

AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF

THE BOOK OF ESTHER

We find in this book, that even those Jews who were scattered in the province of the heathen, were taken care of, and were wonderfully preserved, when threatened with destruction. Though the name of God be not in this book, the finger of God is shown by minute events for the bringing about his people's deliverance. This history comes in between ^{<560>}Ezra 6; 7.

CHAPTER 1

The royal feast of Ahasuerus. (1-9) Vashti's refusal to appear, The king's decree. (10-22)

^{<100>}Esther 1:1

Vs. 1-9: The pride of Ahasuerus's heart rising with the grandeur of his kingdom, he made an extravagant feast. This was vain glory. Better is a dinner of herbs with quietness, than this banquet of wine, with all the noise and tumult that must have attended it. But except grace prevails in the heart, self-exaltation and self-indulgence, in one form or another, will be the ruling principle. Yet none did compel; so that if any drank to excess, it was their own fault. This caution of a heathen prince, even when he would show his generosity, may shame many called Christians, who, under pretense of sending the health round, send sin round, and death with it. There is a woe to them that do so; let them read it, and tremble, ^{<3025>}Habakkuk 2:15,16.

^{<100>}Esther 1:10

Vs. 10-22: Ahasuerus's feast ended in heaviness, by his own folly. Seasons of peculiar festivity often end in vexation. Superiors should be careful not to command what may reasonably be disobeyed. But when wine is in, men's reason departs from them. He that had rule over 127 provinces, had no rule over his own spirit. But whether the passion or the

policy of the king was served by this decree, God's providence made way for Esther to the crown, and defeated Haman's wicked project, even before it had entered into his heart, and he arrived at his power. Let us rejoice that the Lord reigns, and will overrule the madness or folly of mankind to promote his own glory, and the safety and happiness of his people.

CHAPTER 2

Esther chosen queen. (1-20) Mordecai discovers a plot against the king. (21-23)

Esther 2:1

Vs. 1-20: We see to what absurd practices those came, who were destitute of Divine revelation, and what need there was of the gospel of Christ, to purify men from the lusts of the flesh, and to bring them back to the original institution of marriage. Esther was preferred as queen. Those who suggest that Esther committed sin to come at this dignity, do not consider the custom of those times and countries. Every one that the king took was married to him, and was his wife, though of a lower rank. But how low is human nature sunk, when such as these are the leading pursuits and highest worldly happiness of men! Disappointment and vexation must follow; and he most wisely consults his enjoyment, even in this present life, who most exactly obeys the precepts of the Divine law. But let us turn to consider the wise and merciful providence of God, carrying on his deep but holy designs in the midst of all this. And let no change in our condition be a pretext for forgetting our duties to parents, or the friends who have stood in their place.

Esther 2:21

Vs. 21-23: Good subjects must not conceal any bad design they know of against the prince, or the public peace. Mordecai was not rewarded at the time, but a remembrance was written. Thus, with respect to those who serve Christ, though their recompense is not till the resurrection of the just, yet an account is kept of their work of faith and labor of love, which God is not unrighteous to forget. The servant of God must be faithful to every trust, and watchful for those who employ him. If he appear to be neglected now, he will be remembered hereafter. None of our actions can be forgotten; even our most secret thoughts are written in lasting registers,
Revelation 20:12.

CHAPTER 3

Haman seeks to destroy the Jews. (1-6) He obtains a decree against the Jews. (7-15)

Esther 3:1

Vs. 1-6: Mordecai refused to reverence Haman. The religion of a Jew forbade him to give honors to any mortal man which savored of idolatry, especially to so wicked a man as Haman. By nature all are idolaters; self is our favorite idol, we are pleased to be treated as if every thing were at our disposal. Though religion by no means destroys good manners, but teaches us to render honor to whom honor is due, yet by a citizen of Zion, not only in his heart, but in his eyes, such a vile person as Haman was, is contemned, ^{<BIB>}Psalm 15:4. The true believer cannot obey edicts, or conform to fashions, which break the law of God. He must obey God rather than man, and leave the consequences to him. Haman was full of wrath. His device was inspired by that wicked spirit, who has been a murderer from the beginning; whose enmity to Christ and his church, governs all his children.

