

# Esther

**The Book of God's  
Providential Care of His  
Covenanted People**



**Dr. Jimmy Nelson**

# God's providential care of His covenanted people

**Text:** Esther 4:10-14

“Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai; All the king’s servants, and the people of the king’s provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days. And they told to Mordecai Esther’s words. Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king’s house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer, Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.”

## **Introduction:**

### A. The German freighter “Victoria”

1. In March 2011 a German freighter owned by a French company and flying a Liberian flag was intercepted by Israeli commandos.
2. The crew of the ship had no clue they were carrying concealed cargo.
3. Beneath the bags of cotton and lentils lay nearly 50 tons of Iranian weapons bound for Gaza.

4. The secret Israel Defense Forces (IDF) operation prevented Iran and its president, from supplying the terrorist group Hamas with weapons.
  5. Thus preventing the murder of many Jewish people.
  6. There was reason for Jewish people to celebrate.
- B. It was somewhat ironic that a few days later, Israel celebrated another operation that saved even more Jewish lives.
1. The celebration was is the feast of Purim.
  2. And the story of Purim and the saving of the Jewish nation is recorded in the book of Esther.
  3. Though separated by 2,500 years, both events were instigated by haters of the Jewish people: the wicked Haman and Ahmadinejad, both from Persia, which today is Iran.
- C. Although God's name is not mentioned in the book of Esther, His presence is unmistakable; and His control and care for His people is evident even in a distant land. Their destiny was in His hands then, just as it is today.
- D. Chronologically the book of Esther is between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> chapters of Ezra and it is contemporary with the book of Nehemiah.
1. The Jewish people were brought to the area during the Babylonian Captivity in the sixth century B.C.
  2. Even after Cyrus the Great came to power in Persia, which overthrew Babylon, many Jewish people remained despite his decree allowing them to return to their homeland.

3. Amazingly, only 49,897 Jewish people chose to return, led by Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:64-65).
  4. God had removed them from the Promised Land because of disobedience to Him.
  5. But to many, life in exile seemed a better option than the uncertainty of life back in Israel, even though it meant facing danger, anti-Semitism, and possibly death.
  6. Before the shah of Iran in 1979, 100,000 Jewish people still lived in Iran/Persia, a figure that fluctuated moderately through the years.
  7. Shortly thereafter there was a massive Jewish exodus.
  8. It is hard to imagine but about 25,000 Jewish people still live in Iran today.
  9. They are forbidden to learn Hebrew or attend Jewish day school, and Jewish children are required to attend school on the Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath.
  10. Why do they stay? A Jewish Iranian interviewed by Israel National News sounded as though he were living in the days of Cyrus: "People are afraid of the unknown," he said.
- E. So the book of Esther is the history of those like Mordecai, the Benjamite, and his cousin and ward, Esther, and the large Jewish population that remained in Persia after the captivity ended.
- F. Some have questioned the validity and inspiration of the book of Esther because:
1. There is no mention of Jerusalem, the Temple, the priesthood, sacrificial system, nor is there any mention of the Lord by name.
  2. Even though God is not mentioned His

providential deliverance of His people from total extermination is the grand theme of the book.

3. Thus the spiritual value of the book is limitless!
4. The sovereignty of God in the affairs of a nation or people is never seen more clearly than here.
5. The book of Esther holds high esteem in the eyes of orthodox Jews, second only to the writing of Moses.
6. Thus the great design of this portion of the Holy Scriptures is to display the wisdom, providence, and power of God in the preservation of His people, and in the destruction of their enemies.
7. We learn from it that the most casual events which take place in the affairs of the world are connected with His plans respecting His people; and that the most trifling things are appointed and directed by Him to effect His purposes.

## **I. The unveiling of God's providence.**

- A. Let us preview the train of providential events that provided the means of deliverance for the Jewish nation, before they were brought into danger:
  1. The first thing that presents itself is the great feast of Ahasuerus.
  2. Secondly, the request of the King.
  3. The rebellion of Vashti
  4. The removal of Vashti as queen.
  5. The search for a queen
  6. The lack of respect of Mordecai
  7. The conspiracy of Haman
  8. The plan consummated

9. The plea of Mordecai
10. Esther's response to his message and plea
11. The plan of Esther:
  - Her preparation to see the king.
  - The king's reaction to her
  - The queen's request
  - The reaction of Haman
  - The decree of the king.

