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Esther: A Study Outline

Old Testament Digest, Volume 2

From the *Old Testament Digest* of William MacDonald

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Esther

A study outline from William MacDonald's *Old Testament Digest, Volume 2* · online: kee-ministry-library.netlify.app/.../outline/esther

Overview of Esther

Esther tells of God's care for the Jews who chose to stay in Persia rather than return to Jerusalem, and its events fall between the sixth and seventh chapters of Ezra, in the reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes). MacDonald follows the orphan Esther from the deposing of Queen Vashti to her crowning, Haman's plot to destroy every Jew in the empire, Esther's brave approach to the king, Haman's fall on his own gallows, and the deliverance remembered in the Feast of Purim. The name of God is not found in the book, though some see it hidden in acrostics, but His presence and power are clear throughout in a series of designed coincidences.

Key themes

- God's unseen providence: "standeth God within the shadow"
- "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14)
- Courage to risk all for God's people: "If I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:16)
- Pride before a fall: Haman
- Satan's hatred of the Jews and God's protection of them
- The last battle in the Lord's war with Amalek (Exodus 17:8–16)
- Seeking the welfare of one's people (Esther 10:3)

Christ in Esther. MacDonald sees in the king's outstretched golden scepter a picture of the way the scepter of God's forgiveness has been stretched out to us at Calvary, so that we may come boldly to the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16). Haman's attempt to destroy the Jews was another satanic attack on the people from whom Christ would come, and God defeated it. The swift couriers carrying the king's counter-decree remind him how much more the news of redemption should be carried through Satan's realm with thoroughness and speed.

Read Esther in the NET Bible: Esther 1 · MacDonald's full commentary: Esther in the Digest

MacDonald's Outline of Esther

I. Dethronement of Vashti Decreed (Esther 1)
II. Elevation of Esther Accomplished (Esther 2)
III. Extermination of the Jews Planned (Esther 3–4)
    A. Haman's talk with the king (Esther 3)
    B. Mordecai's talk with the queen (Esther 4)
IV. Extermination of the Jews Thwarted (Esther 5–9)
    A. Esther's supplication and Haman's rage (Esther 5)
    B. Haman's humiliation and Mordecai's honor (Esther 6)
    C. Esther's accusation and Haman's execution (Esther 7)
    D. Mordecai's promotion and the Jews' deliverance (Esther 8)
    E. The enemy's destruction and the inauguration of the Feast of Purim (Esther 9)
V. Exaltation of Mordecai (Esther 10)

I · Vashti Deposed

Esther 1

MacDonald describes the king's great feasts at Shushan and Queen Vashti's refusal to be put on display, which cost her the crown.

I. Ahasuerus (Xerxes) and his kingdom — Esther 1:1–2
II. A feast of 180 days for the nobles — Esther 1:3–4
III. A seven-day feast for Shushan — Esther 1:5–9
IV. Vashti refuses the drunken king — Esther 1:10–12
    A. She would not be degraded in public
V. The counselors' advice: depose her — Esther 1:13–20
VI. The decree sent to every province — Esther 1:21–22

CROSS REFERENCES

Daniel 8 Nehemiah 1

LESSONS

- God is the Author of all history, even if He does not sign His name at the bottom of every page.

RELATED READING

- *The Book of Esther* (Dan Snaddon) — Snaddon, "The Book of Esther"
- *Notes on Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther* (H. A. Ironside) — Ironside on Esther 1–5

ALSO DISCUSSED IN THE LIBRARY

- *The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby, Volume 8 (Prophetic 3)* (John Nelson Darby)
- *Confirming Accuracy* (Jean Gibson)
- *The Book of Ezra* (Dan Snaddon)

Read MacDonald on Chapter 1 →

2 · Esther Made Queen

Esther 2

MacDonald tells how the orphan Esther, raised by Mordecai, won favor and became queen, and how Mordecai saved the king's life.

I. The search for a new queen — Esther 2:1–4

II. Mordecai and Esther — Esther 2:5–7

  A. A Benjamite carried away with Jeconiah (2 Kings 24:14–16)

III. Favor with Hegai — Esther 2:8–11

IV. Twelve months of preparation — Esther 2:12–14

V. Esther chosen and crowned — Esther 2:15–18

  A. She asked for nothing extra

VI. Mordecai uncovers a plot to kill the king — Esther 2:19–23

  A. Recorded in the chronicles

CROSS REFERENCES

2 Kings 24:14–16

LESSONS

- Esther depended on what she was, not on outward adornment.

