

Session 4

Esther and the Bride of Christ

This session covers:

- Esther as a picture of the end-time bride
- The story of Esther
- The types and shadows in the book of Esther
- The bride of Christ in the end times

This session corresponds to:

- Session 4 of *Understanding the Bride of Christ* CDs

A Picture of the End-Time Bride

1. The book of Esther is a magnificent allegory that describes the end-time bride of Christ.

- Esther is more than an amazing story of a young Jewish girl who saved her people. This book reveals the mighty call that the Lord has granted to His end-time bride, the rewards of pursuing this glorious relationship, and the preparation that is required to partner with Jesus in the end times.
- In this session and the next, we will use the book of Esther as the lens through which to view the call, purpose, preparation, position, and role of the end-time bride of Christ.

2. Before we begin, we need to understand a few important truths about allegorical interpretations.

- An allegory is a story in which people, things, and events have a hidden or symbolic meaning. Allego-

ries are often used for teaching or explaining moral principles and spiritual truths.

- The word *allegory* is used only once in the Bible: when Paul says that Hagar and Sarah “are an allegory” of the old covenant and the new covenant (Gal. 4:23-24, KJV).
- Despite only being mentioned by name once, allegories abound in Scripture. Paul, for example, showed that the marriage relationship was a picture of Christ and the church (Eph. 5:22-32). And most scholars believe that the Song of Solomon is an allegory of Jesus and His bride.
- The primary way to interpret the Bible is through the historical grammatical approach that takes Scripture at face value. Even so, allegories can be very helpful in interpreting the Scriptures as they make complex truths simpler to understand, but you need to be cautious when interpreting them, lest you add meaning to God’s Word that was never intended.
- Whenever we interpret a passage allegorically, however, we must make sure that the truth we are establishing is clearly revealed elsewhere in the Bible.
- Because characters in an allegory are often filled with flaws and sinful behavior, they are never a perfect representation of spiritual truths or of the Lord Himself.
- For example, in the book of Esther, King Ahasuerus is an unrestrained, self-indulgent, immoral world ruler who sought pleasure at any cost. He is a poor moral representation of King Jesus.
- However, when you disregard King Ahasuerus’ character flaws and instead view him simply as a king who is searching for a bride, he becomes a symbol of Jesus’ quest to find a worthy bride.

The Story of Esther

1. The book of Esther begins with King Ahasuerus hosting two banquets.

- In 483 B.C., after Persia overthrew Babylon and before many of the deported Jews had returned to the land of Judah, King Ahasuerus, the king of Persia, gave a banquet lasting 180 days—a full six months—for the leaders of the 127 provinces of his kingdom.
- The king used this lengthy feast with his leaders to plan an upcoming invasion of Greece.
- At the end of the 180 day banquet, Ahasuerus gave another banquet for all of the people who lived in the capital city of Susa.
- On the seventh and last day of this banquet, Ahasuerus called his bride, Queen Vashti, to come before the princes and all the people to display her beauty.
- She refused and the king was enraged. Because of her rebellion, Ahasuerus issued an unbreakable edict that prohibited Vashti from ever coming into his presence again, stipulating that her royal position be given to another “more worthy than she” (Est. 1:19).

2. King Ahasuerus searched for a bride more worthy than Vashti.

- After some time passes and his anger subsides, Ahasuerus began searching for a new bride—one more worthy than Vashti.
- His attendants looked throughout the land for beautiful young virgins to bring to Susa so that the next queen might be selected from among them.
- As the king's law dictated, each of the candidates was required to go through 12 months of preparation: six months of myrrh baths and six months of spices and cosmetics.
- When the preparation was complete, each young girl would be evaluated by the king, and the one who pleased him the most would be chosen as his queen.
- Esther, a Jew, was one of the candidates. Mordecai, her uncle who raised her after her parents died, carefully watched over Esther during the preparation process.
- In the king's harem, Esther had great favor with Hegai, the king's eunuch, and he gave her the best that the palace had to offer.
- After completing the 12 month preparation process, Esther, along with the other virgins, went in for her night with the king.
- After this evaluation, each young lady was sent to a second harem to wait and see if she had pleased the king. She would not appear before the king again unless he took pleasure in her and requested her by name.
- As the storyline goes, Esther pleased the king so much that he chose her as his queen.