## **II. The Kings Feast:**

- A. Ahasuerus (Xerxes) ruled Persia from 485 to 464 B.C.
- B. His kingdom (127 provinces) stretched from India to Ethiopia (Esther 1:1) and through Asia Minor, Egypt, and parts of coastal Africa.
- C. To demonstrate "the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty," the king threw a six-month-long feast.
- D. He invited "all the princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him"
- E. That he might, according to verse 4 show, "The riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty."
- F. In other words, "Look at me and how great I am."
- G. As most monarchs, He was very self center, egotistic, and probably believed himself to be deity.

- H. Verse 8 tells us that his guests could drink" according to each man's pleasure."
- I. That meant that it was not it was not compulsory for everyone to get intoxicated, as it sometimes was.
- J. Regardless, after the wine had flowed freely for some time, many became intoxicated, including the king.
- K. Being, as verse 10 says, "Merry with wine," the king lost control and began boisterously about Vashti's, his wife's, great beauty.
- L. Then a very indecent thought came to his mind.
1. The king commanded his servants.
  2. "To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on.
  3. Even though this evil, vial, demand originated with the king himself, it was according to the appointment of God's providence as we will shortly see.
  4. What was the king commanding the queen to do?
    - I as most historians and commentators believe that the king was requesting that the queen present herself, **in the nude**, wearing only the royal crown.
    - Why did such a thought come into the king's mind?
    - First, it was most certainly contrary to the custom of Persia, for queen Vashti to make such an appearance, because, on this occasion, the females were feasted in another part of the palace.

- Secondly, it was extremely inappropriate for the female majesty of the empire to be exposed to a drunken assembly.
  - Finally, the queen's disobedience to the orders of an absolute monarch, accustomed to universal obedience, shows us how much the thing required was contrary to normal behavior.
  - Had such a thing been usual, it would not have been so offensive to the queen.
5. So why would he do such a thing?
- Some say that it was because he was so drunk.
  - Had the king never been drunk before?
  - Is this the only time that he ever made decisions under the influence of wine? No!
  - So why did he act in this wicked way now rather than on some other occasion?
  - Why is it that this is the only instance of the kind on record?

The answer is very clear - God's intention was to cause the king to ask the queen to do something that she would not do, that her disgrace might make way for the exaltation of Esther that she might be the deliverer of His people.

God's purpose is brought about by those whose only view is to fulfill their own purposes.

6. Although these things were appointment of God, it was the result of the actions of free and voluntary agents.



## II. The Queen's decision:

“But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him.”

- A. The queen's refusal is another providential circumstance in which we see the hand of God move.
- B. Notwithstanding the singularity, the indecency, and the unreasonableness of the command, it is remarkable that the queen would risk disobeying the king when he was drunk.
- C. Surely she knew that there would be consequences.
- D. Later, we see that even Esther with all her surpassing beauty, was exceedingly reluctant to go into his presence without being called.
  - 1. She understood that she was risking her life to his whims.
  - 2. Would he hold out his golden scepter, or suffer her to perish for her actions?
- E. So surly, queen Vashti understood the danger of not obeying the king's command to present herself.
- F. Her conduct was bold and unwise.
- G. Her resolution was no doubt because of her own pride, or her sense of etiquette.
- H. However, among those of the royal courts, self-interest usually over ruled principles.
  - 1. Not one woman in a thousand would have acted as she did in this same circumstance.

2. The queen's refusal is another providential circumstance which we are here called to observe.
- I. Why did the queen react to the situation as she did at this critical moment?
  - J. The reason is very clear - God had determined her character and conduct as the means of executing His purposes.
  - K. And through the ordinary course of events, the queen, as a voluntary agent, ignorantly fulfilled the will of Him whom she knew not.
  - L. She was influenced solely by a regard to her own feelings, but reacted as the Sovereign designed that she should act.
- The overruling power and planning of God are very clearly brought out in this book.
  - Seemingly minor details take on major significance as we see the over-all picture of God's program for his own.
  - Perhaps no book in the entire Bible has a more striking area of ministry in this regard.
  - Let us not lose sight of this great fact because it is the key thought and message throughout the entire book.

### **III. The advice of the counselors:**

- A. In chapter 1: 13-22 the king is irate and seeks the counsel of his wise men.
- B. His advisors are concerned because if the king's wife refused to listen to him, why should their wives listen to them (verses 16-17)?
- C. The king is furious and agrees.

