

Title: **ESTHER**
Subject: *The Wonder of Divine Providence*
Text: Esther 4:10-16
Date: Tuesday Evening— 2003
Tape # X-56b
Readings: *Bob Duff and Larry Criss*
Introduction:

Over the years I have often told you that there are three great facts that constantly sustain my soul, give me peace and joy, and inspire me with confidence. When I am faced with trials, troubles, heartaches, -- when my soul is downcast and circumstances begin to fill me with gloom, -- when I find myself sinking beneath any load of care, these three grand, old gospel truths refresh, invigorate, and comfort me.

- The Substitutionary Work of Christ
- The Sovereignty of God
- The Providence of God

As the books of Ezra and Nehemiah display the salvation of our souls in the re-building of the temple and its walls at Jerusalem, the Book of Esther shows us a picture of the secret workings of divine providence to accomplish his purpose of grace for his elect.

Proposition: The Book of Esther is intended to assure us that our God sovereignly manipulates all things for the salvation of his people, to assure us that no matter how things appear all is well because our God is still on his throne.

(Psalms 115:3) "But our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."

(Psalms 135:6) "Whatsoever the LORD pleased, *that* did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places."

Let's begin in Esther 4:10-16.

(Esther 4:10-16) "Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai; {11} All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, *there is* one law of his to put *him* to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days. {12} And they told to Mordecai Esther's words. {13} Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. {14} For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, *then* shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this? {15} Then Esther bade *them* return Mordecai *this answer*, {16} Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which *is* not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish."

The Book of Esther is a beautifully simple historic narrative of the events that took place in the king's palace at Shushan in Persia, during the days of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther, when Ahasuerus was king.

Many have suggested that this could not be an inspired Book because there is no mention of God's name in it. Going on that premise, we would have to say the same thing about the Song of Solomon, because there is no mention of God's name in

that Book either. It is true, God's name is not to be found in this Book; but God's finger is everywhere, ruling and over-ruling all things for his chosen.

Still, according to scholars, though God's name is not spelled out in the Book of Esther, it is hidden in the Book. These Hebrew scholars tell us that his name is hidden away in the Hebrew text in the form of acrostics five times. Be that as it may, it is certainly hidden in our English Bible. There is a reason why God's name was hidden in this Book. The Lord told Israel that if they forsook him he would hide his face from them (Deut. 31:16-18).

(Deuteronomy 31:16-18) "And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go *to be* among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. {17} Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God *is* not among us? {18} And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods."

The Lord hid his face from his people because they had deliberately chosen to stay in the land of their captivity, dwelling among the heathen, instead of returning to Jerusalem (instead of returning to him) with Zerubbabel. The events of this Book took place during the 60 years between the first remnant returned under Zerubbabel and the second, smaller remnant return under Ezra.

THE STORY

There are four principle characters in this Book:

- Ahasuerus—“Venerable Father”
- Mordecai—“Little Man”
- Esther—“Star”
- Haman—“Magnificent”

This is how the story goes.

- Ahasuerus had a big party to show off his greatness, “*according to the state of the king*”. It lasted for many days.
- One day, when he had had a little too much to drink, he called for his wife, Vashti (“Beautiful”), to come show herself to his guests, “*for she was fair to look on*”.
- Vashti refused the king’s request. She may have been the first feminist in history; but this was not a good idea. The king’s request was no mere request!
- All the king’s men were enraged. If the king’s wife could get by with such arrogant defiance, all their wives would try to imitate her.
- King Ahasuerus divorced Vashti.
- After a while, he began to miss female companionship.
- In chapter two, they held a great beauty pageant—A Miss Persia contest.
- Esther won the prize, hands down.
- Ahasuerus could not have been happier. The old king was about to marry the most beautiful woman in the land.

(Esther 2:17-18) "And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti. {18} Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, *even* Esther's

feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king."

- Then, in chapter 3, the king promoted a man named Haman to be prime minister of his great empire.

Everybody bowed and scraped before Haman, everybody except one man—Mordecai.

(Esther 3:5) "And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath."

There was some backbone in that old Jew. He was made of stern stuff. He was not about to prostrate himself before one so haughty and so depraved as Haman, even if he was the king's favorite.

- Haman hatched a plan to destroy all the Jews, Mordecai included, and conivingly got Ahasuerus to go along with it. A letter was written and sealed with the king's ring and sent throughout the land, declaring that at a set time all the Jews, men, women, and children, should be slaughtered and their spoils taken.
- When Haman exalted even more greatly, he built a huge, high gallows upon which to hang Mordecai.

