

## FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

### Esther 4:1-17

On this Mother's Day we are going to look at a book that bears a woman's name – Esther. But like all of the Bible, it is about God more than humans. The theme of Esther is "The Silent Sovereignty of God." In His sovereignty, God uses unlikely people to accomplish extraordinary things for His glory, His eternal plan, and our good. Here is a one sentence summary of Esther: *"Through His Providence and in keeping with His promises, God places Esther and Mordecai in positions of power to preserve His people and punish His enemies."* – Landon Dowden.

#### 1.GOD IS SOVEREIGN OVER EVERYTHING INCLUDING EVIL

- God is not mentioned by name in the book of Esther, but He is all over in the book. His providence and sovereignty are seen repeatedly. For example, in Mordecai discovering the plot to kill the king, in Esther being chosen the new Queen, in the King's insomnia and the records about Mordecai being read to him, in the king arriving just in time to see Haman falling upon Esther, etc. None of these things "just happened", but were all guided by God's Providence. *"Coincidences in Esther are the fingerprints of God's Hand at work."* – *Old Testament Survey, Bush, LaSor, etc.* The book is full of deep irony and divine reversal: the king rules over 127 provinces but cannot rule his own house; Haman builds a gallows to kill Mordecai, but he himself is hung on it; the date to destroy the Jews becomes the date of Jewish victory, etc.
- But the book of Esther is not a "cute story." The book covers a period of 10 years, 483-473 B.C., in the reign of Ahasuerus or Xerxes I, who ruled over the Persian Empire in Susa, the winter palace, (modern day Iraq) from 485-464 B.C. The Persian Empire stretched from India and Afghanistan to Europe and to modern day Sudan, and included all of the Middle East including Judah. Ahasuerus' empire is an evil pagan empire. He is the villain in the attack on the 300 Spartans under King Leonidas at Thermopylae in 480 B.C. Ahasuerus/Xerxes I is not a nice guy and the book of Esther is not a romantic love story. We are not sure exactly how Esther ends up in the Harem of Ahasuerus, whether by choice or force. However, she does go by her Persian name, meaning "star", not her Hebrew name Hadassah ("myrtle"). She may be covering up her Hebrew background. Compromise with the world is always an issue for God's people. But God is working all things for His glory and the good of His people, despite the immorality and sin of the Persian Imperial Court – Proverbs 16:4.
- God is the Lord of history. God is the Lord over individual lives in that history. Our lives matter to God just like Mordecai and Esther. We are not here by chance, but by the plan of God!

#### 2.GOD IS SOVEREIGN OVER EVERYTHING FOR THE GOOD OF HIS PEOPLE

- The one who wants to kill all the Jews in a Satanic-inspired hatred plot is Haman, a power-hungry government official. Haman is a descendant of the Amalekites and King Agag. The Amalekites have a long history of hatred for God and His people – Exodus 17:14-16; 1 Samuel 15:1,2. *"Haman, in fact, is just another pawn under the influence of Satan to try to annihilate God's people and prevent the possibility of Messiah."* - Landon Dowden. The Pur (lot) is cast against the Jews by Haman, but nothing happens by chance or luck! – Proverbs 16:33. God turns it around to make the date chosen a day of victory and celebration – Genesis 50:20. God delivers His people so that His eternal plan of bringing Messiah Jesus from the Jews would

happen over 400 years later. Esther matters in God's eternal plan. Without the deliverance of the Jews described in Esther, there would be no Jesus and no gospel. God rescued the Jews under Esther so we could have eternal life today.

- For the good of His people, God overrules evil in order to bring good in the End for His people. *“Esther is one of the longest sustained meditations on the sovereignty and providence of God in the whole Bible. It is really just one long narrative illustration of Romans 8:28.” – Mark Dever.* God is still doing this for us today in Jesus Christ – Romans 8:28,29. Do you trust God even when you don't understand or see what He is doing?

### **3.GOD USES HIS PEOPLE TO ACT IN HIS SOVEREIGNTY OVER EVERYTHING! – Esther 4:1-17**

- God sovereignly placed Mordecai and Esther in a place where they could be used of Him to rescue the Jews. God brought them to the kingdom for such a time as this. But they still had to act – Esther 4:8,16. God is sovereign, but humans are still responsible. Our choices matter under His sovereignty. Mordecai **Reacts** to Haman's edict by putting on sackcloth in grief and humility. Mordecai's **Request** of Esther is for her to act even though she has not identified herself as a Jew. Esther's **Refusal** is based on her fear – verses 9-11. Like so many of us, Esther's obedience was not immediate. Mordecai's **Response** is to point out the consequences even for Esther – verses 12-14. In the end, Esther **Resolves** to act with courage and dependence on God. She asks for everyone to fast for three days – verse 16. She will put her own life on the line to save her people – “If I perish, I perish.” How do you react to bad news? Do you pray first? Why does it often take drastic measures before we awake, repent, or seek Him afresh?
- How can God use imperfect sinful people for His glory and purposes? God still uses redeemed sinners to do His will. He can overrule our sinful choices and bring good in the End – Romans 5:20. *“My sins, they are many, His mercy is more.”*
- “For such a time as this.” God has put you where you are for His own purposes – Acts 17:24-28. He is calling you to action for the glory of His name and the good of His people. We all have moments where we can act and speak up for God. We all can humble ourselves and pray. What ministry has God especially for you to do in this time? If you find yourself thinking about our church or a ministry or need in our community, “somebody should...” or “I wish someone would...”, maybe you should ask if God wants you to do it.
- “For such a time as this.” Perhaps you wonder how can God ever use you? Start where you are. Start with your own family and in your own house. Fathers and mothers begin by honoring Christ in your own home. On this Mother's Day I am thankful for my mother who loved Jesus and influenced me through ordinary life for the gospel.
- *“Perhaps, like Esther, you have been brought to this moment in your life by circumstances over which you had no control, combined with flawed decisions you made along the way...Then suddenly you find yourself facing calamity...regardless of the straits you find yourself in, turn to the Lord your God. His purposes are greater than yours.” – Jobes, Esther, p. 142.*

#### Concluding Applications:

- Have you submitted to God and His plans for your life? Our Mediator is Jesus Christ!
- Are you serving and loving right now where God has placed you? – “for such a time as this.”
- Will you surrender afresh to God, knowing He uses imperfect redeemed sinners to do His Will?
- Rejoice in God's sovereign rule over all things, including evil. He will bring good in the End!