- D. So on the advice of his wise men, he makes a decree to divorce and remove Vashi as queen – then give her royal estate (position) to “another that is better than she” (verse 19).
- E. The advice of the king’s counselors on this occasion is also remarkable.
- F. Kings counselors had to be very cautious, lest they give advice, not necessarily bad, just to the king’s disliking.
- G. So even in their drunken state they were on guard.
1. Yet, they gave the king advice that could have been “hazardous to their health.”
  2. Even though the king may not have had a pure love for his queen it is evident that he had great admiration for the queen’s beauty.
  3. It was also well known that the favorite mistress of tyrant king could prevail against the most subtle and most powerful ministers.
    - We see how quickly this very king gave up the man whom he most singularly honored and raised above all the princes of the empire to Esther’s wish.
  5. If the counselors of the king should fail in displacing Vashti from the affections of their master, they were, in reality, planning their own ruin.
  6. Had the king refused to listen to their counsel, and the queen been restored to power, their overthrow was certain.
  7. So why did the subtle statesmen not take the wisest course, and intercede for the queen’s pardon?

8. Even though the king was provoked to anger by the queen's disobedience, it was still possible that a man who admired her beauty, might punish then forgive her.
9. Such this bold suggestion by the king's counselors is remarkable.
10. Whatever their selfish motivation that influenced their decision we clearly see that it was God that had determined their counsel as the means of fulfilling His own.
11. Again, Vashti must be removed, that Esther may be exalted to her place to fulfill the purpose of God.

## **Conclusions:**

- A. The events found in the book of Esther clearly display the wisdom, providence, and power of God in the preservation of His people, and in the destruction of their enemies.
- B. From this book we learn that God is working in and through the seemingly casual of world affairs to bring to pass His plans with regard to His people.
- C. We also see that the most trifling things are appointed and directed by Him to bring about His purposes.
- D. From this book the believer may learn to place unbounded confidence in the care of his God in the utmost danger
- E. And to look to the Lord of omnipotence for deliverance when there is no apparent means of escape.
- F. It demonstrates the particular providence of God in the minutest things, and gives a solid answer to all the objections of philosophy to this great truth.

## God's providential care of His covenanted people (part 2)

**Text:** Esther 2:1-10,

“After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her. Then said the king’s servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king: And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hege the king’s chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given them: And let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so. Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite; Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle’s daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter. So it came to pass, when the king’s commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king’s house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women. And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, which were meet to be given her, out of the king’s house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women. Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew it.”

Theme verse: Esther 4:15, 16, “Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer, Go, gather together all the

Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.”

### **Introduction:**

- A. Last week I told the story of the Israeli IDF forces stopping a shipment of arms to Hamas that saved many lives.
- B. Then I said that, “It was somewhat ironic that a few days later, Israel celebrated another operation that saved even more Jewish lives. The celebration was is the feast of Purim.”
- C. And we know that the feast of Purim is the celebration commemorating the saving of the Jewish nation as recorded in the book of Esther.
- D. Though separated by 2,500 years, both events were instigated by two men that hated the Jewish people, both from Persia, which today is Iran.
- E. I also said that, “Although God's name is not mentioned in the book of Esther, His presence is unmistakable; and His control and care for His people is evident even in a distant land. Their destiny was in His hands then, just as it is today.”
- F. In the message we saw the providence of God in the actions of the king, the queen, and the king's counselors.
- G. We also learned that the most casual events that take place in the affairs of the world are connected with God's plans respecting His people; and that the most trifling things are appointed and directed by Him to accomplish His purposes.
- H. Although these things were appointment of God, God did not author their sin, but rather their actions were the result of their own free and voluntary will

and desires.

- I. Now let us look at several more providential events that resulted in the saving of God's covenanted people.

#### **IV.I. The selection of a new queen:**

Verses 2- 4, Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king: And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hege the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given them: And let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so."

- A. The king divorces Vashti.
- B. Then he commands his servants, in each of his 127 providences, to search for and bring the "fair young virgins, to Shushan that the search for the new queen could begin.
- C. Those selected were taken to the "house of the women" at the king's palace in Shushan and placed under the supervision of Hegai, one of the king's trusted chamberlain.
  1. Evidently the house had two apartments:
  2. One for the virgins before they were introduced to the king.
  3. The other apartment was for those who had visited the king and become his concubines.
  4. While Hegai was in charge of the entire house, verse 14 indicates that there was a secondary servant that was the keeper of the concubines.

Esther 2:14, “In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king’s chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name.”

#### D. The purification process:

Verse 12, “Now when every maid’s turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with other things for the purifying of the women).”

1. Every virgin had to undergo a 12 month purification process.
  - The first six months they were bathed and had oil of myrrh, or musk, applied to their skin many times a day.
  - The second six month’s they were bathed and rubbed with sweet odours.
  - The myrrh made their skin smooth and soft, while the sweet odours removed any ill scent that their body might have had from sweating or some other cause.
  - In other words, these young women were bathed, massaged, rubbed with expensive oils and perfumes, and pampered beyond measure and treated as royalty.
2. Why did their purification last 12 months?
3. First, they might be properly prepared for the king, secondly to insure that they were not with child by another, before they came to the king.