Everything was set. The hated Jews were about to be eliminated. That meant that God's promise could not be fulfilled. His purposes would be foiled. Christ could not come into the world from the seed of Abraham, as he had said. None of his chosen could be redeemed. You and I would be forever lost.—Not a chance!

DIVINE PROVIDENCE

All that had transpired, though it appeared to everyone to be against the God of Israel and his purpose of grace to his people was but the secret working of divine providence to accomplish his purpose.

(Psalms 76:10) "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."

Behold the wondrous mystery of God's providence (Rom. 8:28-30) and rejoice.

Divine providence is the direction God gives to every thing, animate and inanimate, good and evil. **It is the sovereign rule of God in the determination of history. It is the hand of God in the glove of history.** Our God is at the steering wheel of this universe. Providence means that God is behind the scenes, shifting, directing, controlling and manipulating everything for the salvation of his elect and the glory of his name (Rom. 11:33-36). **Providence is the way God coaches the man on second base. It is the way God secretly and sovereignly forces all things to do his will.** As recorded in the book of Esther, the entire Jewish nation would have been slain had it not been for the providence of God. **God stands in the shadows, keeping watch over his own.** Let me show you something of the wonder of God's providence in this Book. We will not read the Book now. Time will not permit. I hope you will read it again before you go to bed tonight. I will just point you to the highlights.

1. **God always puts the right person in the right place at the right time to accomplish his purpose.** He has his servants exactly where he wants them.

(Esther 4:14) "For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, *then* shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the

Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and **who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?**"

2. **God restrains evil and governs his enemies to perform his good pleasure.**
3. **He arranges the smallest, most minute things to accomplish his great purpose** (Matt. 10:30).

- When Esther decided to go into the king's court, uninvited, he just happened to pass by (5:1).
- One night, the king just could not sleep, so he had his servant to bring out the chronicles of the kingdom and read them. These chronicles contained the records of 127 provinces. The servant just happened to read the chronicle of Shushan.

(Esther 6:1-3) "On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of 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 chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. {3} And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him."

- About that time Haman walked in, and the king asked him, "*What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor?*" And Haman gave the counsel that would destroy him, exalt Mordecai, and save the Jews!

4. Now, watch this—**When God is about to do a great work for us and with us, he moves his people to seek him.**

(Esther 4:16) "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which *is* not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish."

5. **Our God always accomplishes his purpose.**

- What wonders are unseen!
- How safe we are!
- We have a Guardian in the Kin's Palace!

PICTURES OF GRACE

I am fully aware that typology can be strained, and often is, making passages Scriptures say what they do not say. Yet, we are assured that everything written in the Book of God speaks distinctly of our Lord Jesus Christ and the things he has accomplished for us as our Substitute (Luke 24:27, 44-45). Christ crucified is "*all the counsel of God*" (1 Cor. 2:2; Acts 20:27).

1. **Esther's Intercession for Israel.**

Here is one willing to lay down her life for her people, interceding before the king as one pure and lovely and delightful in his sight.

2. **The Golden Scepter**

(Esther 5:2) "And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, *that* she obtained favour in his sight: and

the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that *was* in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre."

WHAT a beautiful type this is for each of us in our approaches to God!

For the repentant sinner. You may have said with Esther, "I will go into the king's presence, and if I perish, I perish." But it is impossible for you to perish. None ever perished at the footstool of mercy. God is faithful to his promises, and just to his Son; and He can do no other He wants to do no other than forgive. As you stand amid the throng that surrounds his throne, He will espy you, and accept you graciously, because of the God Man who sits at his right hand, and ever lives to intercede. In his name you may come boldly and obtain mercy.

For the suppliant. You have a great boon to ask for yourself, or another. The King's court stands open; enter and lodge your petition. He will be very gracious at the voice of your cry: the golden scepter extended, his word passed, that He will answer with the whole resources of his kingdom. The answer may not come at once, or in the way you expected; but no true suppliant was ever turned away without his complaint or cause being graciously considered, and in the best way met and adjusted.

For the Christian worker. Surely Esther represents a Paul prepared to be himself accursed, a Luther, a Brainerd. It is a lovely sight when the child of God is so oppressed with the burden of other souls as to sacrifice all else in order to plead their cause. Surely such find favor with God; they are kindred spirits with his own, and He bids them share his throne. God will do anything for those who are consumed by his own redemptive purpose.

3. **The Decree Sealed with the King's Ring**

(Esther 8:8) "Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal *it* with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse."

4. The Jews Ruling Their Enemies (Rom. 16:20)

(Esther 9:1) "Now in the twelfth month, that *is*, the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them;)"

5. Mordecai Seeking the Good of His People

(Esther 10:3) "For Mordecai the Jew *was* next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed."