

### The Divine Behind the Scenes, Part 3, Esther 5-7, 3/18/18

Theme of Esther we have been studying is the doctrine of God's Providence, an aspect of God's sovereignty- **God, in an invisible and inscrutable way, governs all creatures, actions and circumstances through the normal and ordinary course of human life, without the intervention of the miraculous.**

While God's name never appears on the pages of this book, he indeed is the main character and the hero of the story of Esther. God hides himself in the background to teach us about his providence in our everyday lives so that like the book of Esther, we learn to see God's fingerprints working behind the scenes through the good, the bad and the ugly.

Quick Summary- King Xerxes is throwing a big party for his generals and asks Queen Vashti to be the entertainment. She says no thanks, which leads to her ousting and a search for a new queen, who ends up being Esther, who happens to be Jewish, but conceals her true identity. Esther's, adoptive father, Mordecai happens to be at the right place at the right time to overhear a plot to assassinate the King and report this news to Esther. But Mordecai was not rewarded for his loyalty. Instead other man rises to power- Haman, the Agagite (Boo)... remember what Matthew told us about that term? Every Jewish person knew that the Agagites/Amalekites were the great enemies of the Jewish people who were the first to attempt to destroy them, coming out of Egypt. And we find out that Haman, much like his lineage, was out to destroy not only Mordecai, who refused to bow to him, but all the Jews in the kingdom. Haman convinces the King to sign into law a genocide bill...the slaughter of the Jewish people. So in mourning Mordecai pleads to Queen Esther, now is the time, this is your destiny to use your influence to save the Jewish people. And at this moment we see a transformation in Esther from a passive pretty girl, to a courageous, committed queen. She calls for a fast...

**Esther 4:16**

*When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.*

Risky business...The penalty for approaching the King without being summoned was death unless his golden scepter was extended. She knew she had a higher responsibility to a higher king. So what is going to happen to Esther? This is where we pick up the story.

**Esther 5:1-5**

*On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance. <sup>2</sup> When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was **PLEASED** with her (Phew!) and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter.*

<sup>3</sup> Then the king asked, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you." <sup>4</sup> "If it pleases the king," replied Esther, "let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him." <sup>5</sup> "Bring Haman at once," the king said, "so that we may do what Esther asks."

And so they have the banquet and the king asks again, "What is your request?" She says... let's do one more banquet tomorrow. And so the king grants this request as well.

Let's pause for a second. You say, is she getting cold feet and delaying it? Why doesn't she just get it out there? What's with all the banquets? I don't think she had cold feet. I think Esther was being very strategic here. You always hear, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make the drink." Ah yes, but you can salt his oats! Esther is salting the oats... maybe literally! She's building his anticipation, building his promises to do what she says... She knew she had the king wrapped around her finger at this point... three times he says- "Up to half of my kingdom!"

In the meantime, Haman's is getting invited to these parties; he thinks he's the cat's meow as my grandmother always used to say... we used to say he thinks he's the bomb.com! He gathers all his friends and family and reminds them how amazing he is... But there is one thing that bothers him, Mordecai is still alive and he can't quite be happy until he's dead. And so they concoct a plan as outlandish as his pride.

Esther 5:14

*His wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Have a pole set up, reaching to a height of fifty cubits, and ask the king in the morning to have Mordecai impaled on it. Then go with the king to the banquet and enjoy yourself." This suggestion delighted Haman, and he had the pole set up.*

Now this is a big "Uh oh" in the story. Because Esther's banquet isn't until the evening. Haman is going to get to the king in the morning... Who will do something about this? God's got it.

Esther 6:1-3

*That night the king could not sleep; so he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him. <sup>2</sup> It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes.*

<sup>3</sup> "What honor and recognition has Mordecai received for this?" the king asked. "Nothing has been done for him," his attendants answered.

Coincidence is God's way of remaining anonymous- C.S. Lewis

Maybe nowhere in Scripture is it so clear that God is at work behind the scenes than in these verses. Coincidentally, just this night, King Xerxes has a case of insomnia. And to cure the insomnia he pulls out his own memoirs... nothing comforts a power

hungry, egomaniac quite like looking at their own accomplishments. But coincidentally, of all the chapters of the memoir he could read, he happens to stumble upon the section about Mordecai stopping the assassination. No sooner does he learn that Mordecai was overlooked, coincidentally, who just happens to walk in the court to convince the king to have Mordecai executed on his newly built gallows? Haman!

Esther 6:6-11

*<sup>6</sup> When Haman entered, the king asked him, "What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?" Now Haman thought to himself, "Who is there that the king would rather honor than me?" <sup>7</sup> So he answered the king, "For the man the king delights to honor, <sup>8</sup> have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head.*

*<sup>9</sup> Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king's most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, "This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!"* [He's asking essentially to have the treatment of the king, to be equal to him. Modern day, this would be like me asking our President to get a ride on Air Force One, getting to sit in the Oval Office, Get his pen, maybe get the **President's haircut...**]

*<sup>10</sup> "Go at once," the king commanded Haman. "Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended." <sup>11</sup> So Haman got the robe and the horse. He robed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city streets, proclaiming before him, "This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!"*

Can you imagine the fury, fear and humiliation that Haman must have been experiencing? "Hey, Haman, say it again! 'This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor.' Louder Haman! "This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!"