RELATED READING

- *The Book of Esther* (Dan Snaddon) — Snaddon on Esther 2–3

ALSO DISCUSSED IN THE LIBRARY

- *Life of Christ* (Gordon Franz)
- *Dr. Ironside's Bible* (H. A. Ironside)
- *Notes on Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther* (H. A. Ironside)

Read MacDonald on Chapter 2 →

3 · Haman's Plot

Esther 3

MacDonald shows Haman the Agagite exalted, enraged by Mordecai's refusal to bow, and securing a decree to destroy all the Jews.

I. Haman promoted — Esther 3:1

  A. An Agagite, of Israel's old enemy Amalek (Exodus 17:8–16; 1 Samuel 15:32)

II. Mordecai will not bow — Esther 3:2–6

  A. Respect for authority, but worship for God alone

III. Pur, the lot, cast for a date — Esther 3:7

  A. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Proverbs 16:33)

IV. Haman's accusation and bribe — Esther 3:8–11

V. The decree sent out — Esther 3:12–15

  A. "But the city Shushan was perplexed"

CROSS REFERENCES

Exodus 17:8–16 1 Samuel 15:32 Proverbs 16:33

LESSONS

- Even superstition is chained to God's chariot wheels.
- The king's decree was posted, but the King of kings would have the last word.

RELATED READING

- *The Book of Esther* (Dan Snaddon) — Snaddon on Esther 2–3

ALSO DISCUSSED IN THE LIBRARY

- *Life of Christ* (Gordon Franz)
- *Proverbs* (H. A. Ironside)
- *Sailing with Paul* (H. A. Ironside)

Read MacDonald on Chapter 3 →

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4 · For Such a Time as This

Esther 4

MacDonald describes Mordecai's mourning, his challenge to Esther, and her resolve to go to the king though it might cost her life.

I. Mourning among the Jews — Esther 4:1–3

II. Esther learns of the decree — Esther 4:4–9

III. Her danger: thirty days not called — Esther 4:10–12

IV. Mordecai's answer — Esther 4:13–14

  A. Deliverance will come, but you will perish

  B. "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

V. "If I perish, I perish" — Esther 4:15–17

CROSS REFERENCES

Hebrews 4:16

LESSONS

- Each of us has an essential role to play in God's plan.
- Our attitude should not be fatalism but confidence, for the scepter of forgiveness has been held out to us at Calvary.

RELATED READING

- *The Book of Esther* (Dan Snaddon) — Snaddon on Esther 4–5

ALSO DISCUSSED IN THE LIBRARY

- *Life of Christ* (Gordon Franz)
- *Current Messages* (Dan Snaddon)
- *Worship* (Dan Snaddon)

Read MacDonald on Chapter 4 →

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5 · Esther's First Banquet

Esther 5

MacDonald shows the king holding out the scepter, Esther's invitation, and Haman's pride and plan for a gallows.

I. The golden scepter held out — Esther 5:1–3

II. The first banquet; a second requested — Esther 5:4–8

  A. Four views of why she delayed

III. Haman's joy and his rage at Mordecai — Esther 5:9–13

IV. Zeresh's advice: a gallows fifty cubits high — Esther 5:14

LESSONS

- Pride swells just before its fall.

RELATED READING

- *The Book of Esther* (Dan Snaddon) — Snaddon on Esther 4–5

ALSO DISCUSSED IN THE LIBRARY

- *Worship* (Dan Snaddon)

Read MacDonald on Chapter 5 →

6 · Mordecai Honored

Esther 6

MacDonald describes the king's sleepless night, the reading of the chronicles, and Haman forced to honor the man he meant to hang.

I. The king cannot sleep — Esther 6:1

II. Mordecai's unrewarded service read — Esther 6:2–3

III. Haman arrives at the wrong moment — Esther 6:4–5

IV. "What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour?" — Esther 6:6–9

V. Haman leads Mordecai through the city — Esther 6:10–11

VI. An omen of Haman's fall — Esther 6:12–14

LESSONS

- "Wheels within wheels": God weaves circumstances together to work out His plans.

