

Slide # 1

Theme: God’s providential Care For His People

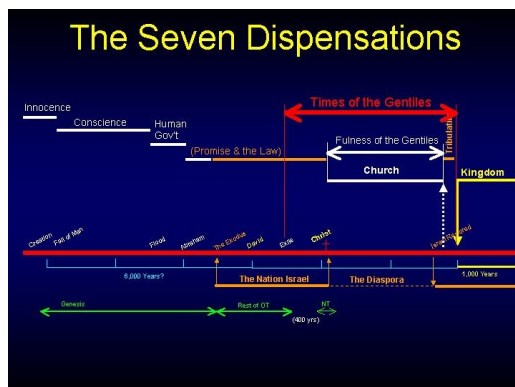
Outline:

Chapter 1 – Queen Vashti Deposed
Chapter 2 – Esther Becomes Queen
Chapter 3 – Haman’s Plot Against the Jews
Chapters 4-7 Esther’s Courage – Haman’s Plot Backfires
Chapter 8 The Jews Avenged
Chapter 9 The Feast of Purim Instituted
Chapter 10 Epilogue – Mordecai Exalted

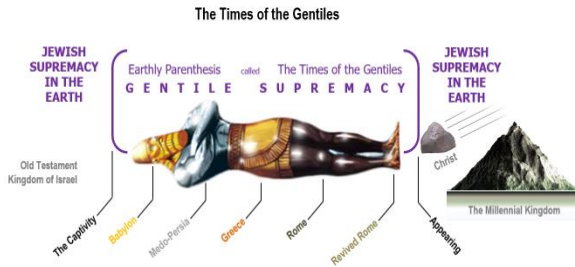
We now come to the conclusion of the story of Esther. Throughout the book the Jews were constantly under duress but now they come to a time of peace. God has providentially preserved them and brought them through some tumultuous times.

This is reflective of what God is doing all down through the times of the Gentiles. The Jews during this time are under the domination of the Gentiles and oppressed by the Gentiles and yet God preserves them as a people and ultimately, He will bring them through it to peace on the other side.

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The short little postscript in chapter 10 amounts to a special tribute to Mordecai. Humanly speaking, God did use him in a very crucial manner, but in truth the real story is about the sovereign God behind the scenes. We run our race but God puts us in place.

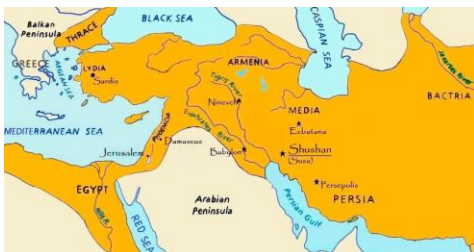
Esther 10:1–3 (NKJV)

1 And King Ahasuerus imposed tribute on the land and on the islands of the sea.

Why is this stated here? We are not told but in context the thought of the great reign of Ahasuerus is laid right along side of the greatness of Mordecai. So, many surmise that under the leadership of Mordecai King Ahasuerus continued to prosper and wield absolute power throughout his realm.

“Imposed tribute” can refer to forced taxation or to forced labor or both. Again, the empire was massive consisting of 127 provinces as seen in chapter 1.

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2 Now all the acts of his power and his might, and the account of the greatness of Mordecai, to which the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia?

This suggests the historicity of the book of Esther as it appeals to the official records as recorded in that day. “This formula (in its various forms) appears frequently in the books of Kings and Chronicles (e.g., 1 Kings 14:19, etc.; 2 Chron. 12:15; 13:22)” (John Whitcomb)

Its as if the author is saying, “Check the facts for yourselves in the official records.”

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Although this book and its records have not been found (perhaps destroyed by later emperors or conquerors), the essential historicity of the events is confirmed by the long continued observance of the feast-days of Purim – an observance which could never have been initiated and sustained otherwise. – **Henry M. Morris**

Footnote: Eight years after Purim was established King Ahasuerus was murdered in his bedroom in 465 B.C. and after that we don’t know what happened to Mordecai or Esther. But we do know that the feast of Purim continued to be celebrated as it is still done today. So this history of the feast of Purim extends back about 2500 years.

3 For Mordecai the Jew was second to King Ahasuerus, and was great among the Jews and well received by the multitude of his brethren, seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his countrymen.

Mordecai was second in command over this vast Gentile empire – second only to King Ahasuerus.

A contrast is drawn throughout the book between Haman who is called the enemy of the Jews 5 times (cf. 3:10; 7:6; 8:1; 9:10, 24), and Mordecai who 6 times is specifically called, “Mordecai the Jew (cf. 5:13; 6:10; 8:7; 9:29, 31; 10:3). And to finish it off he is here called “great among the Jews”.

