At the end of Ezra chapter 6, Zerubbabel had completed the construction of the new temple in Jerusalem. 21 years had passed from the Israelites’ returning to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple (i.e., first year of Cyrus / 536 BC to the sixth year of Darius the Great / 515 BC [Ezra 1:1ff; 6:15]). Ezra chapter 7 takes place during the 7th year of Artaxerxes I Longimanus who ruled Persia from 464 to 424 BC (cf. Ezra 7:7) (i.e., 457 BC). Between the sixth year of Darius and the seventh year of Artaxerxes I Longimanus there was a period of 58 years skipped by Ezra (the time between chapter 6 and 7). During this time, it is most probable that the events of Esther occur. One proof of this date may be seen when we follow the time line of Artaxerxes I Longimanus in Ezra and Nehemiah; his reign goes into the 32nd year (cf. Neh. 2:1; 5:14; 13:6). The Artaxerxes / Ahasuerus of the book of Esther only reigned 20 years. Ezra 7 begins in the seventh year of Artaxerxes I Longimanus (i.e., 457 BC), and chapter six ended during the sixth year of Darius (i.e., 515 BC). The book of Esther was written during the 3rd year of the reign of Ahasuerus (485 – 465 BC) (i.e., 482 BC / cf. Esther 1:2).

The book’s author is difficult, if not impossible, for us to determine. Some have suggested that it was Mordecai himself due to statements in 9:20-23. It seems that the wording of Esther 10:1-3 disqualifies Mordecai from being the author. Who wrote Esther is unknown.

Skeptics have doubted the authenticity of the book of Esther due to the unusually cruel decree suggested by Haman and carried out by King Ahasuerus (Esther 3:8-11). However, this is an unfounded conclusion. When one looks into the character of Artaxerxes, such cruel acts, as mentioned in this book, become reality. Artaxerxes was described by Roman historians as “a very luxurious, voluptuous, and at the same time an extremely cruel tyrant.” 1 Keil and Delitzsch record Artaxerxes’ cruelties as including sawing a man in half and commanding his armies to pass between the body, and beheading bridge builders due to storms wiping out the bridge. Lastly, the king was one who dealt with the shame of defeat by engaging in sensuality. Indeed, this despot had the capability of such cruel acts as mentioned in the book of Esther.

But the name of God is not found in the book of Esther

Though the word God is not found in Esther, it is everywhere inferred. Mordecai is said to be son of Kish of the tribe of Benjamin (Esther 2:5). Mordecai

1 Keil and Delitzsch; A Commentary on the Old Testament, Esther pg. 192
would not bow down and worship Haman because he was “a Jew” bound by law to give such worship to Jehovah God alone (Esther 3:4). Lastly, Mordecai appears to believe in the providential care of God for His people (Esther 4:14).

Objective of the book of Esther

The objective of the book of Esther may be fourfold. First, we find characters in the book that we gain insight into regarding Godly and godless living. The character of Esther teaches us to seize spiritual opportunities (Est. 4:14ff), to be courageous (Est. 4:16), to show wisdom (Est. 5:4ff), and to exhibit boldness (Est. 7:1-6). Mordecai teaches us spiritual courage, too, in that he refused a governmental decree to bow down to a man (Est. 3:2-5). Ahasuerus was a despotic king who was willing to have an entire race of people wiped out due to their insubordination to the government of the Medes and Persians (Est. 3:10ff). Haman is the true scoundrel of the book. Haman was filled with anger due to Mordecai not bowing down to him (Est. 3:2ff). Haman’s anger got the better of him when he plotted to exterminate the Jewish race for Mordecai’s insubordinate act. He consulted with his wicked wife and friends and determined to do away with Mordecai even quicker. Little did Haman know that Mordecai had previously saved the king’s life and was about to be honored by the king for his act of loyalty. Haman, a self-centered (5:13), deceptive (3:8), and vain (6:6ff) man learned the value of human life the hard way. He lost his life due to his unbridled passions.

