

# A DIVINE PROVISION (PART 1)

## Esther 2.5-7: An Adoption that Prepares the Provision

**Theme:** Your adoption, like your new birth, is sure and secure; so don't worry about losing your salvation or your inheritance, just be faithful and do something.

**In Esther 2.5-11 we are going to see God's Divine Provision after man's Useless Proposal in vv1-4.**

- Ahasuerus made a good decision in chapter 1: Get rid of Vashti (rebellious, disobedient).
  - ✓ In that we saw a picture of lost man's decision to repent (to separate from “Vashti,” his rebellious, disobedient human/natural spirit he received from Adam).
- In Esther 2.1-4 we saw the king “under conviction,” but seeking man's wisdom to fix it.
  - ✓ It's a picture of a lost man under conviction by the Spirit seeking humanistic solutions to his problem.
- (Est 2.5-11) Now God shows us a glimpse of what is going on behind the scenes with His provision for the king in Esther.
  - ✓ Here is where we see two very important people show up in our story: *Esther* and *Mordecai*.
    - This morning we are going to look at vv5-7 and talk about the relationship between these two.
  - ✓ Next Sunday we'll finish up the passage by looking at vv8-11 and one more important person: *Hegai*.

**One of the most important things we can see in the history of Ahasuerus in this chapter is that God is always working in the life of a lost man, regardless.**

- Ahasuerus is a picture of the soul, and until he receives Esther, God's provision, he's still lost.
- We see him “under conviction” in v1 and then seek out man's wisdom to fix it in vv2-4. Bad decision.
- But, what we need to remember is that, even in spite of his bad decision, God's still working “behind the scenes” to prepare the way to introduce Ahasuerus to His provision, Esther.
  - ✓ (1Tim 2.3-4) God wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
  - ✓ (2Pet 3.9) He doesn't want anyone to perish in their sins.
  - ✓ (1Jn 2.1-2) To that end, Jesus died as the penal substitute for the sins of the whole world.
- (John 12.32) What we see in picture and type in Esther 2 is God working “behind the scenes” in the life of a lost man to introduce that man to His Divine Provision (even in spite of man's stupid decisions).

**So let's take some time this morning and talk about an adoption the prepares the provision...**

### **I. (v5-6) Mordecai: A Jew from the Captivity**

- (v5) Mordecai is a Jew, a descendant of the line of Benjamin through Kish, Saul's father (1Sam 9.1-3).
- (v6) Mordecai was carried away from Jerusalem in the Babylonian captivity (like Daniel).
  1. He was likely a newborn at the beginning of the 70 year exile in Babylon (around 606 BC).
  2. (Ezra 2.1-2) Unless this is a different Mordecai, we see him going back to Jerusalem 70 years later.
  3. (Ezra 6.15) He could, therefore, have been in Jerusalem when they finished the temple in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king (that's King Ahasuerus, Darius Hystaspes).
  4. He would have then returned to the capital city (like Nehemiah returned to serve the king).
    - a) He is in Shushan that same year—the sixth year of Ahasuerus's reign (v16 cf. v12).
    - b) (v21) And we see that Mordecai, also like Nehemiah, held a position in the government, serving the king (the phrase “sat in the king's gate” refers to a governmental position).
  5. So Mordecai would have been in his 80's during the history of Esther.

C. What can we learn from Mordecai's name: *Mordecai* means *a little man*.

1. Now here is where we begin to see a picture and type of the Holy Spirit in Mordecai.
2. His name doesn't refer to his stature but rather to his demeanor—his character: Little, humble; he wasn't ambitious; he was not someone who thought highly of himself. He was “little” (humble).
3. Just like we see in Mordecai's name, the Holy Spirit is always the “little man” among the Trinity.
  - a) Obviously we are *not* talking about his power or “size” (He is omnipotent and omnipresent).
  - b) Rather, we are talking about His *role* in the Trinity: We never see the Holy Spirit drawing attention to himself, but rather he “works behind the scenes” (quietly, often anonymously).
  - c) (John 14.26) The Spirit will teach us the things of God, the things *Christ* has said. He doesn't draw attention to Himself.
  - d) (John 16.8-11) His reproof is because people do not believe in *Christ*, not because they don't believe in Him, the Spirit.
  - e) (John 16.13-14) The Spirit will *not* speak of Himself. Rather, His work “behind the scenes” in this world will always bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - f) Side Note: If you ever come across a ministry, church, or denomination that places an excessive amount of emphasis on the Spirit, you know the Spirit is not in them. Why? Because if the Spirit were in them, He would be exalting the Father and the Son, not Himself.

D. In vv5-6 we get our first introduction to Mordecai: A Jew (Benjamite) taken from Jerusalem in the Babylonian captivity who is currently working in some governmental capacity for King Ahasuerus.

