if we desired nothing more than God's guidance and plan for our lives? That kind of faith leads to profound peace and fulfillment, as you're aligned with God's will, strengthened by His grace, and adequately prepared for His kingdom.

When Esther finally goes before the King, she finds favor in his eyes among hundreds of women. Thus, she is crowned the new queen, underscoring God's sovereignty, and His ability to elevate the lowly for His purposes.



UNCOVERING A PLOT (VERSES 19-23)

Following Esther's crowning as queen, we observe an interesting shift in the narrative. The focus turns to Mordecai, who is now sitting at the king's gate. In ancient times, the city gate was a significant place where legal matters were discussed, and civic decisions were made. It was the heart of city life, encompassing commerce, legal affairs, and social interaction. Those sitting at the gate were usually individuals with some form of civic or administrative role, such as elders, judges, or officials.

Though the Bible doesn't detail Mordecai's specific responsibilities at the gate, Esther 3:2 suggests that he was in some capacity a royal official. In any case, his role clearly provided him access to crucial information, which he used to inform Esther and ultimately save King Xerxes' life. Thus, Mordecai's presence at the gate seems to be a part of God's providential plan, perfectly positioning him to play a pivotal role in the unfolding events.

As I see this shift in our story, I'm reminded of Jeremiah 29:11, which says,

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

What preparations did the women have to go through before they could see the king?

Why was Mordecai in Susa? See Esther 2:5-6. Also see 2 Kings 25:8-11

What are some of the things that Hegai gave Esther?

Throughout the book of Esther, we see the providence of God. What is the dictionary definition of "providence"?

In what ways does Esther's time of purification parallel our own process of sanctification?

How did Mordecai save the King's life?

How does Mordecai's adoption and care of Esther reflect God's adoptive love for us through Christ?

What was Mordecai doing every day before he sat at the king's gate? How might this reflect the nature of Christ?

AS WE CLOSE THIS CHAPTER

Let's not forget the journey of sanctification beautifully mirrored in Esther's preparation. This journey, often full of trials and challenges, is God's way of preparing us for His divine purposes, much like Esther was prepared to meet the king.

Hold tightly to Him, as He is shaping and guiding you exactly as you need to be. Trust that God's favor is upon you, and that His divine plan is unfolding in your life.

In the midst of uncertainty and change, remember that God's divine orchestration is at work. He crafts our lives with purpose, turning ordinary moments into extraordinary opportunities to live out our faith.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Esther Chapter 2

What preparations did the women have to go through before they could see the king?

The preparations the women underwent before seeing the king involved twelve months of beauty treatments prescribed for the women, six months with oil of myrrh and six months with perfumes and cosmetics (Esther 2:12).

Why was Mordecai in Susa? See Esther 2:5-6. Also see 2 Kings 25:8-11

Mordecai was in Susa because he was among the Jewish people who were exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. This event is described in 2 Kings 25:8-11.

What are some of the things that Hegai gave Esther?

Hegai, who was in charge of the women, was kind to Esther and gave her beauty treatments. He also assigned her seven female attendants selected from the king's palace and moved her and her attendants into the best place in the harem (Esther 2:9).

Throughout the book of Esther, we see the providence of God. What is the dictionary definition of "providence"?

"Providence" is defined as the protective care of God or of nature as a spiritual power. It is also used to refer to God's intervention in the universe.

In what ways does Esther's time of purification parallel our own process of sanctification?

Esther's time of purification can be paralleled to our process of sanctification in the sense that both processes involve preparation, cleansing, and transformation over a period of time. Sanctification is the process of being set apart for God's service and being conformed to the image of Christ.

How did Mordecai save the King's life?

Mordecai saved King Xerxes' life by uncovering a plot to assassinate the king. He heard two of the king's officers discussing the plot and reported it to Queen Esther, who then reported it to the king in Mordecai's name (Esther 2:21-23).

How does Mordecai's adoption and care of Esther reflect God's adoptive love for us through Christ?

Mordecai's adoption and care of Esther, his younger cousin, after her parents died reflects God's adoptive love for us through Christ. Just as Mordecai took Esther into his home and cared for her, God invites us into His family through the work of Christ, offering us love, care, and an eternal inheritance.

What was Mordecai doing every day before he sat at the king's gate? How might this reflect the nature of Christ?

The text mentions that Mordecai walked back and forth near the courtyard of the harem to find out how Esther was and what was happening to her (Esther 2:11). This daily commitment to Esther's wellbeing reflects Christ's constant care and concern for us. Just as Mordecai was always there for Esther, so is Christ always present in our lives, attentive to our needs and circumstances.