Under Mordecai the Jews experienced the exact opposite of what they experienced under Haman. Under Haman’s leadership they were in danger for their very existence.

Under Mordecai they experienced good and peace.

There is a little debate as to how Mordecai should be seen. Was he merely a great patriot or was he a man of God.

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It is noteworthy that the Book of Esther nowhere states that Mordecai was a righteous individual or that he was careful to follow the Law.

– ***The Bible Knowledge Commentary***

Still, it is noted that his fasting and instruction as he went along does seem to indicate that God was somewhere on his radar. In this verse Mordecai is described as great among the Jews – seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his countrymen.

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Both of these activities, moreover, canonically describe a person who is motivated by the fear (i.e., slavish love) of the Lord (cf. Ps. 34:11-14). – ***The Moody Bible Commentary***

At the very least Mordecai was a great patriot who had the well-being of God's people in view which consistently is indicative of a God perspective on life. However, there certainly was lots of compromise in his life as seen earlier in the book in the things that he tolerated and went along with.

Perhaps we should see him as a man who found himself in a whole context of compromise but as God was at work providentially in relation to the nation He was also at work in Mordecai. I think we see progression in this way as we work through the book.

Certainly there is much to commend about Mordecai (humanly speaking). He brought Esther up as a strict but loving disciplinarian to where even when she became queen she continued to respect what he commanded her (cf. 2:10, 20). His character was such that he was faithful to his role in the king's gate exposing those that wanted to harm the king as seen in chapter 2 (cf. 2:19-23).

In chapter 3 we see that Mordecai had the internal fortitude to not bow before wicked Haman the archetype enemy of the Jews. That took some boldness because it went against the command of the king (cf. 3:5).

In chapter 4 it was Mordecai who provided the impetus that moved Esther into action with the king.

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Esther 4:14 (NKJV)

14 For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

It was Mordecai who crafted the counter decree under the direction of the king which allowed the Jews to defend themselves (cf. 8:8-11). And it was Mordecai who was KEY in establishing and publishing the guidelines for the celebration of Purim sent out to the Jews throughout the empire.

So, yes humanly speaking Mordecai deserves a great place of honor among the Jews. Thus 10:3 is a fitting tribute to Mordecai the Jew.

In the end those who curse the Jews, as seen in Haman, are cursed of God and those who bless the Jews, as seen in Mordecai, are blessed of God. That is an irrevocable law that goes back to Genesis 12:3.

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Genesis 12:3 (NKJV)

3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

It is interesting to note that Esther is not mentioned at all in this tribute although she too was a major player in this drama. Why we are not told. Perhaps because in reality she continued to function under the shadow of Mordecai's leadership.

During the Feast of Purim the Jews pray with a threefold emphasis.

- 1) First they praying thanking YHWH that they are counted worthy. They might want to rethink that prayer just a little bit and come back to Lam. 3:22-23.

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Lamentations 3:22–23 (NKJV)

22 Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not.

23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.

Malachi 3:6 (NKJV)

6 "For I am the LORD, **I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed**, O sons of Jacob.

The preservation of Israel is not because they are somehow worthy, but rather because of God's unchanging covenant faithfulness. This is all about God's character in spite of them not because of them.

Second, they pray thanking God for preserving their ancestors – and that is certainly appropriate. And finally, they thank God that they have lived to be able to celebrate another feast of Purim.

The Feast of Purim is really a celebration of God's providential preservation of His people.

As the original Jewish readers read this account they would have been struck by the way God was sovereignly protecting them, often when they did not even know it. Many things in the Book of Esther happened that were beyond anyone's control except that of God, who oversees history. – ***The Bible Knowledge Commentary***

The book of Esther is a magnificent piece of poetic work from the literary standpoint in that it purposely leaves God out – not even mentioning the name of God - and yet the providential activity of God is seen on every page. It is a wonder to behold.

People often confuse miracles with providence. When someone gets to the hospital just in the lick of time to save their life that is not a miracle that is providence. When the person dies and is raised back to life and doesn't have to go to the hospital that is a miracle.

A miracle is God's direct intervention in which He supersedes or bypasses the normal laws of nature in what is called signs and wonders. Sign-miracles were unique to Christ and the apostles. Sign-miracles are not happening today. Now certainly, God can perform any miracle He wants to at any time He wants to but His normal mode of operation today in the Church Age is His providential workings.

Providence has a lot to do with timing – God’s timing in which things happen at just the right time to bring out a certain outcome without violating the normal laws of nature. God does it without bypassing the normal laws of nature as is the case with a miracle where God overrules the normal laws of nature. Providence happens within the normal course of nature and yet clearly there is a sovereign hand guiding the events to just the right outcome in just the right way at just the right time.

