

The Esther Series

Message One, God's Unseen Hand

ESTHER 1: 1-22 *Now in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces,*

2 in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne in Susa, the citadel,

3 in the third year of his reign he gave a feast for all his officials and servants. The army of Persia and Media and the nobles and governors of the provinces were before him,

4 while he showed the riches of his royal glory and the splendor and pomp of his greatness for many days, 180 days.

5 And when these days were completed, the king gave for all the people present in Susa the citadel, both great and small, a feast lasting for seven days in the court of the garden of the king's palace.

6 There were white cotton curtains and violet hangings fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rods and marble pillars, and also couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and precious stones.

7 Drinks were served in golden vessels, vessels of different kinds, and the royal wine was lavished according to the bounty of the king.

8 And drinking was according to this edict: "There is no compulsion." For the king had given orders to all the staff of his palace to do as each man desired.

9 Queen Vashti also gave a feast for the women in the palace that belonged to King Ahasuerus.

10 On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha and Abagtha, Zethar and Carkas, the seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus,

11 to bring Queen Vashti before the king with her royal crown, in order to show the peoples and the princes her beauty, for she was lovely to look at.

12 But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command delivered by the eunuchs. At this the king became enraged, and his anger burned within him.

13 Then the king said to the wise men who knew the times (for this was the king's procedure toward all who were versed in law and judgment,



14 the men next to him being Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, who saw the king's face, and sat first in the kingdom):

15 "According to the law, what is to be done to Queen Vashti, because she has not performed the command of King Ahasuerus delivered by the eunuchs?"

16 Then Memucan said in the presence of the king and the officials, "Not only against the king has Queen Vashti done wrong, but also against all the officials and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus.

17 For the queen's behavior will be made known to all women, causing them to look at their husbands with contempt, since they will say, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, and she did not come.'

18 This very day the noble women of Persia and Media who have heard of the queen's behavior will say the same to all the king's officials, and there will be contempt and wrath in plenty.

19 If it please the king, let a royal order go out from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes so that it may not be repealed, that Vashti is never again to come before King Ahasuerus. And let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she.

20 So when the decree made by the king is proclaimed throughout all his kingdom, for it is vast, all women will give honor to their husbands, high and low alike."

21 This advice pleased the king and the princes, and the king did as Memucan proposed.

22 He sent letters to all the royal provinces, to every province in its own script and to every people in its own language, that every man be master in his own household and speak according to the language of his people.

ESTHER 2: 1-23 *After these things, when the anger of King Ahasuerus had abated, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her.*

2 Then the king's young men who attended him said, "Let beautiful young virgins be sought out for the king.

3 And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom to gather all the beautiful young virgins to the harem in Susa the citadel, under custody of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women. Let their cosmetics be given them.



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4 And let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti.” This pleased the king, and he did so.

***5 Now there was a Jew in Susa the citadel whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish, a Benjaminite,
6 who had been carried away from Jerusalem among the captives carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away.***

7 He was bringing up Hadassah, that is Esther, the daughter of his uncle, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman had a beautiful figure and was lovely to look at, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.

8 So when the king’s order and his edict were proclaimed, and when many young women were gathered in Susa the citadel in custody of Hegai, Esther also was taken into the king’s palace and put in custody of Hegai, who had charge of the women.

9 And the young woman pleased him and won his favor. And he quickly provided her with her cosmetics and her portion of food, and with seven chosen young women from the king’s palace, and advanced her and her young women to the best place in the harem.

10 Esther had not made known her people or kindred, for Mordecai had commanded her not to make it known.

11 And every day Mordecai walked in front of the court of the harem to learn how Esther was and what was happening to her.

12 Now when the turn came for each young woman to go in to King Ahasuerus, after being twelve months under the regulations for the women, since this was the regular period of their beautifying, six months with oil of myrrh and six months with spices and ointments for women—

13 when the young woman went in to the king in this way, she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the harem to the king’s palace.

