

## Heart Conditions in the Book of Esther Esther 1-10

### Introduction:

- I. Much emphasis in Scripture is placed on the heart.
  - a. I Samuel 16:7 – The Lord looks on the heart.
  - b. Matthew 15:8 – Their heart is far from me.
  - c. 78 verses in Proverbs speak about the heart.
- II. Of course, these do not refer to the physical organ called the heart. They refer to the inner mind, character, and desire that a person has.
  - a. The Lord wanted a king to act with wisdom and character to fulfill God's desires for his people.
  - b. Our worship is to include thoughtfulness, and must be offered from a pure character without selfishness.
- III. The book of Esther is a popular study for young people for many reasons. I believe that one of those reasons is that just about anyone can relate to at least one person in the book.
- IV. Context – The Jews have been in captivity for just over 100 years. Some have gone back to Jerusalem since an edict from King Cyrus in 539 B.C. allowed it. However, many Jews still are scattered throughout the Persian Empire.
  - a. These events take place about 20 years before Ezra and Nehemiah's reforms in Judah.
  - b. We have presented in the book of Esther four kinds of hearts:
    - i. The Selfless Heart of Service – Mordecai
    - ii. The Dangerous Heart for Popularity – King Ahasuerus
    - iii. The Hateful Heart of Pride – Haman
    - iv. The Crippling Heart of Fear – Esther
  - c. Only one of these hearts is the right one to have.

### Discussion:

- I. The Selfless Heart of Service
  - a. Mordecai just as well may be the main character in the book of Esther.
    - i. It was he who took care of Hadassah (Esther) when her parents died (2:5-7).
    - ii. It was he who discovered a plot against the king and reported it to his cousin Esther (2:21-23).
    - iii. It was he who angered Haman to the point of genocidal thoughts (3:6).
    - iv. It was he who disclosed to Esther Haman's plot against the Jews and urged her to act (4:4-8)
    - v. It was he who was promoted at the end of the story to Haman's place (10:3)
      1. Why? – "He sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all his people."

- II. The Dangerous Heart for Popularity
  - a. Not “pleasing,” as in “acceptable to God,” but as in “pleasing everyone.”
  - b. The Party Crashes
    - i. Wine flowed freely, with but one rule – No limits!
    - ii. This festival lasted six months!
    - iii. Early into the feast, the king has become drunk and commands his queen, Vashti, to come “display her beauty” to the different rulers and noblemen of his empire. However, she refuses to go!
      - 1. 1:13, 15-17, 19, 21 – He pleases Memucan.
      - 2. Yet he regrets it: 2:1. The solution: Find a new wife! This is where Esther and her cousin Mordecai enter the picture.
  - c. The Plot Thickens
    - i. 3:8-11 – Haman is convincing the king to allow him to massacre the Jews. But wait—Is not the king’s *new* queen a Jew?
    - ii. Then, even when he finds out what he’s done, he is too late to reverse it!
      - 1. Esther has given two banquets for Ahasuerus and Haman.
      - 2. 7:2-6 – She reveals Haman’s plot in its entirety.
      - 3. 8:5, 8 – He had to get her to write another law to go along with that one, because a Persian king’s law could not be revoked!
  - d. However, if he had not been so easily persuaded by his friends, he would not have had to worry about either of these major problems!
  - e. BE CAREFUL ABOUT TRYING TO PLEASE THE CROWD!!!
- III. The Hateful Heart of Pride
  - a. The second heart we discuss has to do with the king’s most elevated official, Haman.
  - b. Haman enters the picture in chapter 3, as he has been promoted pretty much to second-in-command to the king (3:2-5).
    - i. Everyone who saw him would bow down to him in reverence. However, only one person would not bow down: Mordecai.
      - 1. Notice: It was not Haman who noticed that Mordecai did not bow, but the king’s servants at the gate who saw it, and took it upon themselves to spread news (that was none of their own business in the first place) to Haman.
        - a. Do you think that Haman might have been so angry because he thought these men were looking for an excuse not to bow to him?
          - i. How often do we make situations worse because we cannot keep our mouths shut?
    - ii. Unsatisfied that even just one person did not revere him, Haman goes on a tear to prevent anyone else from being bold enough not to bow to him.
      - 1. He goes beyond wanting to punish Mordecai, and decides instead to eradicate the entire Jewish race (3:6).

- iii. This was when he went in to the king to persuade him to annihilate the Jews.
    - c. However, even this does not satisfy him, because he saw Mordecai sitting at the gate when he passed (Mark of disrespect).
      - i. He goes home and cries about how rich and powerful he is, how many children he has, how much honor the king has given him, but MORDECAI DOES NOT RESPECT ME. (How old are you?)
        - 1. So he builds a place to hang Mordecai and goes joyfully away.
    - d. That night, the king has trouble sleeping and has the chronicles of “memorable deeds” read to him. When he comes across Mordecai, he knows he has to honor him. Enter Haman, whose pride leads to Foot-in-Mouth disease! (6:3-10)
      - i. What should be done to the man whom the king delights to honor?
        - 1. Who better than me? Well one: Mordecai!
    - e. Then Haman goes to the feast, and Esther makes known his plot to the king.
      - i. The king storms out (7:7) and Haman stays to beg for his life.
      - ii. The king returns, to see Haman’s awkward position, and Haman is taken away and hung on the place he had set up for Mordecai.
- IV. The Crippling Heart of Fear
- a. Now we come to the “title character” of the book of Esther.
  - b. The fearful heart that she has at the beginning of the events in this book is conquered by a courage to lead her people to salvation at the end of this book.
    - i. 4:13-14 – This is a question that we need to ask ourselves every day when we are faced with a “problem” that is “out of our control.”
      - 1. How do we know that God has not put us in this very predicament to be his instrument of salvation for someone?
        - a. What if God allowed you to get a job because he wants you to persuade a coworker or client to become a Christian?
          - i. I feel this way about working here!
        - b. What if God leads a struggling family to move into the house next door to you, so that you can reach out to them?

**Conclusion:**

- I. How do you know that God has not allowed you to be here tonight so that you might have just one more opportunity to repent of sin or wrongdoing in your life?
- II. What if he has given you this last one opportunity to make things right with a fellow Christian before you or this person leaves this earth? May that not be!
- III. What if this is your last opportunity to put on Christ in baptism?