God is providentially guiding our path constantly.

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Psalm 37:23 (NKJV)

23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way.

Proverbs 16:9 (NKJV)

9 A man’s heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.

Proverbs 20:24 (NKJV)

24 A man’s steps are of the LORD; How then can a man understand his own way?

We make our plans, but the outcome is in God’s hands. Constantly we see God routing and rerouting our ways – often in ways that we don’t even understand.

This mysterious reality which we call providence, this sovereign manipulation of all the ordinary, non-miraculous doings which make up the ordinary ongoing of human affairs, so as to bring about, by natural processes those results which are divinely predetermined, is the mightiest of all miracles. – **J. Sidlow Baxter**

A Puritan writer by the name of Jeremiah Burroughs wrote this:

There is nothing that befalls you but there is a hand of God in it... When a certain passage of providence befalls me, that is one wheel, and it may be that if this wheel were stopped, a thousand other things might come to be stopped by this. ... When God has ordered a thing for the present to be thus and thus, how do you know how many things depend upon this thing? God may have some work to do twenty years hence that depends on this passage of providence that falls out this day or this week.

When I started this study we were in the throes of figuring out what to do in terms of whether God was leading us to pursue purchasing this property or not. I thought that no matter how it went it would be good to study the providence of God as emphasized in the book of Esther. Truly, we saw the providential hand of God move as we went through the process.

On June 6 we had an “All Church Meeting” to get input from the Church and to see if God would so move through the church so we could move forward or not. We needed \$165 and when we counted it up \$235 was accounted for. The next morning we immediately submitted our bid – and providentially just in time.

As we submitted our bid another potential buyer had their agent ready to submit a bid as well. This realtor told me that just as he was ready to submit their bid he looked up on the computer screen and it said that the property was pending. We had just gotten our bid in. He told me, “You must have been praying harder”. It was clearly the providence of God and we saw that in so many ways on our journey to where we are.

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Psalm 16:6 (NKJV)

6 The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; Yes, I have a good inheritance.

The lines have fallen in pleasant places is a statement of providential care. This is our testimony concerning where God has placed us as a local church.

Providence applies to all our lives but in particular the story of Esther is about the people of Israel. God has forever attached His very Name – His covenant Name YHWH to Israel. The very reputation of God is attached to Israel's preservation. If Israel ceases to be a people and the nation of Israel is no more then the God of the Bible is shown not to be faithful to His covenant promises.

And as we have noted the survival of Israel is ultimately about God, His character, His reputation, His Word. Israel is singularly the ONE witness nation in the entire world. There is no other nation that God is in covenant relationship with except Israel.

The pre-state Jews had virtually no chance to survive. The surrounding Arab countries had publicly proclaimed that they would chase the Jews into the sea. No chance was given to the Jews to establish their own Jewish state. Jews, including many Holocaust survivors, were literally standing alone against organized Arab armies, such as Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Egypt. Even Saudi Arabia sent a special formation to endure the destruction of Israel. But things happened quite differently; Israel conquered more territory than the United Nations, in their temporary decision, had assigned to the Jews. – **Arno Froese**

The only explanation that is credible for this is God's providential care of His people. God preserved them. Israel is said to be the **ONLY** country in the world that is under constant threat of immediate destruction from her enemies. Yet, Israel continues. This is the providential preservation of God.

The book end by saying Mordecai sought the good of his people speaking peace to all his countrymen. Peace is the word "shalom" referring to well-being. This has been the desire of the Jewish people down through the times of the Gentiles. They had a little sample of it under the leadership of Mordecai, but true lasting peace for Israel and the world awaits the arrival of Jesus the Messiah – the true Prince of Peace (cf. Isa. 9:6-7).

In terms of application God blesses those who bless His people. That was certainly true of Mordecai but that is true for us as well in the Church Age.

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Hebrews 6:10 (NKJV)

10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

"There's not a square inch in the whole domain of human existence over which Christ, who is Lord over all, does not exclaim, 'Mine!'"

- William Kuyper

God is sovereign overall and He providentially controls all. When you are rightly related to God through Jesus Christ you can rest easy in His sovereign providential care knowing that He cares for you and that indeed all things work together for good for those who love Him (Rom. 8:28; 1 Pet. 5:7).

Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne,—
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own.

- **James Russell Lowell** - 1819-1891 (*The Present Crisis*)

As we leave the book of Esther may knowing the truth of God's providential care go with you wherever you go. It will be a great comfort in all your ways – come what may.

Nothing happens by LUCK or CHANCE. God providentially orders our steps in all our ways. And in the BIG picture everything is working together for good for those that love Him. And one day we will see this BIG picture. In the meantime we walk by faith.

Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own.