

Title: Just in Time

Text: Esther, chapter 2

Main Point: God uses ordinary people for extraordinary things.

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Series: The Book of Esther

## INTRODUCTION

Historically, the events of Esther take place during the reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes). (Ahasuerus represents the linguistic pathway following the Aramaic rendering; the Greek language identified him as Xerxes. Although the different languages used different names, both names speak of the same ruler.) History records Xerxes' character as vain, foolish, fickle, and hot-tempered. Nevertheless, Xerxes ruled an immense area, "from India to Ethiopia" (Est 1:1), celebrated for his massive building projects at Susa and Persepolis. His rule ended in 465 B.C. by assassination.

The book of Esther is part of the biblical books (Ezra and Nehemiah), describing the Jews' return from exile in 538 B.C. Esther, although in the same historical context, generally describes those Jews who remained in Persia rather than returning to Israel. In 586 B.C., the Babylonian leader Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem and took its captives to Babylon. Later, Babylon fell to Persia in 539 B.C. The Persian leader Cyrus the Great permitted Jews who were interested to return to their homeland in 538 B.C. However, some (Esther and Mordecai) remained in Persia.

The book of Esther is the source for the Jewish festival of Purim ("Purim" comes from the Hebrew word גּוּרָל *gôrāl*, meaning a small stone used in the casting of lots (Esther 3:7; 9:26). After the Bible was complete, later Jewish leaders established the victory feast of Purim, a festival celebrating God's reversal of potential Jewish annihilation.

"What makes Esther theologically distinctive is its remarkable restraint. The book contains no reference to God's name, the Temple, prayer, or Jewish religious practices like dietary laws—making it the most 'secular' biblical book." (JPS Guide: The Jewish Bible (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2008), 210.) "Yet despite this silence, God's presence operates throughout the narrative, working through ordinary people to accomplish deliverance." (KJV One Big Story Bible (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2020).

"Esther stands as the only biblical book outside the Torah [Exodus- Deuteronomy] that establishes a new festival, which grants it religious significance and opens the way for later holidays that could be instituted without explicit divine command if they commemorate important events in Jewish life. The book remains primarily responsible for Purim's continued celebration across Jewish communities." (JPS Guide, 210)

"The book of Esther never mentions God's name, yet God clearly orchestrated all of its events. Esther, a Jew living among the exiles in Persia, became queen of the empire in about 480 B.C. Haman, a Persian official, sought to eradicate the Jewish minority, but God had prepared Esther for 'such a time as this' (4:14) to save his covenant people. The book was written some decades later to document the origins of the Jewish observance of Purim, which celebrates Israel's survival and God's faithfulness. The author is unknown, but some believe it could have been Esther's cousin Mordecai, who is a key person in the book. Throughout the book, we see God's sovereign hand preserving his people, showing that everything is under his control." (The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2025), Es.)

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## ESTHER, CHAPTER 2

### The Fingerprints of God in Esther

1. Christians find encouragement in Esther regarding God's sovereignty.
  - 1.1. God promised Abraham He would make him into "a nation" (Genesis 17:6). The Jews became this nation to bring Christ Jesus to the world.
  - 1.2. Deuteronomy 31:6 speaks of God's promise to "not leave or forsake" His people.
  - 1.3. The book of Esther explains how God works behind the scenes to protect His people from destruction (Esther 3:9), keeping His promise made to Abraham.
  - 1.4. The book of Esther fits a biblical pattern of God granting favor to accomplish His purpose: Noah (Genesis 6:8); Lot (Genesis 19:19); Joseph (Genesis 39:4); the Jewish people (Exodus 11:3); Moses (Exodus 33:12).
    - 1.4.1. Chapter 2 specifically highlights God's sovereignty toward Esther by granting her favor (2:9; 2:15; 2:17).
  - 1.5. Mordecai was also at the right place at the right time (Esther 2:19-22) for God to later use him in protecting His people (Esther chapter 8). Again, highlighting God's sovereignty.

### The Objectification of Women

1. The Bible does not avoid the sinfulness of life. Since Genesis 3, sin mars God's "very good" (Genesis 1:31) creation. The centerpiece of God's "very good" creation is men and women who bear His image (Genesis 1:27). However, sin, "seizing an opportunity" (Romans 7:8), seeks to place men and women in opposition to each other. Regarding the objectification of women (something derived from today's chapter), the chapter views Esther because of her sexual value rather than her worth as a woman. Unfortunately, what was true in Esther's time remains true today. Rather than being valued as equal partners in God's work on earth, women are too often reduced to sexual objects rather than being respected for their contributions to God.
  - 1.1. Although pornography assaults both men and women, it often results in the objectification of women.
  - 1.2. Inaccurate biblical teaching can confuse the equal value of men and women.
  - 1.3. Although there are different roles in marriage, it should be a place where a woman's value is honored.
  - 1.4. Parents should train children early about God's creation order, emphasizing the equal value of women and men.

### God Uses Ordinary People to Accomplish His Work

1. Abraham was a herdsman with no position, power, or land when God chose Him.
2. Gideon was a farmer, fearful and doubting, but God used Him for His work.

3. Ruth, a widow who was poor, vulnerable, and marginalized, yet God selected her to advance His mission.
4. King David began as a shepherd boy when God tapped him to become a king to lead His people.
5. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was an unmarried village girl.
6. The 12 disciples were fishermen, a tax collector, and ordinary workers who changed the world.
7. From the entire Persian Empire, God chose a young girl and her uncle to save His people.
8. David Wilkerson was a simple pastor who God tapped for a special assignment. He read a magazine article about seven teenage gang members on trial for murder in New York City. He could not escape God's "burden" to help gang members in New York. So, with no street-ministry training, no connections, no financial support, and no guarantee of safety, he followed God to New York. His ministry impacted millions.
9. Through David Wilkerson's ministry, Nicky Cruz surrendered to Jesus. At the time, Cruz was known as someone who would not hesitate to kill. Even the police were wary of him. Following his conversion, Cruz became an international evangelist preaching to millions.
10. God uses ordinary people who, when surrendered to Him, accomplish extraordinary things!

***1 Corinthians 1:27-28, "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world."***

### You were born for God's Purpose

1. Every follower of Jesus has a purpose in God's plan. Ephesians 2:10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Everyone should be busy doing godly things. However, there are times when unique assignments are needed.
2. Faithful Christians prepare themselves to be used by God in a specific assignment.
  - 2.1. Preparedness is being faithful to your current assignment. "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much." (Luke 16:10)
  - 2.2. Preparedness is maturing in biblical knowledge and practice so that you can handle the assignment.
  - 2.3. Preparedness deals constantly with sin through confession and repentance.