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COMMENTARY ON THE WHOLE BIBLE

Esther

by Matthew Henry

To the Students of the Words, Works and Ways of God:

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AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF

THE BOOK OF

ESTHER

How the providence of God watched over the Jews that had returned out of captivity to their own land, and what great and kind things were done for them, we read in the two foregoing books; but there were many who staid behind, having not zeal enough for God's house, and the holy land and city, to carry them through the difficulties of a removal thither. These, one would think, should have been excluded the special protection of Providence, as unworthy the name of Israelites; but our God deals not with us according to our folly and weakness. We find in this book that even those Jews who were scattered in the provinces of the heathen were taken care of, as well as those who were gathered in the land of Judea, and were wonderfully preserved, when doomed to destruction and appointed as sheep for the slaughter. Who drew up this story is uncertain. Mordecai was as able as any man to relate, on his own knowledge, the several passages of it; *quorum pars magna fuit* — for he bore a conspicuous part in it; and that he wrote such an account of them as was necessary to inform his people of the grounds of their observing the feast of Purim we are told (⁽⁻¹⁷¹⁰⁾ Esther 9:20, *Mordecai wrote these things*, and sent them enclosed in letters to all the Jews), and therefore we have reason to think he was the penman of the whole book. It is the narrative of a plot laid against the Jews to cut them all off, and which was wonderfully disappointed by a concurrence of providences. The most compendious exposition of it will be to read it deliberately all together at one time, for the latter events expound the former and show what providence intended in them. The name of God is not found in this book; but the apocryphal addition to it (which is not in the Hebrew, nor was ever received by the Jews into the canon), containing six chapters, begins thus, *Then Mordecai said, God has done these things*. But, though the name of God be not in it, the finger of God is, directing many minute events for the bringing about of his people's deliverance. The particulars are not only surprising and very entertaining, but edifying and very encouraging to the faith and hope of God's people in the most difficult

and dangerous times. We cannot now expect such miracles to be wrought for us as were for Israel when they were brought out of Egypt, but we may expect that in such ways as God here took to defeat Haman's plot he will still protect his people. We are told,

- I.** How Esther came to be queen and Mordecai to be great at court, who were to be the instruments of the intended deliverance, Esther 1, 2.
- II.** Upon what provocation, and by what arts, Haman the Amalekite obtained an order for the destruction of all the Jews, Esther 3.
- III.** The great distress the Jews, and their patriots especially, were in thereupon, Esther 4.
- IV.** The defeating of Haman's particular plot against Mordecai's life, Esther 5-7.
- V.** The defeating of his general plot against the Jews, Esther 8.
- VI.** The care that was taken to perpetuate the remembrance of this, Esther 9, 10. The whole story confirms the Psalmist's observation (^{<35712>}Psalm 37:12, 13), *The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him; he sees that his day is coming.*