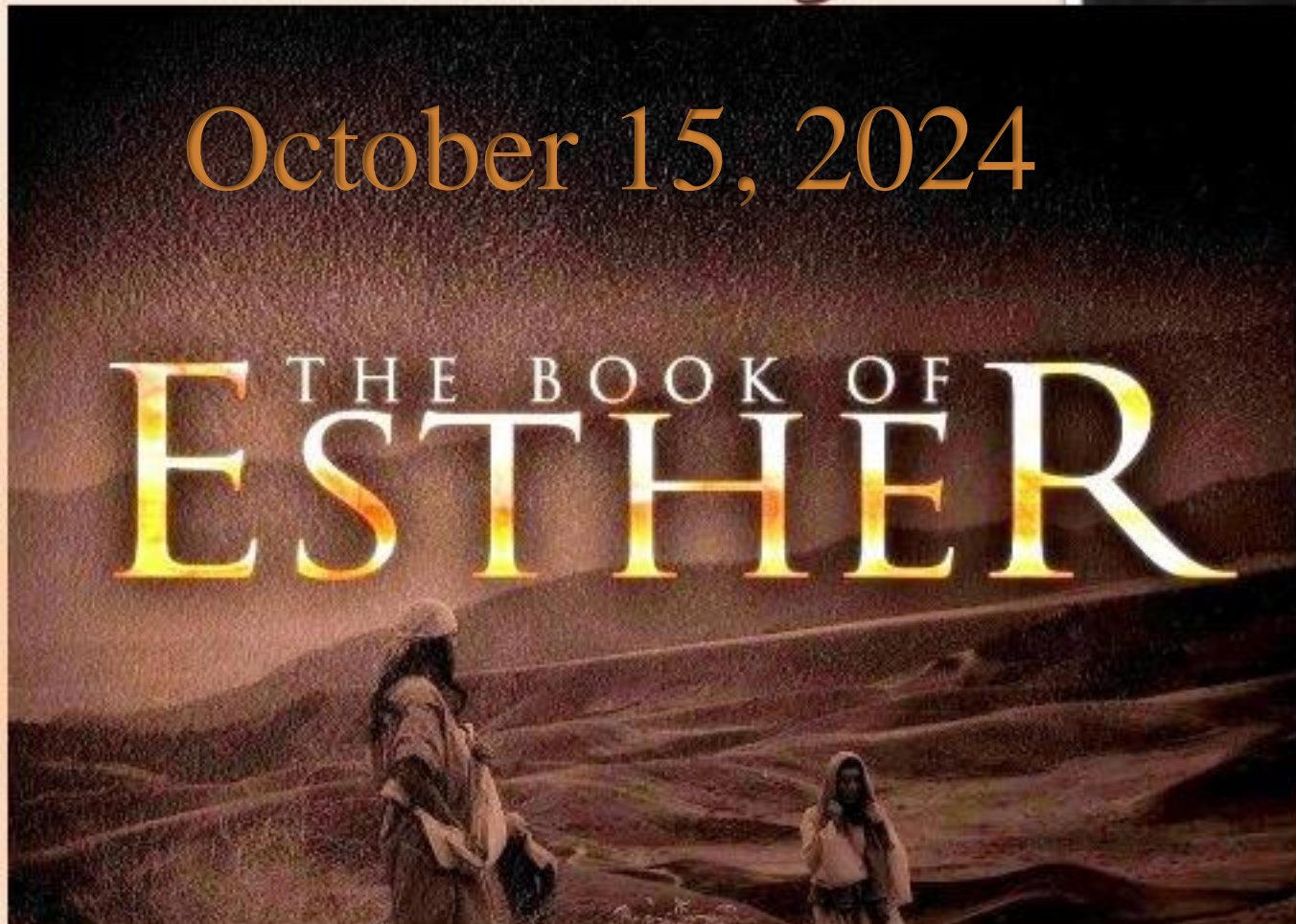


*Tuesday
Bible Study*

October 15, 2024

THE BOOK OF
ESTHER



Esther

Questions from the life of Esther:

- When the opposition seems unbeatable, does God care?
- Am I alone in this world, with its suffering, injustice, and pain?
- Where can I go to resign when life becomes too tough?
- How can I risk my reputation, comfort, and future to rescue others?