1. Mordecai is a picture and type of the Holy Spirit who works out God's will “behind the scenes.”
2. He also raised a young Jewish orphan (and she is our second important person this morning)...

## II. (v7) Mordecai: A “Father” by Adoption

### A. Esther is Mordecai's uncle's daughter—she is Mordecai's first cousin.

1. When Esther's parents passed away, Mordecai stepped up and *took Esther for his own daughter*.
  - a) Mordecai became Esther's “father” by adoption: He “took her” (adopted her) as his daughter.
  - b) Whether or not he legally adopted her is not important. What's important is that he took in his young cousin and raised her as his own daughter (in a sense, he *adopted* her as his own).
2. And so here we see the first mention of *Esther* in this book... and she's given two names...
  - a) Both of the names given to Esther picture the nation of Israel (so let's take a brief look at the *doctrinal picture* we have in Esther: *the nation of Israel being reconciled with God*).
  - b) *Hadassah* is her Hebrew name, and it means *myrtle* (like the myrtle tree).
    - (1) The myrtle tree in Scripture is a picture of Israel (see study below on *myrtle trees*).
    - (2) Esther (Hadassah, the myrtle tree) shows us a picture of Israel *restored*:
      - (a) (Isa 55.7) When Israel turns to the Lord for reconciliation...
      - (b) (Isa 55.12-13) ...she will be restored (like a myrtle tree replacing the brier).
    - (3) We see the restoration of the *relationship* between God and Israel in Esther 2, when Ahasuerus (a picture of God) marries Esther (a picture of Israel, now the “myrtle tree”).
    - (4) Later we see the restoration of Israel as the *head of the Gentile nations* (in the *Millennium*) in Esther 10, when Mordecai and Esther lead under the rule of Ahasuerus.
  - c) *Esther* is her Persian name, and it means *star* or *I will be hidden*.
    - (1) Israel, like a star, was given to be a “light” to the nations (a star).
    - (2) (Est 2.10, 20) But she is still *hidden* out in the world, among the nations of her dispersion.
3. Just like with her names, we can also see a picture of Israel in Esther's “adoption” by Mordecai...

## B. Esther's adoption by Mordecai is a picture of the adoption of Israel by God.

1. Essential to Understand: There are two distinct uses of the word *adoption* in the Bible.
  - a) One of the *absolutely indispensable elements* of a proper understanding of Scripture is the *distinction between Israel and the Church*.
  - b) If you do not make a distinction between Israel and the Church (if you say they are one and the same “people of God”), then you will never understand the Bible.
    - (1) *Israel* is God's instrument to carry out His *earthly purposes* (they are related to the earth).
    - (2) The *Church* is God's instrument to carry out His *heavenly purposes* (we are related to the heavenlies).
  - c) The two adoptions follow the two peoples: One for Israel and one for the Church...
2. Israel (like Esther; Est 2.7) was adopted by God: She was placed into God's family by adoption.
  - a) (Rom 9.2-3) Israel (the descendants of Jacob “according to the flesh”; the nation of Israel) was adopted by God. That's why they are called “the elect” in so many places (esp. Rom 9-11).
  - b) Israel, therefore, became a “child of God” just like Esther became the “child of Mordecai.”
    - (1) (Ezek 16.1-3) Speaking to Jerusalem (the capital city of the nation of Israel), God says...
    - (2) (Ezek 16.8) ...He took Israel and entered into a covenant with her (with the nation).
      - This is the covenant of the Law (Exod 19.5-8) and it is likened unto marriage *and* adoption (a legal transaction making a stranger part of the immediate family).
    - (3) Israel became God's “child” (son, daughter) by God's choice and God's legal adoption.
      - (a) Israel has never been “born again”—born spiritually—into God's family.
      - (b) That means the *adoption* of Christians (the Church) is as *different and distinct* as Israel is from the Church...
3. The adoption of Christians (the Church) is the adoption of children.
  - a) (John 1.12-13; 3.3-6 cf. 1Cor 12.13) Remember: We become “sons of God” by the new and spiritual birth—we are *born* into God's family.
    - We form part of God's family (we become sons of God) by birth, *not by adoption*.
  - b) (Rom 8.23) We have already received the Spirit (we have new life; 1Cor 12.13: the new birth), but we are still waiting for the *adoption* (the realization of the adoption) which happens at the rapture when our bodies are redeemed/changed.
  - c) (Gal 4.5) That inheritance is made possible by the “*adoption of sons*.”
    - (1) As sons (born into the family of God) we have received an *adoption*.
    - (2) We are not adopted sons; we are sons who have received an adoption.
  - d) (Eph 1.5) Our adoption as sons deals with our predestination (our destination that God has predetermined in Christ).
    - (1) (Eph 1.11) That means that our adoption has to do with our inheritance, not our salvation
      - (a) (Eph 1.13-14) And that's why the Spirit in us is the *Spirit of Adoption*: He *guarantees* us something (He is the “down payment”—the seal, the earnest—of our inheritance).
      - (b) The Firstborn (Jesus Christ) is the only one who legally has right to the Father's inheritance. But God has chosen to “adopt us” legally (as if we were all firstborn sons) so we can receive an inheritance also.
    - (2) (1Cor 4.5) Each born again Christian is predestined to receive *something* when the Lord comes back for us. You *will* receive *some* inheritance. (That's good! That's grace!)