## E. The summoning of Esther.

Verse 5-8, “Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite; Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. And he brought up **Hadassah**, that is, Esther, his uncle’s daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter. So it came to pass, when the king’s commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king’s house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women.”

1. These verses introduce us to two major characters of the story.
2. First, we have Mordecai
  - Mordecai was a Benjamite.
  - He was one of the many Jews that Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away into captivity.
  - We are not told why he declined to return to Jerusalem with Nehemiah and those that returned to rebuild Jerusalem under Cyrus.
  - However, it is very evident that regardless of what he said, that in God’s providence he remained that he might be an instrument used of God in the deliverance of the Jews.
3. The second person introduced is Hadassah, or Esther.
  - She is his uncle’s daughter, or his cousin.

- When her father and mother died, Mordecai took her in and adopted her as his own daughter.
  - We are also told that she was very beautiful and undoubtedly has a great personality.
4. Esther becomes a candidate for queen.
- Some authors say that Mordecai sinned against the Lord when he presented Esther as a candidate; and Esther sinned by allowing him to present her as a candidate.
  - Is that true? Others, including myself, disagree.
  - We must remember that the king word is absolute.
  - He has published a decree (verse 3) that “the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom,” were to gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women.
  - I believe that she had no choice in the matter; as women of Persia were not allowed to exercise “rights of choice.”
  - Thus, those summoned by the kings appointed officers were required to go whether they wanted to or not.
  - I think Esther very clearly understood her predicament.
  - If she did not go, she could be put to death for defying the king’s command.
  - So for a full year she lived in the house of the women preparing for the one night that she would spend with Ahasuerus.

- She fully understood that night would determine her fate.
- If she was not chosen to be queen she would be relegated to the king's harem for the rest of her life.
- In this case she would never be allowed to leave the house of the women, never be allowed to marry another person, or return to the land of her people.
- We are not told how either Esther or Mordecai felt about their circumstances.
- Possible they were saying, "Why Lord?"
- But we know that the Lord was intervening behind the scenes.
- We clearly see Sovereign God working on behalf of Esther, and the Jewish nation as a whole.

#### F. The favor of Hegai.

Verse 9, "And the maiden (Esther) pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, which were meet to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women."

1. Again we see the sovereign God moving in Esther's present circumstances to bring about His perfect will.
2. As we consider the elevation of a poor fatherless Jewess to the rank of queen of the Persian empire, we must admire how the

wonderful providence of God works in her situation.

3. Could anyone be so blind that they could not see that it was entirely by God's providence that one maiden, of the captive Jews, should be found to be more beautiful than all the virgins of a hundred and twenty-seven provinces?
4. Can any one question the fact that God gave her exquisite beauty for the very occasion?
5. Known only unto God are all His ways from the beginning; and in the formation of Hadassah (Esther's Hebrew name) He had a plan which He would execute through her.
6. Had not God provided a Jewess surpassing all the virgins of the Persian dominion the previous events would have been useless.
7. Esther was found to be the most beautiful of all the fair virgins, that through her beauty she might deliver the chosen people of God.
8. In this circumstance we have a key to the Divine procedure in adjusting the various events in providence to the fulfilling of His plans.
9. All those who are called to take a part in the advancement or defense of the cause of God are gifted by Him with the necessary qualifications.
10. By a single gift was Esther fitted to be the deliverer of Israel.
11. It was beauty that He gave to Esther, because beauty only could be the means of her elevation.
12. Anything other than her beauty would have utterly failed.

- Great wisdom, or riches could not have gotten her one step closer to the throne.
  - Been the daughter of a powerful man likewise would not have forwarded her progress to the throne.
- The king was interested in one thing and one thing only – beauty.
- It was her beauty alone that would raise her to the throne, and great beauty the God of providence gave her.

13. This gives us an insight or key.

- Sovereign God through His providence governs a world that is at enmity with Him.
  - He makes those, who know Him not, who hate Him, to obey His will, even though they fulfill His will, they transgress His laws.
- How unsearchable are the counsels of the Lord!

14. Again verse 9 speaking of Hegai,

“And the maiden (Esther) pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, which were meet to be given her, out of the king’s house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women.”

- “He preferred her” means that Hegai seeing her beauty and her behavior concluded that she was the one that would be acceptable to the king.
- Thus he gave her preferential treatment and hurried her preparation so that she could be presented to the king as soon as possible.

