

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD
An Examination Of The Life Of Esther
6/5/16

Life is hard.

It is often filled with hardship and injustice.

When we face difficult things we are tempted to question God.

“Where is God?”

“Does He care?”

“Is He even around?”

This morning we will look at the life of a young woman which was filled with hardship and injustice.

Esther is a Jewish girl who is a captive in a foreign land.

Her parents were both dead and she was raised as an orphan by an older cousin.

She is taken against her will into the harem of a ruthless king

No hope for a real marriage or home

Yet in Esther we will see the sovereign hand of God working things together for good in and through her life.

The Historical Background

Overview of Israel’s History

Babylonian captivity (586 BC)

Esther (483-473 BC)

1. Esther Is Taken Into The Harem Of A Foreign King. Esther 1-2

1:1 The extent of Ahasuerus’ (Xerxes) reign

1:3-7 The splendor of his riches

Grand Hall (200 feet square, 40,000 sq. ft.)

180 day (6 month) celebration (482 BC)

7 day banquet

1:10-12 Vashti’s refusal

We are not told why she refused to come, though many have speculated on various possibilities.

1:16-19 The king’s decision

2:2-4 The king’s plan

2:9 Esther finds favor receives special treatment from the person in charge of the project.

2:16-17 She was chosen to be the new queen.

As we will see as the story develops . . .

a. Esther's promotion was a result of the sovereignty of God.

- Esther's beauty was the result of God's sovereign choice. v. 7 of Exodus 4:11
- The fact that Esther found special favor with both Hegai and Ahasuerus demonstrates God's sovereignty.

Proverbs 21:1 The king's heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.

b. Mordecai's chance hearing of the plot was a sovereign "accident." 2:21-23

2. Haman Seeks To Destroy All Jews. Esther 3-4

3:1-6 When Mordecai refuses to bow before Haman, he plots to kill all Jews

3:7 He superstitiously casts the lot in order to determine the best time for carrying out his plot against the Jews.

It happens to turn up the 12 month which is 11 months away

3:8-11, Haman's ploy (bribe)

375 tons of silver (750,000 lbs)

\$50 million by today's standards

3:13-14 The decree was issued from India to Ethiopia

4:1 Mordecai's grief

4:8-11 Esther's problem

2:10, 20 Esther hadn't revealed that she was from a Jewish background. (Probably because of racial bigotry)

4: 11 For her to go into the king's presence without being summoned could result in death

4:13-14 Mordecai's reply

"Esther, God has placed you in a strategic place at a critical moment in history to be the instrument to deliver His people. Your presence in the palace here and now is no cosmic coincidence. You are here by divine appointment."

Esther's problems were allowed by a sovereign God.

4:15-16 Esther's answer

Fast (and pray)

"If I perish, I perish."

This is not fatalism, but faith in God's guidance whatever the outcome.

"I will do it because it is right, regardless of the immediate consequences."

"I entrust my life and eternity to God."

“I know that God is in control and that He will do what is best.”

3. Esther Risks Her Life To Save God’s People. Esther 5-8

5:1-8 Esther approaches the king

- 2 finds favor
- 4 Invites the king and Haman to a banquet
- 8 Invites them back the next day

5:9-14 Haman determines to kill Mordecai

6:1-14

- 1 The king can’t sleep
- 2 He asks for the chronicles of his reign to be read
- 2 His servants just happen to turn to the part about Mordecai reporting on those who sought to assassinate him.
- 3-5 Ahasuerus desires to honor Mordecai. Haman just happens to be coming into the court at the time and thinks that the king wants to honor him.
- 6-9 Haman ironically chooses how Mordecai will be honored
- 10-14 Haman is the one forced to honor Mordecai

God works in ironic ways

7:1-6 Esther’s request

7:9-8:2

Haman is hanged on the gallows he had built to kill

Mordecai is promoted to Haman’s position with the king’s signet ring and then given Haman’s estate

- 8:2 signet ring
- 8:15 royal robes
- 9:4 Greater and greater
- 10:2-3 Second only to king Ahasuerus

God ultimately brought about poetic justice in the end.

Psalm 75:7 But God is the Judge; He puts down one and exalts another.

Both promotion and demotion come from God.

Exodus 9:16 "But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth.

Daniel 4:17b . . . the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, And bestows it on whom He wishes And sets over it the lowliest of men."