3. Esther rescued the Jews from certain annihilation.

- Some time later, Ahasuerus promoted Haman—who was from the royal family of the Amalekites, Israel's ancient enemy—to second in command.
- To honor Haman, the king required that everyone in the kingdom bow before Haman and pay homage to him.
- Mordecai, an observant Jew, would not bow down to him. Thus, Haman detested Mordecai and initiated a plot to kill him—and all of his people, the Jews.
- Haman sent a letter to all the provinces authorizing the people to kill all of the Jews in the land.
- As you would expect, the Jews were terrified and began to cry out for deliverance.
- Mordecai asked Esther to intercede to the king for the Jews' deliverance.
- Though she did not recognize the threat at first, Esther finally realized what was at stake. If she did not act, her people would be annihilated. Perhaps she had "attained royalty for such a time as this" (Est. 4:14).
- Determined to act, yet knowing the consequences of not receiving the king's favor, Esther uttered her now-famous words, "If I perish, I perish" (Est. 4:16).

- After a three-day fast, Esther approached the king to request that he spare the Jews. To her great relief, Ahasuerus extended his golden scepter, asked what was troubling Esther, and granted her up to half his kingdom.
- Esther's intercession ultimately led to deliverance for the Jews and death for Haman and his 10 sons.

4. The Jews celebrated their deliverance and were exalted in the land.

- Following Haman's and his 10 sons' death, Mordecai was placed over Haman's house, many of the Persians converted to Judaism, and dread of the Jews fell upon the leaders of the kingdom.
- Filled with joy and gladness, the Jews feasted and celebrated their great victory. Because of Esther, the Jews escaped certain annihilation and were exalted in the land.
- The book ends with this enlightening verse:

For Mordecai the Jew was second only to King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews and in favor with his many kinsmen, one who sought the good of his people and one who spoke for the welfare of his whole nation (Est. 10:3).

- God used Esther in unprecedented ways to deliver the Jews from the wicked schemes of the enemy.

The Types and Shadows in the Book of Esther

A type or shadow is a person, thing, or event that symbolizes something else, especially something that is expected to take place in the future. The following is a brief description of the six main characters in the book of Esther and how they foreshadow the end-time Bride of Christ.

1. King Ahasuerus represents Jesus.

- Though Ahasuerus is far from a perfect type of Him, Jesus, like Ahasuerus, is a King, and He will rule a worldwide kingdom.
- Jesus will also search for a worthy bride to be His queen and He will display her beauty to the world.

2. Vashti represents that part in all of us that is independent, self-willed, rebellious, and unwilling to submit to authority.

- Vashti means beautiful woman or one who is desired.¹ Vashti was so beautiful that King Ahasuerus wanted to display her beauty to everyone in his worldwide empire.

- Vashti was of royal blood. She was a Persian princess by birth, identified by some as the daughter of King Alyattes of Lydia.²
- Vashti held all of the right credentials to be queen; she came from a royal line and was very beautiful. But she was also independent, self-willed, rebellious, and refused to submit to authority.
- When we are born again, all of us are like Vashti. We are betrothed to Christ as His bride and are partakers of a royal bloodline, but we have an independent, self-willed nature that has not been broken by the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 11:2; 1 Peter 2:9).
- For those who want to be a worthy bride like Esther, we must be willing to change. We must submit to the Holy Spirit's work in our life, and we must overcome the traits of independence and rebellion that plagued Vashti.

3. Mordecai represents the Holy Spirit.

- Like the Holy Spirit, Mordecai was Esther's guide and counselor (John 14:26). He oversaw her preparation to be the wife of the king, and he told her to intercede for the Jews' deliverance (Est. 2:11, 4:13-14).
- Mordecai was Esther's adopted father (Est. 2:7). The Bible says that we have received "a spirit of adoption [the Holy Spirit]...by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'" (Rom. 8:15-16).

4. Haman and his 10 sons symbolize the Antichrist coming to power in the end times.

- In Haman, we see the demonic power that will motivate the Antichrist and his kingdom in the end times.
- Haman was an Agagite from the line of the Amalekites. From the beginning, the Amalekites hated Israel and pursued them with unrelenting spite (Ex. 17:16; Deut. 25:17-19). Consequently, Israel came close to exterminating them on several occasions (1 Sam. 15:8, 30:17; 2 Sam 8:12; 1 Chron. 4:43).³
- A survivor of this family line would instinctively hate Israel and every Jew, just as Haman did. In fact, the Lord told Moses that He would war against Amalek from generation to generation (Ex. 17:16).
- Haman planned to destroy Mordecai and all of the Jews in Persia because Mordecai refused to bow down and worship him (Est. 3:5-6). Though this plot was established in the first month of the year, it was not scheduled to take place until the end of the year (Est. 3:12-13).
- Likewise, we know that Satan's strategy to destroy mankind—especially the Jews—has been planned from the beginning but will not be fully released until the end times.
- Just as Haman had 10 sons, the Antichrist will partner with 10 kings to conquer the world and annihilate God's people—both Jews and Christians (Rev. 17:12-14).