- e) (Rom 8.14-17) A full and complete inheritance, though, depends on each son...
- (1) (v14) The Spirit of God has given us life—He has made us sons of God through the new, spiritual birth (our salvation). We are sons of God *by birth*.
  - (2) (v15-16) That same Spirit, though, is also the ***Spirit of adoption*** because He guarantees us an inheritance (He is the seal / earnest / down payment / firstfruits of what's to come)...
  - (3) (v17) ...receiving a full inheritance, however, depends on each son's faithfulness to the Father's desire that he serve in the fields of Harvest with the Firstborn Son, Jesus Christ.
    - (a) The Firstborn is the only one that has “right” to the Father's inheritance.
    - (b) But God, in His gracious love, has made a “legal transaction” that allows us (the other “born sons”) to also receive an inheritance with His Firstborn...
      - i) That is the *adoption of sons* that makes us *joint-heirs* with Christ.
      - ii) Every one *will* receive *something* because we have *all* been adopted “as firstborn.”
      - iii) And everyone *can* receive a *full* inheritance if we will suffer with Christ in the Mission and thereby glorify the Firstborn Son while we are on earth.

4. So don't confuse the our adoption with the adoption of Israel.

- a) Esther pictures Israel: Mordecai was not her natural father, but he took her for his own daughter... just as God adopted Israel as His son.
- b) The Church is Different and Distinct:
  - (1) We are born into God's family and *then* receive the *adoption of sons*.
  - (2) Our adoption does *not* place us in the family of God (we are born into it), but rather it is a legal transaction that places us as joint-heirs with Christ.
  - (3) Our adoption deals with the inheritance the Father desires to give to His sons.
- c) Israel and the Church are different and distinct in the Bible, and so are their adoptions!

**Conclusion: In Esther 2.5-7 we see an adoption that prepares the provision....**

**Mordecai adopted Esther as his own daughter... and he raised her (“brought her up”) himself.**

- In Mordecai we see a picture of God adopting Israel and “raising” her to reign with Him throughout the Millennium and Eternity (pictured in Esther and Mordecai reigning together with Ahasuerus).
- But Mordecai is also a picture of the Holy Spirit in *our* lives...
  - ✓ (v7) Just as Mordecai “brought up” Esther as his own daughter (helped her to grow and mature), so the Holy Spirit works in us, through our new regenerated spirit, to help us grow to spiritual maturity.
  - ✓ (v10) Just as Mordecai was involved in guiding Esther daily, in the circumstances and situations of her life, so the Spirit of God guides us according God's perfect will (daily, through the Scripture).
  - ✓ (v11) And just like Mordecai took care to be present in Esther's life every day (to see how she did), so the Spirit of God lives in us, seals us, and will never leave us—He is our ever-present Comforter.

**And so let me finish with these two thoughts...**

1. For the lost person: You need to be saved... You must be born again...
  - Until you repent of your sins and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ (to trust Him and follow Him), you are not in God's family and you have no place in God's kingdom.
  - But, when you turn to Christ you are “born again” into God's family—born as a son of God.

- When you become a son of God, you are ***secure in your salvation*** (because you cannot be “unborn”) and you have a *perfect* heavenly Father who will love you unconditionally forever.
  - But, you must be born again. You must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved.
2. For the Christian: You are ***born*** again (a son of God) and you have received the ***adoption of sons***...
- That means that not only is your ***salvation*** *sure and secure*, so is your ***inheritance***! Think about that...
  - I talk a lot about losing our inheritance, so, let's flip it around: (1Cor 4.6) You *will* receive something.
  - You can't mess it up! Your *life* is sure and secure and your *inheritance* is sure and secure!
    - ✓ So serve the Lord with confidence and joy! Don't worry about it so much... just do something!
    - ✓ Make choices by faith (based on the Bible) and you will be fine (even if you make a mistake)!
    - ✓ If you make a mistake while walking by faith, God will reward your faith and correct your mistake... leading you into a greater understanding of Him and better obedience (maturity!).
  - There are really only two ways to lose your inheritance... two ways you can really *blow it*:
    - ✓ Do nothing.
    - ✓ Do what you *know* to be wrong.
  - Let that be liberating for you:
    - ✓ Serve the Lord by faith (learn the Bible and do what it says)... somehow, some way.
    - ✓ And if you do that, you will have confidence and joy, because you will *know* you'll receive a full reward. But, you have to start by doing something. So, do something.