Esther

Who Was Esther?

- It's easy to dismiss Queen Esther as a lucky young woman who won the heart of the king.
- But realistically, she was a woman with a tragic background and dangerous secret that could cost her life and her family's.
- She was married to a king who destroyed peoples' lives on a whim and had a history of killing people close to him.



Esther

Who Was Esther?

- The king's favorite counselor and chief advisor was a mortal enemy of Esther's family.
- Esther had to keep a low profile, keeping her secret, hoping he wouldn't make the connection.
- For Esther, life was unfair. But her story brings hope to all who face trouble by showing how God works even through the fears and dangers.



Background

The Story of Esther

Lessons from Esther



Background Book of Esther

Background

The History

- In 722 BC the king of Assyria, Sargon II, conquered and destroyed Samaria.
- Almost 200 years later, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, conquered Judah.



Babylonian Warriors

Background

The History

- From 597–586 BC, Nebuchadnezzar systematically undermined Judah until he destroyed Jerusalem and its temple.
- To avoid rebellion and exert complete dominance, both Assyria and Babylonia deported people.
- By uprooting people from their land and their gods, they were easier to control.



Background

The History

- Some of the Jews who were taken from their homes during these years went to Persia.
- These exiled Jews not only lost their homes and their land, but also the certainty of God's presence.



Background

The History

- God's presence in the Jerusalem temple was a direct source of assurance and security for the Israelites, God's chosen people.
- If God was with them and dwelt among them, who could dare challenge them?
- However, the Babylonians not only conquered them, but also destroyed their temple.



Background

The History

- Because every region had its own local gods, wars were also representations of divine wars.
- In conquering Judah, the Babylonians could claim that their god, Marduk, was superior to the Jewish God, Yahweh.
- In light of this desperation and spiritual grief, the words of the prophet Isaiah echo powerfully: “Comfort, comfort my people, says your God” (Isa. 40:1).



Background

The History

- In the 6th century BC, Persia became the dominant power.
- Under the leadership of Cyrus the Great, the Persian Empire conquered Babylon in 539 BC.



Background

The History

- Besides being a brilliant warrior and conqueror, Cyrus was also a great politician.
- He created a policy to send people previously conquered in Babylonian and Assyrian times back to their homelands.



Background

The History

- The “Cyrus Cylinder” proclaims Cyrus as the legitimate king of Babylon.
- It also describes how Cyrus won the respect and favor of the Babylonian priests when he restored the temples in Babylon.



Cyrus Cylinder,
dating to 539 BC



Background

The History

- The Bible portrays Cyrus as God's instrument to free and restore the Jews to the Promised Land (2 Chron. 36:22–23).
- King Cyrus allowed the exiled Jews to return to Jerusalem, an event Isaiah prophesied as God's own action (Isa. 44:28–45:13).
- But many Jews who had already begun a new life in exile stayed in Persia.



Background

The History

- A group of Jews returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls and the temple around 515 BC.
- Other Jews, like Mordecai and Esther, remained in Persia.



Ruins in Ancient Persia



Background

The Setting

- The story of Esther takes place in the Persian royal court in Susa—a world of power where decisions, obsessions, and whims of the people with power in this world affect thousands.
- Some of the oldest written records reference this city.



Background



Background

The Setting

- In the 6th century BC, King Cyrus' son, Cambyses II, transferred the capital of the Persian government from Pasargadae to Susa.
- His son, Darius I (Xerxes' father), extended and improved a road from Susa to Asia Minor in the West and to East to India.
- This road, known as the "Royal Road," was crucial for Imperial communication and commerce.