Esther 6:12-13

*<sup>12</sup> Afterward Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman rushed home, with his head covered in grief, <sup>13</sup> and told Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him. His advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, "Since Mordecai, before whom your downfall has started, is of Jewish origin, you cannot stand against him—you will surely come to ruin!"*

That's an encouraging word from your wife, huh? If ever there was a person who typified the biblical truth, "Pride comes before the fall" it is Haman.

Esther 6:14-7:4

*<sup>14</sup> While they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried Haman away to the banquet Esther had prepared. So the king and Haman went to*

*Queen Esther's banquet, <sup>2</sup> and as they were drinking wine on the second day, the king again asked, "Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted."*

*<sup>3</sup> Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor with you, Your Majesty, and if it pleases you, grant me my life—this is my petition. And spare my people—this is my request. <sup>4</sup> For I and my people have been sold to be destroyed, killed and annihilated. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king."*

Esther finally reveals her true Jewish identity. I picture everyone in attendance simultaneously spitting out their wine, mid sip. I'm sure the King was surprised, but that would have been nothing compared to the terror that must have been like shock waves through Haman. Esther says, "These are MY people!"

**Esther 7:5-8**

*<sup>5</sup> King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, "Who is he? Where is he—the man who has dared to do such a thing?" <sup>6</sup> Esther said, "An adversary and enemy! This vile Haman!" Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen. <sup>7</sup> The king got up in a rage, left his wine and went out into the palace garden.*

*But Haman, realizing that the king had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life. <sup>8</sup> Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining. The king exclaimed, "Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?" As soon as the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.*

Radar- Invented by Robert Watson Watt, a wartime invention. Driving in Canada, caught for speeding in a radar trap. Acknowledging the irony, we penned a little poem- *Pity Sir Robert Watson Watt, strange target of his radar plot, and thus with others I could mention, a victim of his own invention.* That's an apt summary of what happens to Haman.

**Esther 7:9-10**

*<sup>9</sup> Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said, "A pole reaching to a height of fifty cubits stands by Haman's house. He had it set up for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king. The king said, "Impale him on it!" <sup>10</sup> So they impaled Haman on the pole he had set up for Mordecai. Then the king's fury subsided.*

Wow, take a breath...What a story! Spielberg, your turn! And this is as far as we want to go, although the story is not over, while Haman may have lost the battle, there is still war- remember the Genocide Bill signed into law? That is "irrevocable"? The Jewish people are far from safe...but we will tackle that next Sunday.

So much going on here but I want to draw our minds and hearts to one key principle about God's Providence we learn from this story.

**God uses ALL THINGS to accomplish his PURPOSES for HIS GLORY.**

All things? Yes

**Good things**- Esther's beautiful appearance and winsome influence.

**Bad things**- Haman's evil plot and the enormous gallows. Genesis 50- What man intended for evil, God intended for good.

**Coincidences**- Sleepless nights, reading material, who happens to be at the door, purpose of gallows.

**Things we control**- Esther's call for a fast, her strategic plan

**Things we cannot control**- Whether Esther would find favor with the king, The king's sleeping patterns, rash decisions.

This was essential for the original hearers to believe this truth just as much as it is for us today. For the polytheistic culture of their day, the gods controlled the fate of human affairs through competing and warring with each other. Human affairs could be turned upside down if one god overpowered another. Fate was therefore capricious...because one could never be sure which god they had to appease, who was winning. But not the one God of the Bible- he is not in a tug-of-war, regardless of how circumstances appear, God is ruling history... It's not when one bad thing happens, the devil won, and when something good happens, God wins. He's on his throne. This is true not just for pretty queens in Persia, but in your life and mine. God is the same, yesterday, today and forever.

**Your good things**- your promotion, your education, your wealth, your family and friendships, your faith. Blessed you to be a blessing.

**Your bad things**- your regrets, mistakes and failures, your broken relationships, your illness or limitations, your "thorns in the flesh"

**Coincidences**- Just so happened... Just look at your history you will see this all over.

**The things you can control**- your influence, where you live, how you use your time, talents, treasures, how you pursue your faith.

**The things you can't control**- the decisions of others, world events, a diagnosis, even the timing of your death.

**God uses ALL THINGS to accomplish his PURPOSES for HIS GLORY.**

You say, OK, God is using all these things... but what is his good purpose?

**1) Bringing people into an eternal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.**

We cannot understand Esther's story or our story until we understand God's big story of redemption through Jesus Christ.

*Graeme Goldsworthy- History is not the story of God's trial of something good that failed, thus requiring him to come up with an emergency package as an afterthought, God's ultimate creation plan was not Adam and Eve in Eden but Christ in the Gospel.*

**Philippians 1:12-14**

*12 Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. 13 As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. 14 And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.*

This has been God's plan from the beginning.  
And God will use the good, bad and ugly to accomplish this.  
Johnny Reck story  
My story  
What about your story of how you came to Christ?

2) To be conformed into the image of Christ.

**Romans 8:28-29**

*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son*

God will use all things, good, bad and ugly for our maturity.

James 1

The path to the joy God promises may wind through the swamps of suffering and despair.

Derek Kidner- *All of God's delays are maturings, either of the time or the man.*

Consider- maybe the things you most want out of your life, are there for this purpose.

**God uses ALL THINGS to accomplish his PURPOSES for HIS GLORY.**

The Father allowed the son to be humiliated, suffer and death a horrible death...

**Philippians 2:10-11**

*That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the **glory of God the Father.***