

PROVIDENCE OVER POLITICS

“Faithful to Fulfill: A Study of God as Revealed in Post-Exilic Scripture”

Esther 1:1-2:18 / Part 19 / Pastor Matthew Jones

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Context (Esther 1:1-4)

So far we have covered: *Ezra 1-7, Haggai, and Zechariah*

Zerubbabel - Ezra – Esther - Nehemiah

| | Persian King | Date of Rule | What Happen | Date B.C. About |
|--|-------------------------------|--------------|--|-----------------|
| Construction of the Temple – Zerubbabel, Altar Rebuild, Temple foundation Laid | | | | |
| Ezra 1-3 | Cyrus Daniel (Dan 6:28) | 539-530 | Zerubbabel and Joshua return to Jerusalem, 50,000, 1 st Return | 538 |
| | | | Temple work start | 536 |
| Ezra 4 | Cambyses (Cyrus Son) | 530-522 | Rebuilding at Jerusalem stopped | 530 |
| Ezra 5-6 | Darius 1 Daniel (Dan 6:28) | 522-486 | Haggai and Zechariah Prophecy | 520 |
| | | | Temple Completed | 516 |
| Esther 1-9 | Xerxes | 486-464 | Story of Esther | 486 |
| Reformation and Religious Reforms - Ezra | | | | |
| Ezra 7-8 | Artaxerxes 1 | 464-423 | Ezra to Jerusalem with Families 2 nd Return | 458 |
| | | | Esther is Queen and step mother to Artaxerxes; helps Ezra and Nehemiah 2:6 | |
| Ezra 9 | | | Ezra's Reforms | |
| Ezra 10 | | | Ezra's Prayer about Intermarriage | |
| Jerusalem Exterior Walls Rebuilt - Nehemiah | | | | |
| Nehemiah 1-2 | | | Nehemiah to Jerusalem, 3 rd Return | 444 |
| | | | Malachi Prophecy | 443 |

Nehemiah 2:6 Then the king (Artaxerxes) said to me (the queen also sitting beside him), "How long will your journey be? And when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. Queen is Esther and step mother to Artaxerxes; 30 years between Ezra and Nehemiah. Queen Esther was below 20 when married, now about 60+.

Citadel (Ezra 1:5-9)

Conflict (Ezra 1:10-22)

Contest (Ezra 2:1-4)

Coronation (Ezra 2:5-18)

Conclusion (Esther 1:1-2:18)

COMMUNITY GROUP QUESTIONS

Reflective Questions for You and Your Small Group

1. This Sunday we picked up where we left off in our 'Faithful to Fulfill' series. That said, take some time to look at the above table and see how the post-exilic books fit together and then read 2 Chronicles 36:15-23. After reading, discuss what Empire took the Jewish people into exile and what happened when the next Empire took them over (see vv.21-23).
2. Having studied Ezra 1-7, Haggai, and Zechariah already, we have seen the spiritual state of God's covenant people, Israel, during the post-exile at the time of Esther. That said, please read together Zech. 1:1-6 and 7:1-14, as well as Haggai 1:1-11 (keep in mind Darius is Xerxes' dad, cf. Ezra 4:6) and discuss their spiritual compromise, along with God's grace in bringing them revival and godly leaders (read Ezra 7:9-10, 8:21-23; and Neh.8:1-3). How do we see this in our day, that is, spiritual compromise among God's people (Israel and the Church), but also God's grace in sending us godly preachers, solid churches, etc? Discuss.
3. Reflect on the massive power of the Persian Empire that defeated many enemies and in God's providence tolerated the Israelites, even resourcing them to return to their homeland. With this in mind, also reflect on the decadence, injustice, and corruption of the Persian throne and its government, which God nonetheless used for His purposes. How does this comfort us in the face of our polarized socio-political context filled with politicians on both sides who are corrupt? Discuss (without getting unnecessarily political).
4. The temptation for Jewish people in Esther's account would have been to feel powerless and hide their faith, as well as their ethnic identity. Have you ever felt powerless, weak, or timid as a Christian in our culture? Share. How does the opening of Esther challenge us to trust God?
5. In thinking about compromise, the need for boldness, etc. how can we pray for your holiness and witness? Share, discuss, and pray.