ALSO DISCUSSED IN THE LIBRARY

- *The Book of Ruth* (Dan Snaddon)
- *Proverbs* (H. A. Ironside)
- *The Continual Burnt Offering* (H. A. Ironside)

Read MacDonald on Chapter 6 →

7 · Haman Hanged

Esther 7

MacDonald shows Esther exposing Haman at the second banquet and Haman hanged on his own gallows.

I. Esther's request for her life and people — Esther 7:1–4

II. "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman" — Esther 7:5–6

III. The king's wrath; Haman's plea — Esther 7:7–8

IV. Hanged on the gallows he had made — Esther 7:9–10

LESSONS

- Haman took Mordecai's place on the gallows.

RELATED READING

- *The Book of Esther* (Dan Snaddon) — Snaddon on Esther 6–7

ALSO DISCUSSED IN THE LIBRARY

- *Proverbs* (H. A. Ironside)
- *The Bible* (James Gunn)
- *Life of Christ* (Gordon Franz)

Read MacDonald on Chapter 7 →

8 · The Counter-Decree

Esther 8

MacDonald describes Mordecai's promotion and the new decree that let the Jews defend themselves, carried in haste through the empire.

I. Haman's house to Esther, his ring to Mordecai — Esther 8:1–2

II. Esther pleads again — Esther 8:3–6

III. The law cannot be revoked, but a new decree may be written — Esther 8:7–8

IV. The decree written and sent in haste — Esther 8:9–14

V. Mordecai in royal apparel; joy for the Jews — Esther 8:15–17

A. Many became Jews

LESSONS

- How much more should the news of redemption be carried through Satan's realm with thoroughness and speed!

RELATED READING

- *The Book of Esther* (Dan Snaddon) — Snaddon on Esther 8–10

ALSO DISCUSSED IN THE LIBRARY

- *Studies in Ephesians* (Dan Snaddon)
- *Bible Gems: Gospel Light* (Milton Haack)
- *Papers on the Pentateuch* (William Kelly)

Read MacDonald on Chapter 8 →

9 · Deliverance and Purim

Esther 9

MacDonald covers the Jews' victory over their enemies on the appointed day and the founding of the Feast of Purim.

I. The thirteenth day of Adar — Esther 9:1–5

II. Haman's ten sons — Esther 9:6–10

III. A second day in Shushan — Esther 9:11–15

IV. No spoil taken — Esther 9:16

A. Self-defense, not enrichment

V. Feasting on the fourteenth and fifteenth — Esther 9:17–19

VI. Purim established by letter — Esther 9:20–32

A. Named from Pur, the lot (Esther 3:7)

LESSONS

- A great deliverance should be remembered by succeeding generations.

RELATED READING

- *The Book of Esther* (Dan Snaddon) — Snaddon on Esther 8–10

ALSO DISCUSSED IN THE LIBRARY

- *Life of Christ* (Gordon Franz)
- *Papers on the Pentateuch* (William Kelly)

Read MacDonald on Chapter 9 →

10 · Mordecai Exalted

Esther 10

MacDonald closes with Mordecai's greatness, recorded in the chronicles, and his concern for the good of his people.

I. Ahasuerus's tribute and power — Esther 10:1

II. Mordecai's greatness recorded — Esther 10:2

III. Seeking the wealth of his people, speaking peace — Esther 10:3

LESSONS

- Seeking the welfare of God's people is a worthy goal for every leader in the church.

RELATED READING

- *The Book of Esther* (Dan Snaddon) — Snaddon on Esther 8–10

ALSO DISCUSSED IN THE LIBRARY

- *Proverbs* (H. A. Ironside)
- *The Continual Burnt Offering* (H. A. Ironside)

Read MacDonald on Chapter 10 →

Further reading on Esther

In the Faithful Men Library

- *The Book of Esther* (Dan Snaddon)
- *The Book of Esther* (William Kelly)
- *Notes on Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther* (H. A. Ironside)
- *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible, Volume 2: Ezra to Malachi* (John Nelson Darby)
- *Articles by Leslie S. Rainey* (Leslie S. Rainey)

On plymouthbrethren.org

- "The Book of Esther" (William Kelly, plymouthbrethren.org)
- "Esther" (John Nelson Darby, plymouthbrethren.org)

Every library book that cites Esther: Scripture index — Esther

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