5. Esther is a beautiful picture of the worthy bride of Christ.

- Esther is a Persian name whose root *aster* means "a star." By implication, it was a star of good fortune, a star of hope, a star of joy, or a

star of superiority.⁴ Furthermore, Jewish rabbis believe that Esther means “to hide.”

- Esther’s original Hebrew name was *Hadassah*, meaning “myrtle.”⁵ The myrtle has dark green, scented leaves, delicate starry white flowers, and dark-colored berries. The myrtle was one of the choice plants of the land. Isaiah wrote, “Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree; and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree” (Isa 55:13). The myrtle tree is a prophetic picture of God’s promised blessings.⁶
- Thus, Esther portrays one who is hidden in obscurity and arises to prominence and power, much like a beautiful myrtle tree rising from the thorns, or as a star rising in the night sky.
- Esther pictures the bride of Christ who consents to being made ready, who pleases the King in the secret place, and who is given authority to rule and reign with Jesus to destroy the Antichrist and his kingdom.
- The Holy Spirit wants to transform all of us from the proud, rebellious nature of Vashti into people who are humble, meek, and selfless like Esther. Esther represents those who willingly submit to the Holy Spirit’s preparation process to become a bride worthy to partner with Jesus in the end times and for all eternity.

6. Hegai the eunuch, along with the other overseers, add significant meaning to this end-time allegory.

- The overseers in all the provinces who gather the virgins to the capital city symbolize pastors in the nations who are going to the highways and byways to invite people “to the wedding feast” (Matt. 22:9).
- Hegai, the king’s eunuch responsible for the preparation of the virgins, symbolizes several things. First, he is a picture of the Holy Spirit’s assignment to prepare a worthy bride for Jesus.
- Second, he is a picture of God’s work of grace that is released on all who say “yes” to be made ready. Just as Esther found favor with Hegai and he quickly provided her with all that she needed, the Holy Spirit provides us with all that we need to please our King.
- Third, Hegai can also represent those are called as a friend of the Bridegroom like John the Baptist. Hegai symbolizes those who operate in the spirit and power of Elijah—whose ministry is to make ready a worthy bride for Jesus (Luke 1:17).

The Bride of Christ in the End Times

1. In the book of Esther, we see a glimpse of the preparation required to make the bride ready for the end times and eternity.

- Just as Ahasuerus held an extensive and elaborate banquet to display the beauty of his bride, the Father’s eternal purpose, even before the foundation of the world, was to have a worthy bride for His Son and to display her beauty to all of the world, as well as to every angel, demonic ruler, and principality in the heavenly realm.

- For this to happen, an unprecedented work of the Holy Spirit is required—a work that will prepare the bride to be worthy of this great honor and to train her to reign with Jesus now and for all of eternity.
- The Holy Spirit, our Mordecai, along with the king’s eunuchs and helpers, must remove the “Vashti” from our hearts. Our pride, independence, rebellion, and stubbornness must be replaced by humility, brokenness, meekness, and love.
- In our day, God is sending His leaders out to gather believers, known as young virgins in the book of Esther, to the harem so that they can be prepared as a worthy bride for Jesus.
- The Father is looking for those who will eagerly say “yes” with their whole hearts to be made ready. For those who surrender to this call, unprecedented grace and favor will be extended to make them ready.
- Like Esther, they will be given myrrh baths of embalming oil that is bitter to the taste but releases a beautiful fragrance. This work of the cross will crucify the Vashti-like nature. Then, after the cross has broken their independent natures, they will be beautified by the internal work of the Holy Spirit as He produces love, joy, peace, patience, faithfulness, kindness, gentleness, and self-control within them.
- Through this long and extended preparation process, the Holy Spirit will heal the wounds of rejection, break demonic strongholds, and liberate the bride to enjoy Jesus like never before.
- Even in the difficult times of preparation, these “Esthers” will know that their Mordecai will direct and protect them. When their season of preparation is over and they are presented to the King, they will be selected as a bride more worthy than Vashti.