1 Samuel 2:8 "He raises the poor from the dust, He lifts the needy from the ash heap To make them sit with nobles, And inherit a seat of honor;

8:11-12 A second decree

8:17 The Jew's favor

4. Purim Celebrates The Sovereignty Of God. Esther 9-10

9:1-6 The tables are turned

9:22 From sorrow to celebration

Tears of joy

From tragedy to triumph

9:26 Pur - lot (chance)

God is sovereign even in "chance" happenings.

Proverbs 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD.

Truths For Living

1. There are no accidents in your life, only divine appointments.

In Esther we see God's sovereign control in every detail.

Esther's beauty and favor with Hegai

Ahasuerus' selection of Esther to be queen

Mordecai's chance hearing the plot to murder the king

Haman's lot by chance coming up 12

Ahasuerus' insomnia on just the right night

His choice of reading material

The chance selection of the part about Mordecai

Haman's chance timing to come to the palace for permission to hang Mordecai

Haman's unknowingly selecting the way to honor Mordecai and then having to be the one who did it

Haman's being hanged on his own gallows.

Mordecai's promotion

The Jews favor and victory

Men make plans, but the outcome is the Lord's.

Proverbs 21:31 The horse is prepared for the day of battle, But victory belongs to the LORD.

Psalms 20:7 Some *boast* in chariots and some in horses, But we will boast in the name of the LORD, our God.

The God of Esther is the same God who rules our world today. (often in irony)

The persecuted church grows. (Russia, China)

Like a starfish when cut in half.

There are no accidents in God's plan

Sickness, birth defects, loss of a job, even foiled plans are under His direction

Things may not be good

You may not understand

You have times of anguish and grief

But God is even using the wrath of His enemies to fulfill His purposes.

We can take comfort in the sovereign control of God in every detail of life.

He knows your every thought and action. Psalm 139:1-6

He is with you wherever you are and in whatever circumstance you find yourself. Psalm 139:7-12

He promises to never leave you nor forsake you. Hebrews 13:5

He loves us and proved it by sending His Son to die for our sins. Romans 5:8

He is working everything together for your ultimate good. Romans 8:28

God tells us that the things we suffer now cannot be compared to the future glory that will be revealed to us in heaven. Romans 8:18

2. You are an important link in God's total plan.

Though you may not understand the whole picture

cf Esther 4:14b

Who knows but that God has placed you here in your present circumstances for such a time as this.

Pocatello, Your job, neighborhood, Stalled car

3. Prayer is important.

James 4:2b . . . You do not have because you do not ask.

He invites us to cast all of our cares upon Him, for He cares for us. 1 Peter 5:7

TIMELINE

- 606 BC** Jeremiah's prophecy of 70 year captivity (Jeremiah 25:12; 29:10)
- 606 BC** First Babylonian invasion (Daniel taken captive)
- 597 BC** Second Babylonian invasion (Ezekiel taken captive)
- 586 BC** Third Babylonian invasion (Temple and city destroyed)
- 538-515 BC** **Zerubbabel** Rebuilds the Temple (Ezra 1-6)
538 BC Decree of Cyrus
536 BC Altar built
535 BC Temple begun but stopped
520 BC **Haggai** prophesies
Zechariah prophesies (520-515 BC)
515 BC The temple is completed
- 479 BC** **Esther** becomes Queen in Persia (Esther 1-10)
- 458 BC** **Ezra** Leads A Second Return To Israel. (Ezra 7-10)
- 445-425 BC** **Nehemiah** returns, rebuilds walls, and rules (Nehemiah 1-13)
444 BC City walls rebuilt
433 BC **Malachi** prophesies

PERSIAN KINGS

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|------------|----------------------|--|
| 559-530 BC | Cyrus | Decree to rebuild temple (Jews return) |
| 530-522 BC | Cambyses | Not mentioned in Bible |
| 522 BC | Smerdis | Not mentioned in Bible |
| 521-486 BC | Darius I | Temple rebuilt (Zerubbabel, Haggai, Zechariah) |
| 486-465 BC | Xerxes I (Ahasuerus) | Esther becomes queen (479 BC) |
| 464-424 BC | Artaxerxes I | Ezra returns (458 BC)
Nehemiah rebuilds city walls (445 BC) |
| 423-404 BC | Darius II | |