Esther 3:7

Vs. 7-15: Without some acquaintance with the human heart, and the history of mankind, we should not think that any prince could consent to a dreadful proposal, so hurtful to himself. Let us be thankful for mild and just government. Haman inquires, according to his own superstitions, how to find a lucky day for the designed massacre! God's wisdom serves its own purposes by men's folly. Haman has appealed to the lot, and the lot, by delaying the execution, gives judgment against him. The event explains the doctrine of a particular providence over all the affairs of men, and the care of God over his church. Haman was afraid lest the king's conscience should smite him for what he had done; to prevent which, he kept him drinking. This cursed method many often take to drown convictions, and to harden their own hearts, and the hearts of others, in sin. All appeared in a favorable train to accomplish the project. But though sinners are permitted to proceed to the point they aim at, an unseen but almighty Power turns them back. How vain and contemptible are the strongest

assaults against Jehovah! Had Haman obtained his wish, and the Jewish nation perished, what must have become of all the promises? How could the prophecies concerning the great Redeemer of the world have been fulfilled? Thus the everlasting covenant itself must have failed, before this diabolical project could take place.

CHAPTER 4

The Jews lament their danger. (1-4) Esther undertakes to plead for the Jews. (5-17)

Esther 4:1

Vs. 1-4: Mordecai avowed his relation to the Jews. Public calamities, that oppress the church of God, should affect our hearts more than any private affliction, and it is peculiarly distressing to occasion sufferings to others. God will keep those that are exposed to evil by the tenderness of their consciences.

Esther 4:5

Vs. 5-17: We are prone to shrink from services that are attended with peril or loss. But when the cause of Christ and his people demand it, we must take up our cross, and follow him. When Christians are disposed to consult their own ease or safety, rather than the public good, they should be blamed. The law was express, all knew it. It is not thus in the court of the King of kings: to the footstool of his throne of grace we may always come boldly, and may be sure of an answer of peace to the prayer of faith. We are welcome, even into the holiest, through the blood of Jesus. Providence so ordered it, that, just then, the king's affection had cooled toward Esther; her faith and courage thereby were the more tried; and God's goodness in the favor she now found with the king, thereby shone the brighter. Haman no doubt did what he could to set the king against her. Mordecai suggests, that it was a cause which, one way or other, would certainly be carried, and which therefore she might safely venture in. This was the language of strong faith, which staggered not at the promise when the danger was most threatening, but against hope believed in hope. He that by sinful devices will save his life, and will not trust God with it in the way of duty, shall lose it in the way of sin. Divine Providence had regard to this matter, in bringing Esther to be queen. Therefore thou art bound in gratitude to do this service for God and his church, else thou dost not answer the end of thy being raised up. There is wise counsel and design in all the providences of God, which will prove that they are all intended for the good of the church. We should, every one, consider for

what end God has put us in the place where we are, and study to answer that end: and take care that we do not let it slip. Having solemnly commended our souls and our cause to God, we may venture upon his service. All dangers are trifling compared with the danger of losing our souls. But the trembling sinner is often as much afraid of casting himself, without reserve, upon the Lord's free mercy, as Esther was of coming before the king. Let him venture, as she did, with earnest prayer and supplication, and he shall fare as well and better than she did. The cause of God must prevail: we are safe in being united to it.

CHAPTER 5

Esther's application received. (1-8) Haman prepares to hang Mordecai. (9-14)

Esther 5:1

Vs. 1-8: Esther having had power with God, and prevailing, like Jacob, had power with men too. He that will lose his life for God, shall save it, or find it in a better life. The king encouraged her. Let us from this be encouraged to pray always to our God, and not to faint. Esther came to a proud, imperious man; but we come to the God of love and grace. She was not called, but we are; the Spirit says, Come, and the Bride says, Come. She had a law against her, we have a promise, many a promise, in favor of us; Ask, and it shall be given you. She had no friend to go with her, or to plead for her; on the contrary, he that was then the king's favorite, was her enemy; but we have an Advocate with the Father, in whom he is well pleased. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace. God put it into Esther's heart to delay her petition a day longer; she knew not, but God did, what was to happen in that very night.