## **II. Esther is chosen as queen:**

Verses 15-18, “Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king’s chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her. So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti. Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther’s feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king.”

- A. “And the king loved Esther” and the following morning the King announced that she was to be his wife and queen.
- B. Therefore Esther was not return to the house of the women, as those who only became the king’s concubines were.
- C. Rather she was given a room in the palace suitable to the position of the queen which she would shortly become.
- D. Four years after the search began the king married Esther and she became queen of Persia.

## **Conclusions:**

- A. The providence of God is seen in every step of the progress of Esther to her destined elevation just as He did Joseph, when he was sold into Egyptian slavery.
- B. God provided friends for her.

1. He filled every heart with good-will towards her.
  2. He caused the king's chamberlain to accelerate her progress.
- E. Likewise it was the providence of the Sovereign that caused it to be that none of those that preceded Esther please the king, and that Esther would win his heart.
- F. In closing I want to briefly speak of another instance of God providentially working to bring about a preordained event.
1. The event - the many providential events that brought about the crucifixion of our Lord.

Acts 2:23, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

Verse 21, "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

2. Has the providence of God led you to this place at this time that you might believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved?

## God's providential care of His covenanted people (part 3)

**Text:** Esther 2: 17 – 3:2, “And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti. Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther’s feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king. And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king’s gate. Esther had not yet shewed her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him. In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king’s gate, two of the king’s chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told it unto Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king thereof in Mordecai’s name. And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out; therefore they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king. After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him. And all the king’s servants, that were in the king’s gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence.”

### **Introduction:**

- A. We have read of several incidents that have proven to be the providential working of God:
  1. The King commanding the queen to present herself was completely out of character and against all court etiquette, yet it happens.



2. Then the queen refuses to present herself as commanded - which was unheard of behavior for women in the Persian Empire.
3. Thirdly, the king's counselors' risky and uncommon behavior in suggesting that he divorce her and select another to be queen.
4. Then we see the Lord move in the heart of Hegai and others so that Esther is "preferred" and advanced as quickly as possible.
5. During Esther's time of waiting we see the providential work of the Lord in the king's heart.
  - For 4 years fair maiden after fair maiden was presented to the king.
  - Yet time after time we see God prevent the king from choosing one of them to be his queen.
6. He had always been a womanizer, yet the Lord's providential hand moved and the king fell in love, maybe for the first time in his life, with the young, beautiful maiden named Esther.
7. It is also note worthy that Persian law did not require that Esther reveal her nationality.
8. Therefore according to verses 10 and 20 at the advice of Mordecai she did not.
9. The reason could have been that the Persian Empire included several nations and was comprised of at least three skin colors.
  - Those of black skin from Ethiopia and Africa,
  - The dark brown people of India,
  - And the lighter tan people of the mid east.

10. However, I personally believe that it was that in God's providence Hammon would openly reveal his evil plot to destroy the Jews without fear. For had he know her nationality, he would have been much more cunning and subtle.

B. Regardless, time after time we have seen and will see God working all things "according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself."

Now let's investigate the next providential happening.

### **I. The plot to kill the king:**

Esther 2:21-23, "In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told it unto Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king thereof in Mordecai's name. And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out; therefore they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king."

A. First we see that Mordecai sat in the king's gate

1. As previously state, he was undoubtedly promoted to some sort of officer at court when Esther was taken to the house of the women.
2. Regardless he discovers a plot between two of the king's chamberlains to kill the king.

B. The two men were Bigthan and Teresh.

1. They were possibly the commanders of the kings bodyguards,
2. Or they were the men that guarded the doors entering the kings bedchamber.

3. Regardless they “were wroth” and sought to kill the King.
4. Some believe that they were going to cut off his head, and take it to the king of Greece because Persia and Greece were at war.
5. We are not told what caused their anger and great wrath toward the king.
  - Some say it was because of their loyalty to Vashti, and the king's marriage of Esther
  - Others believe it Mordecai's promotion, which caused them to fear losing their positions to someone else.
  - We are simply told that they “were wroth” and wanted to kill the king.

C. Mordecai learns of their plot:

1. How he found out about their conspiracy is uncertain.
2. Josephus claimed that Barnabazus, a Jew, and a servant of one of the conspirators revealed it to him.
3. Another said that they spoke in two men were from Tarsus and spoke to each other in the Tarsian language, not knowing that Mordecai spoke the language and understand what they said.
4. Others believe that they solicited him to join them in the assassination.
5. However he got the information concerning their bloody purpose, God was in it!

Psalms 25:14, “The secret of the LORD *is* with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.”