Background



Background

The Setting

- The Persians remained in power until 330 BC when Alexander the Great defeated Darius III.
- As empires appeared and disappeared, Susa became Macedonian, Parthian, Roman, and Muslim.
- Today, Susa is an ancient city in Iran.



Background

The Characters

- **King Xerxes**

- Persian king, Son of Darius I of the royal Persian line, reigned 486–465 BC
- Called Ahasuerus in the Bible
- Invaded Greece, but later defeated by Greece



Background

The Characters

- **King Xerxes**

- Despite his famous loss at the Battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC, Xerxes led his armies to sack Athens.
- A year later, however, the Greeks expelled the Persian army from the Greek islands to Asia Minor.
- He was assassinated by courtiers.



Background

The Characters

- **Queen Vashti**

- Queen of King Xerxes
- May be Amestris, daughter of Otanes
- Loses her position as queen for disobeying the king's orders



Background

The Characters

- **Mordecai**

- Son of Jair (Est. 2:5) of the first royal line of Israel (Kish/Saul; 1 Sam. 9:1)
- Raised his cousin Esther
- Prevents the assassination of the king
- Becomes the king's main advisor



Background

The Characters

- **Esther**

- Mordecai's cousin
- Lost both of her parents; raised by her cousin
- Wins over the king to become queen in a dangerous time
- Saves the Jewish people from genocide



Background

The Characters

- **Haman**

- The king's main advisor
- Born of the royal line of the Amalekites (line of King Agag), an important detail
- Plots the destruction of all the Jews in the Persian Empire
- Is hung on the gallows



Background

The Characters

- **The Missing Character**

- The missing character in the book of Esther is the one who has the largest role: God.
- Conspicuous by his absence, God uses the actions of the human characters to shape all of history.
- God worked through the Persian king's own weaknesses to preserve the Jewish people.



Background

The Characters

- **The Missing Character**

- God worked through the courage of Mordecai and Esther to keep the Jewish people from harm and redeem a family name.
- God overturned Haman's evil plans, and fulfilled a 500-year-old prophecy of judgment on the Amalekites (Haman's ancestors).



Background

The Plot

- The book of Esther presents a childish, whimsical, unpredictable, and dangerous King Xerxes.
- He acts in a drunken stupor, thoughtlessly punishes his own queen, is easily swayed by advisers, and is a danger to his people.
- However, these very qualities generate not only the main crisis in the book, but also its solution.



Background

The Plot

- A beleaguered, young Jewish woman is placed in a position of power and responsibility.
- The future of her people, endangered by a vindictive and ancient enemy of God's people, Haman, the Agagite, is in her hands.
- But where is God in all of this? Are the Jews in Persia, and in many other places of the ancient world, all alone?





Story Of Esther

The Story of Esther

The First Queen

- The book opens with Queen Vashti refusing to obey the king who wants to parade his beautiful wife in front of his banquet guests.
- On the urging of his advisors, the king deposes Vashti, leaving himself without a queen.
- Vashti's act of defiance sets up a series of events that will include conspiracy, pride, lies, murderous plots, unexpected heroism, and deliverance.



The Story of Esther

The New Queen

- After Vashti is stripped of her crown, the king finds a new queen, a young, beautiful woman whose identity seems irrelevant at the time.
- Her name is Esther.



Esther

The Story of Esther

The New Queen

- On Mordecai's instructions, Esther hides her Jewish identity and blends into Persian culture.
- The king is so pleased with his new queen that he throws a great banquet in her honor and proclaims a holiday.



Esther

The Story of Esther

One Queen, Two Identities

- The books of Daniel and Esther both depict life for Jews in exile.
- These books show that Jews in prominent places had both Hebrew and Babylonian names.



The Story of Esther

One Queen, Two Identities

Hebrew Name:	Daniel
Meaning:	God is my judge
Alternate Name:	Belteshazzar
Meaning:	Bel protect his life. (Bel is another name for the Babylonian chief god Marduk.)