14 In the evening she would go in, and in the morning she would return to the second harem in custody of Shaashgaz, the king’s eunuch, who was in charge of the concubines. She would not go in to the king again, unless the king delighted in her and she was summoned by name.

15 When the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his own daughter, to go in to the king, she asked for nothing except what Hegai the king’s eunuch, who had charge of the women, advised. Now Esther was winning favor in the eyes of all who saw her.

16 And when Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign, 17 the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she won grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

18 Then the king gave a great feast for all his officials and servants; it was Esther's feast. He also granted a remission of taxes to the provinces and gave gifts with royal generosity.

19 Now when the virgins were gathered together the second time, Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate.

20 Esther had not made known her kindred or her people, as Mordecai had commanded her, for Esther obeyed Mordecai just as when she was brought up by him.

21 In those days, as Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, became angry and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.

22 And this came to the knowledge of Mordecai, and he told it to Queen Esther, and Esther told the king in the name of Mordecai.

23 When the affair was investigated and found to be so, the men were both hanged on the gallows. And it was recorded in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.

The goal of this message is to help people understand the invisible hand of God's wisdom at work in their circumstances—even when they cannot detect His presence—to bring about His sovereign, perfect plan in their lives.

Esther is unique in all the Bible because it is the only book in Scripture that does not mention the name of God directly.

This is because Esther is a book God wanted to use to show how His providence, His invisible hand, works behind the scene to bring about His purposes in history.

So even though God is not on the front page of Esther, His fingerprints are all through the book.

So even though God is not named in the book of Esther, look for His unseen hand at work.

This book wants us to know that God is in control, but His methods vary.



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INTRODUCTION:

One day, a very lonely frog went to a fortune-teller to see what his fortune would be.

The fortune-teller told the frog, “Don’t worry because soon you’re going to meet a girl who will want to know everything about you.”

The frog was understandably excited, so he asked the fortuneteller, “When will I meet this girl?”

“Oh, you’re going to meet her next semester in biology class!”

Sometimes, things look good one minute, but then go south very fast.

Sometimes, if the truth be told, dreams take place in one moment, and disaster seems to come the next.

Sometimes, it even looks like God doesn’t know what He is doing.

The biblical book of Esther is a lot like that.

It’s actually a Cinderella story—and much like Cinderella, before Esther becomes “the belle of the ball,” things become very dark and seemingly hopeless for her and her people.

This plot alone makes Esther unique in Scripture.

Esther is also unique among the sixty-six books of the Bible because it is the only book in God’s Word that does not contain the name of God.

God’s presence is on every page of Esther, but His name is nowhere to be found, which raises the question of why God would include in His Word a book that never mentions His name.

The reason is that God wanted to use this “Cinderella story” to teach us something about Himself that is critical for your life and mine, which is this: there are many times in our lives when God is nowhere to be found.

There are many times in our circumstances when we look for God, but He cannot be located.

There are many times when it seems that God is letting things happen to us that He wouldn’t allow if He loved us and cared about us.

And He doesn't seem to be present when these painful circumstances are happening to us.

But there is a term for God's invisibility, when He cannot be located.

It is referred to in biblical theology as the doctrine of His providence: God's unseen hand at work.

Esther is probably the classic example of God's unseen hand at work as He providentially rules and overrules when circumstances seem to be taking shape that would result in the destruction of His people, the Jews.

In fact, Esther is so permeated with God's providence that without knowing the reason it was included in the canon, the book makes no sense, other than it being a great story.

But Esther was put in the Bible to teach you and me something about God that all of us face at one time or another, which is that He is present and at work even when our circumstances are falling apart and God seems nowhere to be found.

But when you understand the truth that God is providentially at work, you're able to move through life even when it's quiet spiritually in your life because you know even though you can't see, feel or hear God, He is in control.

The providence of God is a subset of another doctrine, His sovereignty, which refers to God's absolute power and rule over all of His creation.

The sovereign God whose name does not appear in the book of Esther is present and working on every page.

So, we must get our theology straight first before we can appreciate the message of Esther with these five important points.

