

SBC – Aug. 8, 2021
Esther 2:15-23 (NKJV)
“Esther Becomes Queen”

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

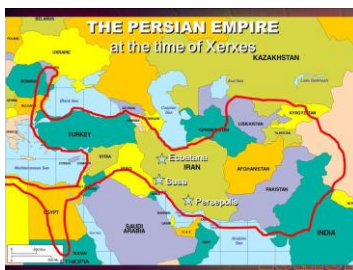
Chapter 9 The Feast of Purim Instituted

Chapter 10 Epilogue – Mordecai Exalted

This is a story of God’s providential care and preservation of His people in spite of themselves. After the time of the Babylonian Captivity the Jews were supposed to return back to their homeland in accord with the edict given by the Persian king Cyrus (cf. Ezra 1:2-4; 5:13; 6:2-5), but more importantly in keeping with God’s intention for them as spelled out in the book of Jeremiah (cf. Jer. 25:12; 27:22 29:10).

In that context the Jews who refused to go home found themselves in the context of the Persian empire under the reign of a pagan king by the name of Ahasuerus. He had a massive kingdom consisting of 127 provinces.

Slide # 2



King Ahasuerus had a beautiful queen wife by the name of Vashti. Upon throwing a BIG party in the capital city where the wine freely flowed between the king and his male friends, in that context the king ordered Vashti to come and present herself as a “beauty queen” to his male guests. She refused and was promptly deposed.

Then a successor was sought to replace Vashti. Young virgins from all over the empire were brought to the capital city to spend a night with the king and see if he delighted in them with the goal of selecting one of them to be the next queen.

Esther (a young beautiful Jewish woman) was one of those women. These women sought to beautify themselves for a full year and then each would spend a night with the king (Est. 2:14).

We pick the narrative up Esther 2:15...

Esther 2:15–23 (NKJV)

15 Now when the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his daughter, to go in to the king, she requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised. And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her.

In verse 13 we see that when it came their turn to spend a night with the king these women could take anything they wanted from the women's quarters to the king's palace (perhaps such things as ornaments, etc.).

But Esther opted to not take anything special in keeping with the Eunuch Hegai's counsel. The sense seems to be her natural beauty was enough and that she did not need anything to enhance it.

Esther carried herself in such an elegant and graceful way that she obtained favor in the eyes of everyone who saw her. She was a natural beauty and very impressive in her style.

16 So 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.

This was about 4 years after Vashti had been deposed which happened in the third year of his reign as seen in Esther 1:3. In between the king has been involved in making war with the Greeks in which he suffered heavy losses. But now he has come home from making war and so focuses his attention on finding a new beauty queen once again. This would have been in about 479 B.C.

17 The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

The king loved Esther more than all the others and so he set the royal queen crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. Thus queen Esther became Vashti's replacement.

There is a real emphasis on "favor" resting upon Esther throughout this chapter. In verse 9 it states she obtained the favor of the eunuch Hegai who had charge the women. Now here in verse 17 we see she obtained grace and favor from the king. There is a double emphasis here in verse 17 making it a very strong emphasis with the connotation of "super-abundant favor" - or extra special favor. Favor is the same word "hesed" translated as "favor" in verse 9.

This idea of "providential favor" is a theme the book builds on.

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The story gives no hint of moral judgment about the actions of Esther, a young Jewish virgin who gave herself to a pagan, uncircumcised Persian king. - **HCSB**

I compare Mordecai and Esther to some of the Judges living a time of great moral compromise. Such people like Sampson don't come off very godly in their practice at many points but at the end of the day they are found standing for the people of God as a demonstration of their faith.

18 Then the king made a great feast, the Feast of Esther, for all his officials and servants; and he proclaimed a holiday in the provinces and gave gifts according to the generosity of a king.

This king liked to throw feasts and they were always for his enjoyment and to make him look good – even if it was in someone else's honor -such as in this case Esther. Truly this king was all about himself. God truly is sovereign over all – including the most pagan of kings.

19 When virgins were gathered together a second time, Mordecai sat within the king's gate.

Commentators freely admit they don't know exactly what this means. Does it mean that even after finding the next queen they rounded up still more virgins for the king's harem. History records that while Ahasuerus had only one queen/wife he also had about 360 concubines. This was clearly a messy situation morally. Clearly the king was a polygamist and not a one-woman man.