D. Here we see the devastating effects of sin.

1. One sin leads to another, and another, and another.

James 1:15, "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

E. Here is where things get interesting.

1. Because of Esther, Mordecai was promoted, because he was promoted he found out about the plot.
2. Because he was the Esther's cousin, he had access to the queen, who had access to the king.
3. Esther "certified the king thereof."
4. However, she made sure that the king knew that it was Mordecai that discovered the plot.
5. An inquisition was made of the matter and both men were hanged.
6. And "it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king."
7. But Mordecai received no reward or recognition for his actions.
8. As we will see later this is a very important fact.

## **II. Hamon is promoted:**

Esther 3:1-6, "After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him. And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence. Then the king's servants,

which were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment? Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand: for he had told them that he was a Jew. And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath. And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai."

A. Chapter 3 begins with "After these things."

1. After what things?
2. The marriage of the king to Esther, and the revealing of the plot to kill the king.

B. At this time Haman is promoted.

1. Who is Haman?
  - He was the son of Hammedatha the Agagite.
  - Most scholars believe Haman was the descendant of "Agag," king of the Amalekites, who was spared by Saul, but destroyed by Samuel.
  - This would explain the great hatred that he harbored for the Jews.
2. Why was he promoted to the position of Prime Minister?
  - We are not told why he was given this great promotion.
  - Nor is there anything in the king's records.

3. Verse 7 sets the date of Haman's promotion as 5 years after the king's marriage to Esther.

C. Verse 2:

“And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence.”

1. The king also decreed that when Haman passed by everyone was to “bow and reverence him.”
  - It seems that this was the custom of Persia.
  - Evidently the kings of Persia gave their favorites great status.
  - Those honored were not allowed to erect statues of themselves, however they were allowed to require that they be honored, as a deity.
2. In fact, the king commanding this honor to be bestowed on Haman shows that it was not a mere civil honor but something uncommon and extraordinary.
3. “But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence.”
  - This is proof that it was not mere civil honor because the Jews did not refuse to give honor to those worthy of it.
  - This is seen in several passages of Scripture like I Samuel 24:8; II Samuel 14:4, 18:28; I Kings 1:16.
  - Furthermore, Mordecai would not have refused to give honor because of pride and resentment, thereby risk the king's

displeasure, the loss of his office, and the ruin of his nation.

- Thus his refusal had to be because it was contrary to his conscience, and the law of his God for him to give this kind of reverence and worship.

D. The result of Mordecai's actions – verses 3-6:

“Then the king's servants, which were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment? Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand: for he had told them that he was a Jew.”

1. Day after day they admonished Mordecai to obey the king's command and honor and reverence Haman.
2. The only answer Mordecai ever gave is found in verse 4,

“For he had told them that he was a Jew.”

3. He basically said that because he was a Jew the fundamental law of his religion did not allow him to worship mere man, but God only.
4. When Haman was told he was furious.

“And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath.”

5. It seems that Haman over reacts:

“And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai.”

- Haman wanted Mordecai put to death.
  - However, just killing Mordecai was not sufficient, Haman wanted to take vengeance on all the Jews within the Persian empire.
  - Why all Jews? Mordecai had told the king's servants, that he was a Jew, and that his religion forbid him to bow down and reverence Haman:
6. Therefore, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews because he knew they believed and lived by the same principle as Mordecai.
- And like Mordecai would all refuse to give him reverence.
  - Thus he was resolved to destroy them all that he not be embarrassed by their refusal to reverence him.
  - Whether his anger was a rekindling of old animosity because of his Amalekite heritage, or because of his great pride, we are not told.

E. In Genesis 3:15 the Lord said,

“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

1. Since this moment Satan has been trying to destroy the people of God.
  - The Egyptians tried to destroy Israel – God delivered them.
  - The nations living in Palestine tried to defeat and them when Joshua led they into the



Promised Land – In God’s power they won the battles and the land.

- Then we see the Philistine’s, then Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian captivities – yet against all odds Israel returned to their lands time and time again.
- Here we read of Haman’s plot to annihilate the Jewish people as Hitler did in WWII.
- Where are these nations and peoples? They are no more, yet Israel stands as a nation today.
- I just read an article by a Canadian journalist that says that Iran wants nuclear capabilities.
- The reason: Iran and its Islamic rulers are consumed by hatred of Jews, hatred of Israel and a diabolical desire to annihilate both, all in the name of Islam.
- So we can see that Satan is has not forgotten the Jews, even today!
- The book of Esther tells us how Satan tried to use wicked Haman to attack and destroy the Jews living in the Persian providences.