**Theme**: Your adoption, like your new birth, is sure and secure; so don't worry about losing your salvation or your inheritance, just be faithful and do something to serve and suffer with Christ in His Mission in the world today.

# MYRTLE TREES: A PICTURE OF ISRAEL

The myrtle tree (Hebrew, *hadas*) of the Bible was probably the common myrtle. Growing 4.6 to 6 m. (15 to 20 ft.) high, it has dark, shiny leaves and bears clusters of star-shaped flowers. The myrtle tree was common to Galilee and northern Palestine and Syria. It also grew around Jerusalem, but was rarer there. Zechariah 1:9–11 mentions that it also grew in the Jordan Valley. Its branches were used for booths in the Feast of Tabernacles (Neh. 8:15; cf. Lev. 23:40). It reminded the Israelites of God's goodness (Is. 41:19), by contrast with the brier (Is. 55:13). [From: J.I. Packer, Merrill Chapin Tenney and William White, Jr., *Nelson's Illustrated Manners and Customs of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 244.]

Myrtle: (*Myrtus communis*), a large ornamental evergreen shrub that grows in dense copses along rivers and streams. Its greens were used to adorn the booths at the Feast of Tabernacles (Neh. 8:15). The fragrant leaves were also used in perfume manufacture. The myrtle is a symbol of peace, joy, generosity, and justice. The name 'Hadassah' is derived from the Hebrew word for myrtle, *hadas* (Esther 2:7). [From: Paul J. Achtemeier, Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature, *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 672.]

The myrtle tree in Scripture is a picture and type of the nation of Israel.

## I. The myrtle tree is a picture of the nation of Israel.

### A. We see myrtle trees picturing Israel in the dispersion.

8 I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he **stood among the *myrtle* trees** that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white.

9 Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be.

10 And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth.

11 And they answered the angel of the LORD that **stood among the *myrtle* trees**, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest.

12 Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? [Zech 1.8-12]

B. (Zech 1.8) We see the myrtle trees mentioned in a passage that deals with Israel during the dispersion, a picture of the greater dispersion of the Jews that began in AD 70 and has continued through our days.

C. In the above passage we see a "man" (v8) riding upon a red horse. This man (v8) is the Angel of the Lord (v11; he who stood among the myrtle trees).

D. (v8a) The Angel of the Lord (the manifestation of the Lord in our world) is among the myrtle trees "in the bottom" (in the low place).

- This is a picture of the humiliation of Israel (the "bringing down" of the nation) during the times of the Gentiles when Israel is in captivity (from the 606 B.C. until the Second Coming of Christ).

E. This same picture is seen in the Book of Esther, especially Esther chapter 2.

1. (Est 2.7) Esther's Hebrew name is *Hadassah* which means *myrtle*. She is a picture of Israel (the myrtle trees among which the Lord stands).

2. The Lord is present among His people, providentially caring for them and protecting them, just like we see in the Book of Esther.

## II. The myrtle tree points to the future restoration of Israel at the Second Coming and in the Millennium.

- A. In the desert God will plant the myrtle (e.g., from the wasted ruins of Israel past, God will bring forth life).

I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the **myrtle**, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together. [Isa 41.19]

- B. In the place of briers, the Lord will bring up myrtle trees.

Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the **myrtle** tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off. [Isa 55.13]

1. This passage, just like Isaiah 41.19, speaks of the restoration of the creation during the Millennium (Rom 8.19-23; the curse of Genesis 3.17 is lifted at the Second Coming, the beginning of the Millennium).
2. The restoration of the creation in the Millennium will be the time when the times of the Gentiles (the fruitless briers) will come to an end and the Millennium will begin.
3. And because the Millennium will be governed by Israel, the head of the Gentile nations, we see the myrtle tree (Israel) taking the place of the brier (Gentiles).

## III. The myrtle tree points to the Feast of Tabernacles, the time when Christ will return.

- A. During the feast of tabernacles the Israelites made their booths/tabernacles out of myrtle branches.

And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and **myrtle branches**, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths [tabernacles, for the feast of tabernacles], as it is written. [Neh 8.15]

- B. The holy feast of tabernacles is a picture of the Millennium because Christ will return during that very same feast (which is why the whole world will commemorate His return each year during the Millennium by celebrating the feast of tabernacles).

And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep **the feast of tabernacles**. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep **the feast of tabernacles**. In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the LORD'S house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts. [Zech 14.16-21]

- C. That Israel uses myrtle branches in their booths/tabernacles shows us a picture of Israel forming an integral part of the Messianic Reign, the Millennium.