

Sermon, May 22, 2011
“God at Work”, Esther 8:1-8
Pastor Thomas P. Bellhy

Review of the Books of History so far:

From Joshua through Nehemiah there are 7 important themes

- Only King God can lead you into the “promised land”
- Trust and belief in the King will redeem you, bring you salvation
- Obedience will allow you to dwell in His Kingdom at peace,
- There are consequences to disobedience
- Repentance will restore you to see God’s presence
- Relationship with God is the greatest call of life
- Keeping your focus on your relationship with God yields Godly actions

Overview of Esther:

- The author of Esther is unknown, but scholars consider the book to be written around 460BC.
- Esther takes place during the reign of the Persian king Xerxes (Ahasuarus), before Ezra returned to Jerusalem, from 480-465BC in the Persian city of Susa, the king’s summer palace.
- The 12th book of history, 17th book of the Bible.

• **Overall Outline Esther¹:**

- I. Esther Replaces Vashti (1:1–2:18)
 - A. Vashti’s Insubordination (1:1–22)
 - B. Esther’s Coronation (2:1–18)
- II. Mordecai Overcomes Haman (2:19–7:10)
 - A. Mordecai’s Loyalty (2:19–23)
 - B. Haman’s Promotion and Decree (3:1–15)
 - C. Esther’s Intervention (4:1–5:14)
 - D. Mordecai’s Recognition (6:1–13)
 - E. Haman’s Fall (6:14–7:10)
- III. Israel Survives Haman’s Genocide Attempt (8:1–10:3)
 - A. Esther and Mordecai’s Advocacy (8:1–17)
 - B. The Jews’ Victory (9:1–19)
 - C. Purim’s Beginning (9:20–23)
 - D. Mordecai’s Fame (10:1–3)

• **Major Themes of Esther²:**

- Service: God accomplished His purposes through Esther and Mordecai
- Obedience: Conflicting demands for obedience to the law of the land and doing what is right forces believers to make difficult choices.
- Pride: Haman is the prideful, arrogant individual contrasted with the humbleness of Mordecai
- God’s sovereignty: God is in control of history; He is the hero who saves and protects His own, often using ordinary people and events.

Even though God is never mentioned in the book, His guiding hand is all through it.

Esther is a short novella

- Historically encompasses roughly the same time period as the death of Confucius and Buddha,
- the classic battles of the Persians and Greeks, like the Spartan defenders at Thermopylae Pass (movie 300)
- The orphan Jewish girl Esther raised by her cousin Mordecai in Susa as a result of the exile from Jerusalem

¹MacArthur, J. J. (1997, c1997). *The MacArthur Study Bible* (electronic ed.) (Ne 1:1). Nashville: Word Pub.

²Archeological Study Bible (2005), p715.

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1. Scripture reading takes place after the God driven events of the story of Esther have weaved their way.

- **Esther 8:1-3**
- **Chapter One**
 - the drunken revelry of the feast of King Ahasuarus (Xerxes), causes Xerxes to summon his queen to “show her off” in front of his guests.
 - Queen Vashti refuses as an affront to her womanhood., King Xerxes is enraged deposes her.
- **Chapter Two**
 - Esther, who was raised by Mordecai, was entered in the “New Queen of Persia Beauty Pageant” and was ultimately chosen to be the next queen of Persia
 - Mordecai and Esther agree to hide her Jewish heritage.
 - Mordecai happens to stand by two men who were conspiring to kill the king, he notifies Queen Esther who tells Xerxes, the plot was uncovered and the men were executed.
- **Chapter Three & Four**
 - the wicked, arrogant and prideful Haman becomes the chief minister of the King.
 - Mordecai refuses to pay him homage. Haman, rather than just killing Mordecai, decides to have the king sign a royal decree to eliminate all Jews.
 - Mordecai wanted Esther to go to the king... **Esther 4:10-16**
- **Chapter 5**
 - Esther plans a banquet for the king and Haman
 - Mordecai still refuses to bow to Haman.
 - Haman has a gallows built to hang Mordecai
 - Esther plans another banquet
- **Chapter Six**
 - King restless sleep remembers Mordecai who saved him from an assassination
 - King questions Hamn on how to rightly honor someone (Haman thinks it is him)
 - King says to honor Mordecai
- **Chapter Seven**
 - Queen Esther requests the king to stay his decree of Jewish annihilation
 - Haman’s plot is exposed and is hung (impaled) on his own gallows

2. God has orchestrated the many seemingly “coincidental circumstances” involved in this small story to preserve, save and deliver His people once again.

- **Esther 8:4-8**
- Even though the main characters of Mordecai, Esther, Xerxes, and Haman are freewill human beings they nonetheless play their roles in the grand play...the play writer has His way.
- If Xerxes had not gotten drunk and acted prideful, Vashti would not have been disgraced and would have entertained the king’s request.
- If Vashti had not refused, Esther would have been another orphaned Jewish girl in Susa, instead of Queen of Persia.
- If Mordecai had not been standing in the right place, he would not have heard of the assassination plan against Xerxes.
- If Haman’s evil attempt to eradicate the Jews was not aggressively thwarted by the sacrificial work of Queen Esther then the end of His story would have been at hand.

3. The message of Esther is the sovereignty of God in the circumstances of life.

- ***God’s sovereignty:*** God is in control of history; He is the hero who saves and protects His own, often using ordinary people and events.
- How have the circumstances of your life been bent by the Lord to enable you to better see Him?
- How have seemingly coincidental events worked their way throughout your life to enable you to see the bigger picture that God wishes to reveal to you?
- Has God revealed to you another piece of the puzzle for you to continue to press on so that piece by piece the bigger picture of the puzzle maker becomes clearer to you?
- Consider how God has worked in your life and look upon the mosaic of your life to see how God has been at work.