But it is pointed out that in the OT even people like David and Solomon had many wives. It was never God's will or ideal but it was somewhat tolerated in that OT context. The standard after the Holy Spirit has come in the NT is actually higher – although the ideal is always the same. In Matt. 19 Jesus goes back to God's created order in Genesis. God's standard ultimately remains the same – even when sometimes the ideal is tolerated.

Others suggest in keeping with the party emphasis of verse 18 that the other virgins who didn't make it as queen still celebrated with queen Esther whom they would have gotten to know in the process.

In addition, there is this note that now Mordecai sat within the king's gate which denoted his position as a court official. Some think that Esther's influence may have now been behind him being in this position. Perhaps when she was moved up to the position of queen – she then helped move Mordecai into "the king's gate". However, we are not told the background.

The king's gate was an official position where business and legal matters were handled. Mordecai may have served as sort of a judge or in some legal capacity. Again, we don't know the details – only that he was now in this honored and trusted position of being in the king's gate. In Dan. 2:49 it says "Daniel sat in the gate of the king" which was a very high and honored position – an administrative position.

20 Now Esther had not revealed her family and her people, just as Mordecai had charged her, for Esther obeyed the command of Mordecai as when she was brought up by him.

Mordecai had trained Esther right. She had learned from an early age to obey the parental like authority figure over her which happened to be her older cousin Mordecai.

Slide # 4

Proverbs 3:12 (NKJV)

12 For whom the LORD loves He **corrects**, Just as a father the son in whom he delights.

Proverbs 19:18 (NKJV)

18 **Chasten your son while there is hope**, And do not set your heart on his destruction.

Proverbs 22:6 (NKJV)

6 Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.

There is a wisdom principle here. Youth is a time of shaping and molding. Children need discipline and if parents are irresponsible in this matter, it can affect the child negatively for the rest of their life. The devil and the world are all against biblical discipline – and look at the result. It is a disaster! As proverbs in effects says the way to destroy a child is to not properly discipline them.

Of course, when children come of age it is characteristic for them to have a mind of their own where they often go through various levels of wanting to do their own thing. David spoke of this as “***the sins of my youth***”.

Slide # 5

Psalm 25:7–9 (NKJV)

7 Do not remember **the sins of my youth**, nor my transgressions; According to Your mercy remember me, For Your goodness’ sake, O LORD.

8 Good and upright is the LORD; Therefore He teaches sinners in the way.

9 The **humble** He guides in justice, And the **humble** He teaches His way.

Youthful sinning often thinks it knows better and does not appreciate the seasoned wisdom of the parents and the older generation. It seems as if every generation has to go through this – they have to be humbled – even as David was. And life has a way of doing this. And in the process, we pray for them as well as for ourselves. These are not easy times.

Balance is always key. Children need discipline and they need love. They need loving discipline and also large doses of encouragement. They need relationship – healthy relationship where they honor parents and learn to obey.

This little detail about Esther hiding her heritage is important to the plot of the story. At just the right time Esther, after she has totally earned the king's trust, she will then make known her heritage which will be key to them being spared. But for now, she laid low and didn't say anything in obedience to Mordecai's charge.

21 In those days, while Mordecai sat within the king's gate, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, doorkeepers, became furious and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.

Again, this detail about Mordecai sitting with the king's gate is brought out (cf. Dan. 2:49). The sense is Mordecai became aware of this information by virtue of being in this position.

We don't know what Bigthan (the Big guy) and Teresh were so upset about but they were furious and were plotting how they might assassinate king Ahasuerus. They served as the king's personal attendants who evidently were in charge of guarding the king's private quarters.

As such they were in a great position to take out the king – or so they may have thought.

Footnote: This was a very serious matter as it was an area that the king would be vulnerable to if those this close to him were not loyal and wanted to overthrow him. In fact, Ahasuerus about 15 years later was assassinated in his bedroom by one of his guards.

Right here is one of those KEY providential hinges in the book. Someone has well said, "**God swings big doors on little hinges.**" We see lots of these little hinges throughout the book on which the God's providential activity sways the course of history.

22 So the matter became known to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name.

Somehow in his position Mordecai either overheard or was told about the plot and he promptly went and told Queen Esther who in turn informed the king – only she did so in Mordecai's name – meaning she gave him all the credit for this inside information.

Here is the idea of providence. Mordecai was in just the right place at just the right time and this incident of informing the king becomes a major hinge at a climactic time in the story.

None of this is happening just by coincidence. Sometimes people talk about providence as being “divine coincidence” in quotes with reason for the quotes being that with God there is no coincidence there is only design, and purpose.