A secondary objective of Esther is to give an account of the origin of the feast of Purim. The Jews, now foreigners in their own land, face extinction at the hands of a Persian named Haman. Lots were cast to determine the day in which the extermination would take place (Esther 9:24, 26-28). The word Purim is a Hebrew word meaning “casting lots.” Thus the Jews celebrate this as a time in which Mordecai delivered the Jews from their impending demise (14th and 15th day of the month Adar).

Thirdly, we find lessons on God’s providence in the book of Esther. The word providence means “control exercised by a deity; divine direction” (American Heritage Dictionary 997). God was divinely directing Esther (4:14) and the events surrounding Haman’s desire to hang Mordecai on the gallows (6:1-5) so that His people might be saved from the wicked plot.

Lastly, it seems that an overriding lesson of the book is the effects of pride on the human soul. Haman was eaten up with self love. The wise king Solomon once wrote, “Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18).

Practical Application (Romans 15:4)

While pride and providence are valuable lessons for us today, it seems that faithful courage is the overall thrust of Esther. There comes a time in every man and woman’s life when we must stand for what we believe to be right even if there is potential pain involved. Esther was the Jew’s greatest hope in retaining their physical lives, and she did not disappoint her kindred. She courageously made her request to the king and acted with great faith and wisdom (Esther 4:16, 5:4ff). Mordecai also evidenced his faith and courage by encouraging Esther to do that which was necessary to save the people (Esther 4:9-14). We, too, ought to act with such faith, courage, and wisdom when truth is at stake (cf. Eph. 6:10ff). Let us understand that as God has providentially cared for His people in the past, so He will care for us today (1 Pet. 5:7).
How to Build a Christian Home

Introduction:

We often sing the song, “God Give us Christian Homes” during worship service. While it is true that God “gives” us gifts such as salvation (cf. Rom. 5:12-18) it is also true that man has a part in receiving these gifts of God. To say that God freely gives salvation to all men without their obedient efforts is to misunderstand scriptures (cf. Rom. 6:16ff). Likewise, to say that God freely gives us Christian homes without any effort on our part is to err greatly. God has delivered revelation whereby when we read we may know His will on any given area of life. God has not left us to fend for ourselves when it comes to our home life. This lesson will examine the Bible home and focus on each individual’s efforts to make the home as God would have it.

I. Building a Home from ground Zero:
   A. Finding a mate (see the book of Ruth).
   B. Husbands:
      1. Headship of the husband should be established from the beginning of the marriage (I Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:22-23).
      2. Husbands are to love and cherish the wife (Eph. 5:25; I Pet. 3:7).
      3. Husbands are to be considerate of the woman’s emotional needs (I Pet. 3:7).
   C. Wives:
      1. Voluntary subjection is not a degrading position to be in according to the Lord (I Cor. 11:3, 9; Eph. 5:22-24).
      2. Wife is to love her husband (Titus 2:4).
      3. She is to provide emotional support to the husband (Gen. 2:18).
      4. She renders to her husband his due (Prov. 5:15; I Cor. 7:1-5; Heb. 13:4).
      5. She honors and respects him (Eph. 5:22, 33; Titus 2:5).
      6. She is not ashamed to call him her lord in respect to family roles (I Pet. 3:6).
      7. She understands that her first priority is to the home (Prov. 31; Titus 2:5).

II. Father and Mother in the Home:
   A. The father has the responsibility to love (Prov. 13:24; Col. 3:21), spiritually instruct (Eph. 6:4), and see to it that a work ethic is developed in the child’s mind (Prov. 22:29; 24:30-34; II Thess. 3:7-13).
   B. The mother provides love, tenderness, and kindness to the children (Titus 2:4). She is a “help meet” in areas of spiritual and secular education, and discipline.

III. Children:
   A. Children are a blessing to the parents (Ps. 127:3-5). A child can either make his father and mother glad (Prov. 10:1) and sad (Prov. 19:26).
   B. Husband and wife should provide an environment where the children learn to respect and honor both parents (Eph. 6:2).

Conclusion:

The goal of every Christian home is to live together in happiness and contentment. When a proper respect for God and His authority is instilled among all members of the family this goal may be achieved. More importantly, however, the goal of heaven will be a reality.