Esther 5:9

Vs. 9-14: This account of Haman is a comment upon ¹⁰²⁴Proverbs 21:24. Self-admirers and self-flatterers are really self-deceivers. Haman, the higher he is lifted up, the more impatient he is of contempt, and the more enraged at it. The affront from Mordecai spoiled all. A slight affront, which a humble man would scarcely notice, will torment a proud man, even to madness, and will mar all his comforts. Those disposed to be uneasy, will never want something to be uneasy at. Such are proud men; though they have much to their mind, if they have not all to their mind, it is as nothing to them. Many call the proud happy, who display pomp and make a show; but this is a mistaken thought. Many poor cottagers feel far less uneasiness than the rich, with all their fancied advantages around them. The man who knows not Christ, is poor though he be rich, because he is utterly destitute of that which alone is true riches.

CHAPTER 6

*Providence recommends Mordecai to the king's favor. (1-3)
Haman's counsel honors Mordecai. (4-11) Haman's friends tell
him of his danger. (12-14)*

Esther 6:1

Vs. 1-3: The providence of God rules over the smallest concerns of men. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without him. Trace the steps which Providence took towards the advancement of Mordecai. The king could not sleep when Providence had a design to serve, in keeping him awake. We read of no illness that broke his sleep, but God, whose gift sleep is, withheld it from him. He who commanded a hundred and twenty-seven provinces, could not command one hour's sleep.

Esther 6:4

Vs. 4-11: See how men's pride deceives them. The deceitfulness of our own hearts appears in nothing more than in the conceit we have of ourselves and our own performances: against which we should constantly watch and pray. Haman thought the king loved and valued no one but himself, but he was deceived. We should suspect that the esteem which others profess for us, is not so great as it seems to be, that we may not think too well of ourselves, nor trust too much in others. How Haman is struck, when the king bids him do honor to Mordecai the Jew, the very man whom he hated above all men, whose ruin he was now designing!

Esther 6:12

Vs. 12-14: Mordecai was not puffed up with his honors, he returned to his place and the duty of it. Honor is well bestowed on those that do not think themselves above their business. But Haman could not bear it. What harm had it done him? But that will break a proud man's heart, which will not break a humble man's sleep. His doom was, out of this event, read to him by his wife and his friends. They plainly confessed that the Jews, though scattered through the nations, were special objects of Divine care. Miserable comforters are they all; they did not advise Haman to repent,

but foretold his fate as unavoidable. The wisdom of God is seen, in timing the means of his church's deliverance, so as to manifest his own glory.

CHAPTER 7

Esther accuses Haman. (1-6) Haman hanged on his own gallows. (7-10)

 Esther 7:1

Vs. 1-6: If the love of life causes earnest pleadings with those that can only kill the body, how fervent should our prayers be to Him, who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell! How should we pray for the salvation of our relatives, friends, and all around us! When we petition great men, we must be cautious not to give them offense; even just complaints must often be kept back. But when we approach the King of kings with reverence, we cannot ask or expect too much. Though nothing but wrath be our due, God is able and willing to do exceeding abundantly, even beyond all we can ask or think.

 Esther 7:7

Vs. 7-10: The king was angry: those that do things with self-will, reflect upon them afterward with self-reproach. When angry, we should pause before we come to any resolution, and thus rule our own spirits, and show that we are governed by reason. Those that are most haughty and insolent when in power and prosperity, commonly, like Haman, are the most abject and poor-spirited when brought down. The day is coming when those that hate and persecute God's chosen ones, would gladly be beholden to them. The king returns yet more angry against Haman. Those about him were ready to put his wrath into execution. How little can proud men be sure of the interest they think they have! The enemies of God's church have often been thus taken in their own craftiness. The Lord is known by such judgments. Then was the king's wrath pacified, and not till then. And who pities Haman hanged on his own gallows? who does not rather rejoice in the Divine righteousness displayed in the destruction his own art brought upon him? Let the workers of iniquity tremble, turn to the Lord, and seek pardon through the blood of Jesus.

CHAPTER 8

*Mordecai is advanced. (1, 2) Esther makes suit for the Jews. (3-14)
Mordecai honored, The joy of the Jews. (15-17)*

Esther 8:1

Vs. 1, 2: What Haman would have done mischief with, Esther will do good with. All the trust the king had reposed in Haman, he now placed in Mordecai: a happy change. See the vanity of laying up treasure upon earth; he that heapeth up riches, knoweth not who shall gather them. With what little pleasure, nay, with what constant vexation, would Haman have looked upon his estate, if he could have foreseen that Mordecai, the man he hated above all men in the world, should have rule over all that wherein he had labored! It is our interest to make sure of those riches which will not be left behind, but which will go with us to another world.

