

## God Revealed in the book of Esther: Part 1

The book of Esther is a unique book. It is the only book in the Bible that doesn't mention God. It doesn't use the word God, Elohim, or LORD, Yehovah, at all. As such, we would be inclined to ask why the book of Esther is included in the Bible. Some scholars have even advocated removing the book of Esther from the canon of scripture because it does not mention God. However, the book of Esther is the answer to the common objection of mankind that God is not interested in man. They say that even if God exists, He doesn't care about people and He offers no hope. They argue that if God exists, how could He allow evil. The book of Esther demonstrates how God is constantly acting even when we can't see His actions. It reveals God's care for His people through the revelation of the hidden.

When studying the scriptures, there are four levels of understanding represented by the acronym PARDAS, referring to Pashat, Remez, Drash, and Sod. Pashat is the literal meaning of the text. Remez is the implied greater truth or concept. Drash is the metaphorical or symbolic meaning, and Sod is the hidden meaning found in the numbers, structure or word meanings of the text. The Remez and Drash levels are the source of most of our sermons in the church today. To understand the significance of the book of Esther, we need to delve into all the levels!

Let's start as we always should, with the Pashat, the literal meaning of the text answering the who, what, where, when, and how. The events of the book of Esther take place in Persia while the children of Israel are still in exile. The rebuilding of the temple and the city of Jerusalem is ongoing but it is a slow process marked by opposition from their enemies and dissension among the participants. Enthusiasm for the project has waned and those involved are beginning to turn to taking care of their own needs, some selfishly exploiting others and some from need and discouragement. The message of the Persian Empire to the conquered and diverse people within her borders is to assimilate and prosper.

**Discussion Question: With this background answer the who, what, where, when and how. Pay attention to who the major characters are; what do they do and what is their motivation. What role do externals play? For example, what role does "chance" play? Where do these events occur? How many banquets are there in the book? (Careful: try not to go into the Remez level yet!)**

**Discussion Question: Now we are ready for the Remez level of understanding. What is the greater truth or truths revealed in the book of Esther? (In Language Arts class, we would ask, “What is the theme?) What do the actions of each of the major characters teach us? How is the message of Esther an encouragement to the Jewish people?**

- Haman relied on chance to choose the day to destroy the Jewish people (Est. 3:7). How does this differ from the appointed days of the LORD (Lev. 23 1-3)? Discuss the underlying philosophies of each position.
- Read Mordecai’s words to Esther in Esther 4:13-14. Discuss how this can apply to any believer.
- Contrast the opening banquet of Ahasuerus with the ending banquet celebrated by the Jewish people.

As we move to the drash level of understanding, we always consider the question of how this book reveals God’s character and His plan for redemption. As we look at this book, both Esther and Mordecai play essential roles in bringing about the salvation or deliverance of their people.

- **What are some comparisons between Esther and Yeshua? What role does the timing of these events play?**
- **What are some comparisons between Mordecai and Yeshua? Why is his role more important after the revelation of Haman’s plan?**
- **In what way is Haman an antichrist? In what way is he different from an antichrist?**
- **The days of Adar which would have been days of sorrow were turned into days of joy (Est. 9:20-22). Read Zechariah 8:19. The fast days written about here all involve the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Babylonians. Discuss the connection between the days of Adar becoming days of joy and the fasts becoming days of joy.**