The Story of Esther

One Queen, Two Identities

Hebrew Name:	Hadassah
Meaning:	Myrtle
Alternate Name:	Esther
Meaning:	Star



The Story of Esther

One Queen, Two Identities

Hebrew Name:	(No Jewish name mentioned)
Meaning:	
Alternate Name:	Mordecai
Meaning:	Related to Marduk, the Babylonian chief god



The Story of Esther

Beauty Secrets

- Everything we know about Esther's personality is derived from her actions and the responses of people around her.
- She is no passive and powerless observer in this story; rather, she shows herself to be daring, intelligent, and strong, despite having been orphaned in her youth.



The Story of Esther

Beauty Secrets

- The expression “won his favor” (Est. 2:9, 15) is a clue to Esther’s personality.
- The common expression is for someone to “find favor” with a king.
- However, Esther “won” the king’s favor, showing Esther as active and purposeful.



The Story of Esther

Beauty Secrets

- Before Esther won the king's favor, she won the favor of the man in charge of all the virgins.
- Hegai quickly provided Esther with the diet and beauty treatments required, and even advanced her to the best spot in the harem!



The Story of Esther

Beauty Secrets

- Esther showed pleasing qualities that wore well with those who mattered.
- Her ability to choose wisely and to trust worthy advice is shown in her willingness to rely on Hegai's advice.
- And the payoff is big—the king is so pleased that he crowns Esther as his new queen.



The Story of Esther

Beauty Secrets

- In the dangerous atmosphere of the Persian court, where conspiracies were thick and executions routine, Esther's apparent serenity stands out.
- She “won the favor of everyone who saw her” (Est. 2:15).
- Her life must have seemed charmed—until the royal shoe dropped.



The Story of Esther

Intrigue in the Persian Court

- Esther's cousin Mordecai, a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin, holds a high post at the royal residence.
- Mordecai overhears two guards plotting to kill the king, which he reports to Queen Esther who exposes the plot.
- The Bible relays this event without giving it much importance, but it turns out to be crucial in the climax of the story.



The Story of Esther

Intrigue in the Persian Court

- The event determines Mordecai's future and shows the intolerant reaction that the king has to betrayal and deception—he hangs the two guards on gallows.
- Because of Mordecai's position of high visibility in the royal residence, Haman, an Amalekite and the king's closest advisor, notices Mordecai.



The Story of Esther

Intrigue in the Persian Court

- Haman is vain and conceited, and an enemy of the Jews.
- He determines that everyone should treat him as royalty; However, Mordecai refuses to bow.
- Haman persuades the king to approve an edict to annihilate all the Jews—men, women, and children.



Haman

The Story of Esther

Why did Mordecai Refuse to Bow?

- The text does not specify the reasons for Mordecai's refusal to bow.
- A possible reasons are:
 - 1. Mordecai's religious conviction that only God deserves praise;
 - 2. A reflection of the ancient enmity between the Amalekites and Israelites.



The Story of Esther

Why did Mordecai Refuse to Bow?

- The Amalekites, bitter enemies of Israel, were the descendants of Esau (Gen. 36:11–12).
- They made an unexpected attack against Israel at Sinai (Ex. 17:8–16).
- King Saul's failure to destroy the Amalekites, especially their King Agag, was one of the main reasons God eventually rejected Saul as king of Israel (1 Sam. 15).



The Story of Esther

Why did Mordecai Refuse to Bow?

- The enmity between the descendants of Agag and Saul, Amalekites and Benjaminites, became an essential part of Esther's story in the Persian court.
- Haman was Agag's descendant (Est. 3:1).
Mordecai was a Benjaminite (Est. 2:5).
- Mordecai's refusal to bow provides the excuse for Haman's hatred and homicidal plans.