Esther 8:3

Vs. 3-14: It was time to be earnest, when the church of God was at stake. Esther, though safe herself, fell down and begged for the deliverance of her people. We read of no tears when she begged for her own life, but although she was sure of that, she wept for her people. Tears of pity and tenderness are the most Christ-like. According to the constitution of the Persian government, no law or decree could be repealed or recalled. This is so far from speaking to the wisdom and honor of the Medes and Persians, that it clearly shows their pride and folly. This savors of that old presumption which ruined all, We will be as gods! It is God's prerogative not to repent, or to say what can never be altered or unsaid. Yet a way was found, by another decree, to authorize the Jews to stand upon their defense. The decree was published in the languages of all the provinces. Shall all the subjects of an earthly prince have his decrees in languages they understand, and shall God's oracles and laws be locked up from any of his servants in an unknown tongue?

Esther 8:15

Vs. 15-17: Mordecai's robes now were rich. These things are not worth notice, but as marks of the king's favor, and the fruit of God's favor to his church. It is well with a land, when ensigns of dignity are made the ornaments of serious piety. When the church prospers, many will join it, who will be shy of it when in trouble. When believers have rest, and walk in the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost, they will be multiplied. And the attempts of Satan to destroy the church, always tend to increase the number of true Christians.

CHAPTER 9

The success of the Jews. (1-19) The feast of Purim in remembrance of this. (20-32)

Esther 9:1

Vs. 1-19: The enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them by the former edict. If they had attempted nothing against the people of God, they would not themselves have suffered. The Jews, acting together, strengthened one another. Let us learn to stand fast in one spirit, and with one mind, striving together against the enemies of our souls, who endeavor to rob us of our faith, which is more precious than our lives. The Jews, to the honor of their religion, showed contempt of worldly wealth, that they might make it appear they desired nothing except their own preservation. In every case the people of God should manifest humanity and disinterestedness, frequently refusing advantages which might lawfully be obtained. The Jews celebrated their festival the day after they had finished their work. When we have received great mercies from God, we ought to be speedy in making thankful returns to him.

Esther 9:20

Vs. 20-32: The observance of the Jewish feasts, is a public declaration of the truth of the Old Testament Scriptures. And as the Old Testament Scriptures are true, the Messiah expected by the Jews is come long ago; and none but Jesus of Nazareth can be that Messiah. The festival was appointed by authority, yet under the direction of the Spirit of God. It was called the feast of Purim, from a Persian word, which signifies a lot. The name of this festival would remind them of the almighty power of the God of Israel, who served his own purposes by the superstitions of the heathen. In reviewing our mercies, we should advert to former fears and distresses. When our mercies are personal, we should not by forgetfulness lose the comfort of them, or withhold from the Lord the glory due to his name. May the Lord teach us to rejoice, with that holy joy which anticipates and prepares for the blessedness of heaven. Every instance of Divine goodness to ourselves, is a new obligation laid on us to do good, to

those especially who most need our bounty. Above all, redemption by Christ binds us to be merciful, ~~488~~ 2 Corinthians 8:9.

CHAPTER 10

Greatness of Ahasuerus, Mordecai's advancement.

Esther 10:1

Many instances of the grandeur of Ahasuerus might have been given: these were written in the Persian chronicles, which are long since lost, while the sacred writings will live till time shall be no more. The concerns of the despised worshippers of the Lord are deemed more important by the Holy Spirit, than the exploits of the most illustrious monarch on earth. Mordecai was truly great, and his greatness gave him opportunities of doing the more good. He did not disown his people the Jews, and no doubt kept to the true religion. He did not seek his own wealth, but the welfare of his people. Few have it in their power to do so much good as Mordecai; but all have it in their power to do hurt, and who has it not in his power to do some good? We are not required to do what is not in our power, or is unsuited to our station; but all are bound to live under the influence of the tempers displayed in the saints, whose examples are recorded in the Bible. If we live by the faith of Christ, we shall be active according to the ability and opportunities he gives us, in promoting his glory and the best interests of men. If our faith be genuine, it will work by love. Wait in faith and prayer, and the event will be safe and glorious; our salvation is sure, through our Lord Jesus Christ.