#### F. Haman petitions the King – verses 8-15:

Verses 8,9, “And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king’s laws: therefore it is not for the king’s profit to suffer them. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king’s treasuries. And the king took his

ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy.”

1. Verses 8-15 tells us that the king gave Haman unlimited power in the destruction of the Jews.
2. A date was set; far enough in advance that dispatches could arrive in all the providences, for the complete annihilation of the Jewish people.

### **III. Mordecai's grief and appeal to Esther:**

Verses 1,2, “When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry; And came even before the king's gate: for none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.

A. Here Mordecai shows his true character:

1. He is a man of strong character and stands forth for what he believes.
2. Yet, at the same time, he is a compassionate man weeping for his people and their plight.
3. Losing his own life was one thing, but because of his refusal to bow to Haman every Jewish man, woman, boy and girl was to die.
4. And they were to die, not because of any crime committed, not because of a rebellion against the king, but simply because they were Mordecai's people.
5. Verse 3 tells us that “in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.”

- B. Esther hears of Mordecai's actions, and not having heard of Haman's decree sends Hatach, her servant, to find out why he is acting this way.
1. Mordecai sends Esther a copy of the decree - verse 8 – and implored her to go to the king on behalf of not a single life, but the lives of a body of people, as well as her own.
  2. She sends Hatach back and reminds Mordecai that no one, even his wife, could not go into the king's presence uninvited without chancing death.

“Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

3. Esther sends back this response,

“Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.”

- C. Esther ask for a three day fast before she goes before the king.
1. that is, she asked that the Jewish people pray for her,
    - First, that she might have courage to go in to the king
    - Secondly, that she would not be put to death and allowed to present herself and her petition to the king.

- Even though it is not mentioned, we understand that Esther was asking for her people to pray, fasting was only an accessory, and is expressive of affliction and humiliation of soul.

#### **IV. Esther's plan and God's sovereign intervention:**

- A. Crisis reveals strong character – Esther was young, beautiful, and had everything one could want, yet she was willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for her people. “I will go to the king ... and if I perish, I perish.”

Esther 4:1,2, “Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house. And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre.

- B. We see the king's response in verse 3,

“Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.”

1. I am sure that Esther had prayed, meditated, and sought the Lord concerning how to present her petition to the king.
2. She does not immediately present her petition but request that the king and Haman attend a private banquet.
3. The king loves her greatly and happily accepts for himself and commands that Haman be notified.

4. That night they feasted on fruit and wine, and when the king was merry he renewed his offer to grant her petition up to  $\frac{1}{2}$  of his kingdom.
5. The queen ask for the King and Haman to attend a second banquet the following day.
6. Why did she postpone presenting her request for another day? We are not told!
7. Gill says that she delayed, partly in hope of increasing his affection to her, and partly to prepare him to expect him to ask something very important of him.

C. The king grants her request:

D. Haman goes home, and brags to his wife and friends of all the king has bestowed on him.

1. He tells them about the queen's banquet and only the king and himself being invited.

Verse 12, "Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and to morrow am I invited unto her also with the king."

2. And guess what she is preparing another one for the king and I tomorrow.
3. He was completely unaware of queen Esthers plan and thought that she was giving him a special honor.
4. He also perceived this to mean that he had the joint affection of the king and queen.
5. But on the way home Haman had seen Mordecai and his anger was kindled.
6. His wife and friends suggest that he build a very tall gallows, that could be seen from a great

distance, that night, then get permission from the king the next morning and immediately hang Mordecai.

7. Haman likes the idea and has the gallows built that night.

#### E. The king's sleepless night.

Esther 5:1-3, "On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him."

1. He should have been very relaxed having spent much of the evening at Esther's banquet.
2. But instead he could not sleep.
3. There is no doubt that the overruling providence of God was working.
4. And again we see God's providence in that he did not send for Esther or one of his other concubines, or the sings.
5. Instead he commanded the servants to bring the book of records of the chronicles in which memorable facts were recorded.
6. During the reading the events concerning the plot to kill the king and Mordecai saving the king's life were read.
7. However, there was no record of any reward or honor being bestowed on Mordecai.

8. Undoubtedly, the king was unable to sleep any that night because in the next verse the king ask who was in the court.
9. They say “Haman” and the king has them to bring him to him.
10. Haman has come to ask permission to hang Mordecai, but before he can speak the king ask him,

And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour?

11. Because of the events the evening before, and his invitation to the banquet that day, Haman assumes that the king wanted to honor him.
12. In verses 7-9 Haman tells the sets forth the great honor this person should be given.
13. The kings response,

“Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king’s gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken.”