1. GOD WANTS US TO KNOW THAT HE IS FIRMLY AND SOVEREIGNLY IN CONTROL OF ALL OUR CIRCUMSTANCES.

Sovereignty is one of God's chief attributes.

Romans 11:36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

Nothing that happens to us escapes God's careful attention because He is shaping our lives to bring Him glory.

2. PROVIDENCE IS GOD AT WORK BEHIND THE SCENES TO CONTROL SITUATIONS.

God's providence is the miraculous and often mysterious way He intersects and interconnects people and events to bring about His sovereign will and purposes—what He wants to happen.

The Scriptures abound with the truth of God' providence, even though the word is not used:

Psalm 33: 10-11 The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples.

11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations.

Proverbs 16: 9 The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.

Proverbs 19: 21 Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.

Proverbs 21: 30 No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the LORD.

Isaiah 45: 15 Truly, you are a God who hides himself, O God of Israel, the Savior.

God grants human beings' freedom, but He will not allow that freedom to thwart His sovereignty.

Providence is often mysterious.

3. GOD ARRANGES CIRCUMSTANCES AND PEOPLE TO ACCOMPLISH HIS SOVEREIGN WILL.

When things happen, God overrules even the evil that people do to accomplish His goal.

When you begin to understand God's sovereignty and His providential ways of achieving His will, you can be conscious of God's fingerprints even when He seems absent.

Because of this, we can trust God even when we cannot trace His hand at work in our lives.

4. WHEN WE CAN'T SEE GOD IN OUR CIRCUMSTANCES, WE NEED TO REMEMBER THAT THERE IS FAR MORE HAPPENING THAN WHAT WE CAN IMAGINE.

God recorded the story of Esther so you can apply its truths to your circumstances as you grow to understand and appreciate God's will and respond correctly to it.

Look at God's providence at work in Esther: a family conflict, a cultural battle between the sexes, a law in a secular culture that can't be changed, and a beauty contest—none of which has anything to do with God's will being of greater purpose.

He is control behind the scenes to work all things according to "the counsel of His will."

Ephesians 1:11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,

5. GOD CAN EVEN ORCHESTRATE A COMPLETELY SEPARATE "SUBPLOT" BEHIND THE MAIN SCENES OF THE STORY.

Esther relays the plot to the king in Mordecai's name.

Ahasuerus is going to be very grateful to Mordecai the Jew.

Conclusion:

The story in the book of Esther is put together in much the same way a cake is baked.

The baker takes butter, eggs, perhaps nutmeg, flour and sugar—ingredients that by themselves are not very enjoyable.

You do not put a tablespoon of flour or nutmeg or even sugar in your mouth by themselves.

But when the baker blends these ingredients together, pours the mix into a cake pan, and puts the fire of an oven underneath it—umm, umm good!

You wind up with a cake, something delightful.

That's because what is produced is bigger and better than the individual ingredients that make it up.

What this means for your life is that God in His providence can take;

- A. the nutmeg of your situation,**
- B. the butter of your circumstances,**
- C. the flour of your failure**
- D. and the sugar of your successes,**

When He mixes them together in His sovereign blender He comes out with a “cake” that is beautiful and tastes wonderful, because His sovereignty is achieved through His providence.

“There are many times in our lives when God seems nowhere to be found.

There are many times when we look for God, but He seems cannot be located.

There are many times when it seems like God is letting things happen to you and me that He wouldn't allow if He loved us and cared about us.

But there is a term for God's invisibility, when He cannot be located.

That term is His providence, His unseen hand at work.”

“When you know the truth of God's sovereign control, and how He providentially works in history, you'll be able to move through life successfully even when it's appear quiet spiritually.

That's because you know even though you don't see, feel, or hear from God, you know He is pulling the strings behind the scenes.”

Once you know about the providence of God, you need to now say God is in the details.”

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- 2. PROVIDENCE IS GOD AT WORK BEHIND THE SCENES TO CONTROL SITUATIONS.**
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Four Take-Aways

What this means for your life is that God in His providence can take;

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