The Story of Esther

A Queen's Courage

- When Haman's plan for the Jews' destruction becomes public, Mordecai laments, and the Jews join him.
- Mordecai turns to Queen Esther to save the Jews by pleading with the king.



The Story of Esther

A Queen's Courage

- Mordecai gives this message to Esther: “And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this” (Est. 4:14).
- Esther requests that Mordecai and the Jews join her in a three-day fast, after which she submits to whatever is to happen: “I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish” (4:16).



The Story of Esther

A Queen's Courage

- Esther's memorable words are born from faith and fear.
- She is afraid of the unpredictable nature of the king who could legally have her executed for approaching him without being called.
- She has faith that someone above the powerful king himself is in control.
- These words show Esther's courage and willingness to risk her life for her people.



The Story of Esther

A Queen's Courage

- After days of fasting (and the implied accompanying prayer) Esther approaches the king.
- But instead of anger, she is met with favor.



Esther before the King

The Story of Esther

Fasting Turns to Feasting

- Just as this whole story begins at a banquet, Esther plans to appeal to the king at a banquet.
- Unexpectedly, Esther does not express her request to the king at the first banquet.
- Instead, she asks him and Haman to return for a second banquet.
- The repetition of Esther's banquets parallels the king's banquets earlier in the story.



The Story of Esther

Fasting Turns to Feasting

THE KING'S BANQUETS	ESTHER'S BANQUETS
The king calls Queen Vashti to the banquet, but she refuses to come.	Esther invites the king and Haman to a banquet; they agree to go.
The king becomes furious and listens to bad advice.	The king is pleased and generous toward Esther.



The Story of Esther

Fasting Turns to Feasting

THE KING'S BANQUETS	ESTHER'S BANQUETS
The king rejects Vashti as his queen.	The king confirms Esther as his queen. Esther invites the king and Haman to a second banquet.
Esther wins the king's favor to become queen.	Having the king's favor, Esther reveals her Jewish identity. The king condemns Haman.



The Story of Esther

Fasting Turns to Feasting

THE KING'S BANQUETS

As a celebration, the king gives a great banquet in honor of Esther.

ESTHER'S BANQUETS

Queen Esther and her people are thus saved from Haman's evil plans. They celebrate with feasting and establish the Feast of Purim to commemorate the event.



The Story of Esther

Royal Humiliation

- Between Esther's two banquets, another important event takes place.
- Haman's wife and friends advise him to build gallows and ask the king to hang Mordecai on them.
- Haman is so prideful and confident of his success that he builds the gallows.



NEXT WEEK

Background

The Story of Esther (cont'd)

Lessons from Esther

STUDY & GROW with US each Sunday

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

8:30AM-9:30AM -- IN-PERSON and VIRTUAL

Dial-In: (339) 207-7080



www.NewMacedonia.org



Impact Generation
New Macedonia Baptist Church

YOUTH MINISTRY

Ages 4-17

Sunday School: 8:30am
Youth Church: 10am

www.newmacedonia.org



VIRTUAL

BIBLE Study

Adult Class

TUESDAYS @ 7:00 P.M.