14. Verse 11 Haman was shocked when the king told him “do even so to Mordecai the Jew.”
15. So much for his plan. He goes and does as commanded.
16. Then as soon as possible he goes home and tells his wife and advisors what has happen.
17. In verse 13, they say:

“If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him.”

18. God sometimes puts in the mouth of the very wicked to speak that thing which he has decreed shall come to pass.
19. Verse 14, "And while they were yet talking with him, came the king's chamberlains, and hastened to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared.

## **V. Esther's banquet – Chapter 7:**

- A. Verse 1 - "So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen.
- B. In verse 2 the king again ask Esther what she desires of the king.

And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom.

1. Notice that he addresses her by her royal title, "queen Esther."
2. Secondly, he promises to give her anything that she wants by the phrase, "even to the half of the kingdom."

- C. Then Esther the queen answered and said,

Verse 3, "If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request:

Verse 4, "For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage.



D. Verse 5, “Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, **Who is he**, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?”

E. The queen’s answer - Verse 6, “The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen.

F. The king is outraged,

Verse 7a, “And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath went into the palace garden.”

G. Haman pleads for his life – Verse 7b,

“And Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king.”

H. Haman makes a great mistake:

Verse 8, “Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther was. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? As the word went out of the king’s mouth, they covered Haman’s face.”

1. “The bed” is a couch on which she sat or reclined at the banquet, as was the custom in the eastern countries.
2. Haman, in the intensity of his supplication, had thrown himself upon the couch at Esther’s feet begging for mercy.
3. Haman being on the queen couch gave the king opportunity to accuse him of indecency toward the queen.

Verse 8b, “Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? “As the word went out of the king’s mouth, they covered Haman’s face.”

4. I'm sure you have heard the term, "dead man walking?" That was Haman at this moment.

I. Haman is hanged – verses 9-10:

"And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon. So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified."

1. Behold the retributive justice of God in the death of Haman!
2. The chamberlain, probably the one that went to bring Haman to the banquet, tells the king about the gallows that Haman built to hang Mordecai on.
3. Then that which was spoken came to pass. The king said, "Hang him on it."
4. Haman is hanged on the very gallows he had built.

## **VI. The deliverance of the Jews:**

A. Chapters 8 and 9 contain the story of deliverance.

1. Esther tells the king who and what Mordecai is to her.
2. The king calls for Mordecai

Verse 2, "And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman."

B. Mordecai is promoted to the position of "Prime Minister of Persia."

- C. But the Jewish people in Persia are still in danger.
- D. In verses 3-6 queen Esther ask the king to “reverse the letters devised by Haman.”
  - 1. Since those thing written in those letters could not be revised because once sealed with the king’s ring a law could not be repealed.
  - 2. So the king allowed Mordecai to write new letters and seal them with the king’s seal.
- E. So, we are not yet done with the wonders of God’s Providence in this affair.
- F. Even with all the good intentions of the king, how can the Jews be preserved?
  - 1. Since the first decree could not be revoked; how could a handful of Jews, scattered over all the provinces of the empire, stand against their enemies?
  - 2. Even though the new letters gave them royal license to defend themselves and destroy their adversaries, how could the few, who were dispersed, escape destruction?
  - 3. Their escape is secured by the fear inspired into the nations by the elevation of Mordecai to Prime Minister.
  - 4. The God who so often filled the hearts of the most numerous armies with the dread of His people, few in number, now filled the nations of the Persian Empire with fear of them.

Esther 9:2-5, " The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon all people. And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king,

helped the Jews; because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them. For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater. Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them."

## **Conclusions:**

- A. Our study of the book of Esther teaches us of the overruling government of God.
- B. We once claimed to be a Christian nation with Christian rulers; but can that be said of America today?
- C. But in all reality there is no nation in which the counsels of the ungodly does not prevail!
- D. Where is the government that is conducted strictly on Christian principles? Where is the assembly of legislators, in which the Lord God is feared as He ought to be feared?
- E. Today Christians in nations around the world are persecuted, and that persecution is increasing!
- F. Fear not the malice of your enemies, ye children of the Most High.
- G. Let us turn our eye to the book of Esther, and behold the Lord God Omnipotent reigning and working His will by the very instruments employed by Satan to defeat His purposes.
- H. God rules even in the counsels of the ungodly.
- I. We are encouraged by knowing that God has done all things according to the counsel of His own will.

- J. The very glory of this world is vanity; its highest enjoyments are unsatisfying.
- K. But though I cannot see through this dreadful darkness, I will look beyond it by the eye of faith.
- L. God reigns; and we as Christian's must look unto Omnipotent Sovereign God - for He can deliver you out of their hands.