One of the great arguments for the reality of God is the undeniable evidence of intelligent design. It is everywhere.

It is in nature. Look BIG out into the universe and you see design. If we were a little further from the sun we would freeze to death – a little closer and we would all burn. Look SMALL – to the simple little human cell and you will find complex design on a scale that blows your mind.

Evolutionists thought origins came by random chance. But the more they have delved into the wonders of God’s creation, the more their discoveries have backed them into a corner or reluctant admission. In the complex systems of the universe, whether macroeconomy or microbiology, everything fits. Design is everywhere. – **Dan Hayden**
And this reality certainly is true when it comes to the Bible.

Slide # 6

Our Bible consists of sixty-six component parts. These are divided into two distinctive major collections, the Old Covenant Scriptures and the New Covenant Scriptures; or as we commonly name them, the Old Testament and the New Testament. ...[A] careful investigation reveals the presence of a marvelous Divine design running through the whole. – **J. Sidlow Baxter**

23 And when an inquiry was made into the matter, it was confirmed, and both were hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.

When an investigation was made into the matter these two eunuchs were found guilty of plotting to assassinate the king. They were promptly hanged on a gallows.

Commentators think this was actually the idea of impaling them on a stake which historically was a common way the Persians carried out capital punishment. The father of Ahasuerus was Darius and he is recorded to have impaled 3000 Babylonians in his take over of Babylon.

This matter was then recorded in the official records called here “the book of the chronicles” which was kept in the presence of the king.

This was a major thing. Mordecai had saved the king's life. It was even written down in the official records and yet the king never even recognized it. He overlooked it which was very uncharacteristic of him.

The ancient Greek historian Herodotus who wrote much about the Greco-Persian wars said, “whenever he [Ahasuerus] saw any of his own captains perform any worthy exploit he inquired concerning him; and the man's name was taken down by scribes, together with the names of his father and his city”.

So how did Ahasuerus manage to overlook such a significant thing such as Mordecai preventing his assassination?

This too was providence, because later in the story at a most critical point the king could not sleep and got up and started reading from these chronicles. Was this just a “coincidence”? I think NOT!

Slide # 7

Esther 6:1–3 (NKJV)

1 That night the king could not sleep. So one was commanded to bring the book of the records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king.

2 And it was **found written that Mordecai** had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, the doorkeepers who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.

3 Then the king said, “What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?” And the king's servants who attended him said, “Nothing has been done for him.”

The whole story turns on this detail. Mordecai just happened to be in the right place at the right time, the king just happened to overlook it; the king just happened to not be able to sleep; he just happened at this exact time to read from the chronicles (which I am sure would put anyone to sleep); he just happened to read that night at this most pivotal time at just the right place in the chronicles about Mordecai which changed the entire trajectory of history. This is all about God's providential working.

God in providence moved Esther to the throne and in providence moved Mordecai to the king's gate.

But this is all part of a much BIGGER picture than them. If God had not providentially moved in a whole host of ways, the Jews were going to be destroyed and if that happened God's covenant promises would not be fulfilled. That could NOT happen. Thus, the hidden hand of God providentially moved to preserve His chosen people, Israel.

This story is ultimately about God and His sovereign faithfulness and His providential ways. God is faithful even when His people are not. He works through all kinds of situations – even very messy situations to the end that His people are preserved and His Word is fulfilled – all to the glory of Himself.

Although in an unscriptural position, God, who knows the heart of His servant, who sees in Mordecai and Esther true lovers of Israel, will use them signally for His own ends of good to His people, whom He truly loved. If they cover their nationality, and shame Him so that He hides His name too, He will make them nevertheless the instruments of His providence. – *H.A. Ironside*

And indeed He did!

It's always good to remember God's providential ways. Sometimes we might feel overlooked. People forget – they overlook things -sometimes really important things, but God does not forget. He has a sovereign BIG PICTURE purpose in all that He allows. He is ever at work in quiet hidden providential ways that we don't even realize.

Slide # 8

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.

In due time the good deed done by Mordecai in preserving the king's life came around in a big way in accordance with the sovereign and providential purposes of God! And so, it will be for us as well. In the BIG scheme of things "***all things work together for good to those who love God, who are the called according to His purpose.***" (Rom. 8:28). It's ultimately all about His purpose for His glory!

All things work together according to His purpose and this is ultimately to the good of those who truly know and love God.

Knowing this reality gives us great confidence and stability no matter what we are going through. God is in charge. He has a purpose. He is always providentially at work. Only trust Him!