2. In the book of Esther, we see a glimpse of how the bride will partner with Jesus in the end times and for all eternity.

- After overcoming every test in their wilderness of preparation (Est. 2), these “Esthers” will be ready to partner with Jesus in end-time events.
- As the modern-day Haman is promoted in the land and the world moves toward a one-world government, religion, and economy (Rev. 17-18), the prepared bride will be ready to take action.
- She will not sit idly by waiting for the rapture; instead, she will be poised to act.
- Realizing that she was born “for such a time as this,” she will go before the King and intercede for her people—both Jews and Christians.
- Because she has pleased the King in the secret place and knows Him deeply, she will be granted the golden scepter—the rod of authority. She will use this authority in spiritual warfare to liberate her people from the forces of evil that are increasing their attacks in the land.
- As she partners with Jesus, she will release judgments against the Antichrist and his kingdom (Rev. 5:8, 8:1-6).
- She will be a prime reason why sin is judged, the devil is bound, and the end-time harvest breaks out in the land.
- After engaging in intense spiritual warfare at the end of the age, the bride of Christ will feast and celebrate at the marriage supper of the Lamb and will partner with Jesus for all eternity.

After seeing these types and shadows of the end-time bride of Christ, let's embrace the rigorous preparation process so that, like Esther, we can be transformed into a bride who is worthy of the King.

Notes

1. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Seattle, WA: Biblesoft, 1995-1996), s.v. "Vashti," referenced from *PC Study Bible v3.2* (Seattle, WA: Biblesoft, 2001) and *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986), s.v. "Vashti," referenced from *PC Study Bible v3.2* (Seattle, WA: Biblesoft, 2001).
2. Herbert Lockyer, *All the Women of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), p.165.
3. Andrew Robert Fausset, *Fausset's Bible Dictionary* (Seattle, WA: Biblesoft, 1998), s.v. "Haman," referenced from *PC Study Bible v3.2* (Seattle, WA: Biblesoft, 2001).
4. Lockyer, *All the Women of the Bible*, pp. 52.
5. *Ibid*, pp. 52-54.
6. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Seattle, WA: Biblesoft, 1995-1996), s.v. "Myrtle," referenced from *PC Study Bible v3.2* (Seattle, WA: Biblesoft, 2001).

Review Questions

True or False

- _____ 1. The book of Esther is a magnificent allegory that describes the end-time bride of Christ.
- _____ 2. Esther is a beautiful picture of the worthy bride of Christ.
- _____ 3. In this allegory, Haman represents the Holy Spirit.
- _____ 4. Esther portrays one who is hidden in obscurity and arises to prominence and power, much like a beautiful myrtle tree rising from the thorns, or as a star rising in the night sky.
- _____ 5. Vashti is a picture of the bride who has been granted authority to reign with the King.
- _____ 6. Mordecai and the eunuchs represent those who are given the responsibility to prepare the bride for the King.
- _____ 7. Like Esther, the bride will be granted great authority in the end times because she is intimate with the King.
- _____ 8. Because he lacks character, integrity, and morality, King Ahasuerus cannot be used to represent King Jesus.
- _____ 9. Myrrh baths represent a work of the Holy Spirit that is bitter to endure but releases a beautiful fragrance.
- _____ 10. Esther is a picture of how the bride of Christ will partner with Jesus to release judgments against the Antichrist and his kingdom.

Fill in the Blank

11. The book of Esther is a magnificent allegory that describes the _____
_____ bride of Christ.
12. In the allegory of Esther, Mordecai represents the _____.
13. King Ahasuerus represents _____.
14. _____ represents that part in all of us that is independent, self-willed, rebellious, and unwilling to submit to authority.

15. Haman and his 10 sons symbolize the _____ coming to power in the end times.

Match the picture from Esther on the left with the corresponding truth on the right.

- _____ 16. Myrrh baths
- _____ 17. Vashti removed from the king's presence
- _____ 18. Mordecai and the eunuchs prepared Esther for the king
- _____ 19. Esther received the scepter from the king
- _____ 20. Esther pleased the king in his chambers

Matches for 16-20

- a. The Holy Spirit and those called as forerunners preparing the Bride to be used in the end times.
- b. The worthy bride being granted authority to battle the spirit of antichrist in the end times.
- c. The preparation process of the worthy bride.
- d. Intimacy with Jesus as a necessary component to being used in power in the end times.
- e. Going free from all traits of rebellion, independence, and self will.