JOIN VIA NEWMACEDONIA.ORG

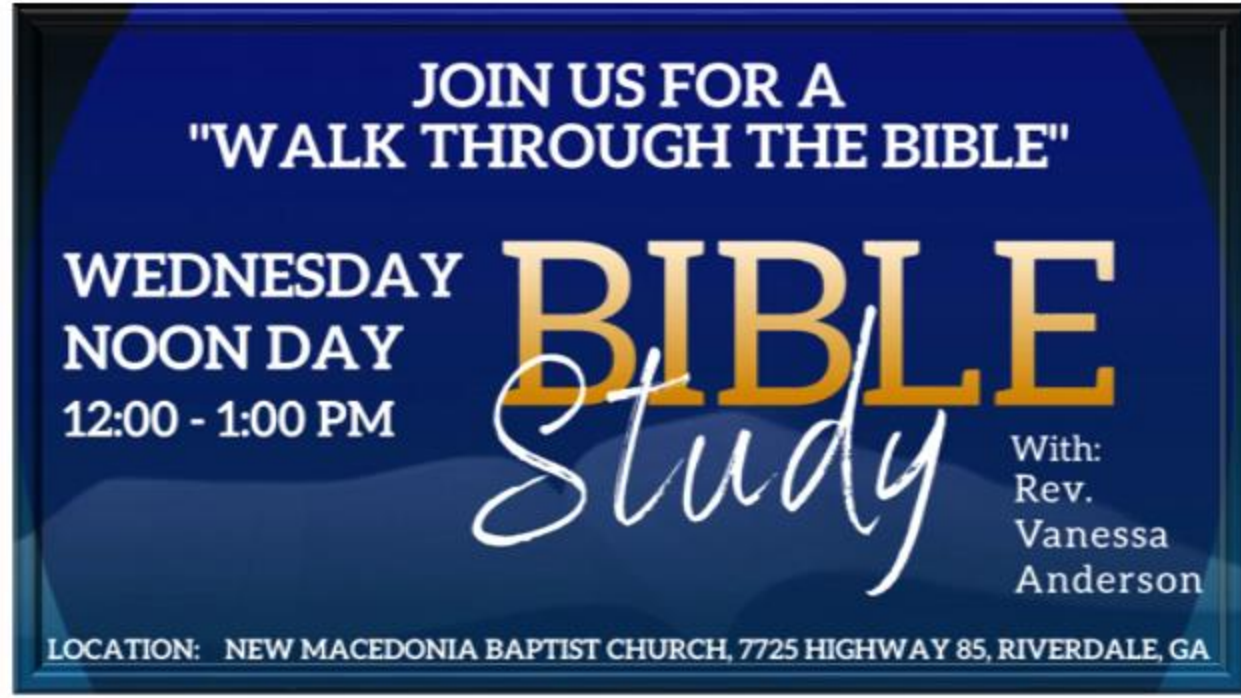
JOIN US FOR A
"WALK THROUGH THE BIBLE"

WEDNESDAY
NOON DAY
12:00 - 1:00 PM

BIBLE Study

With:
Rev.
Vanessa
Anderson

LOCATION: NEW MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH, 7725 HIGHWAY 85, RIVERDALE, GA



NMBC SISTER CIRCLE
MINISTRY
CELEBRATES

**FIGHTERS,
SURVIVORS AND
WARRIORS
OF
BREAST CANCER**

Through Prayer:

Come join us each Wednesday in the
month of October
7:00 pm via Zoom

Zoom Meeting ID: 831 4245 6020

Passcode: 677284

Dial-in: (929) 205-6099



New Macedonia Baptist Church, 7725 Highway 85, Riverdale, GA 30274

www.newmacedonia.org | 678.479.8190

Fall Festival 2024

October **26** 12:00-3:30pm

FREE EVENT

**FOOD
GAMES
HAYRIDE**

**CAR SHOW
VENDOR TABLES**

For more info, see a member of the Youth Ministry or send an email to nmbcyp77@outlook.com



Holiday Outing

Cost \$125

Final Payment

February

Maverick City & Tasha Cobb

State Farm Arena

Sunday, October 27th

Bus leaves at 4:00 p.m.

Contact Rev. Dillard

404-403-4483

Annual Leadership Workshop

“More Than Getting By” in 2025

Saturday, November 2nd
9:00 – 12 noon

Breakfast will be served

Ministry Leaders will be installed!



Dr. Sherry Gaither
Empowerment Network

Please
ATTEND!

OCTOBER 2024

www.mvp.sos.ga.gov

YOUR

✓OTE

COUNTS

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14 <small>Columbus Day</small>	15 Early Voting	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31 <small>Halloween</small>	November 1	

November 2024

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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5 Election Day	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30





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