

***1 Esther 1-4 “The Providence of God and His Chosen People”**

Esther is an account of imperfect people just like us, being caught up in terrible circumstances, who come to see, **but not right away**, that God is working on their behalf in the situation to bring it to a good end!

***2** They have to learn the truth, through experience, that: “And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.” Romans 8:28 (NLT)

If you are like me, you do not see God’s protective hand and attention to detail as soon as you should when life throws something at you. Normally, whining and complaining come before worship and praise to God for His infinite wisdom and perfect plan. But often, the circumstances of life are given to us so that we can learn how wise and powerful God truly is.

It’s easy to believe in God’s sovereignty when everything is going well, but we also need to understand like Joseph, that God is in the details even when things aren’t going so well! (Slavery, prison - ***2a Genesis 50:20 (ESV)** ²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.)

Esther reinforces that nothing happens except by God’s will and His plan. “**God directs everything, without violating the nature of things!**” Alistar Begg “**Providence is God’s attention concentrated everywhere**” Strong

That is the “story” of the Book of Esther! As Alistair Begg says: “***It is what is going on; in what is going on!***”

***3 Quick Facts:**

- The events described in this book took place between 483 and 473 B.C. when the Persians were in control. **The Book of Esther fits between chapters 6 and 7 of the Book of Ezra.**
- The Book of Esther explains the Jewish feast/holiday of Purim which otherwise would not be in the Bible.
- What is readily evident in Esther is the plan and purpose of God at work to save the descendants of Abraham and the seed of the Messiah.
- The Name of YaHWeH is not mentioned in the Book of Esther, BUT one of the main themes of Esther is the providence of God!

****References:**

“Be Committed” Warren Wiersbe (Life of Ruth & Esther)

David Guzik Commentary: <https://enduringword.com/>,

Alistair Begg Esther Messages: <https://www.truthforlife.org/resources/series/unseen-god-volume-1-esther/>, <https://www.truthforlife.org/resources/series/unseen-god-volume-2-esther/>

***4 **Read Chapter 1**

***5 Esther 1** ¹ These events happened in the days of **King Xerxes** (YaHWeH isn't mentioned but Xerxes is 190 times), who reigned over 127 provinces stretching from India to Ethiopia. ² At that time Xerxes ruled his empire from his royal throne at ***5a** the fortress of Susa.

***6** Ahasuerus (prince, head, chief) is the Hebrew name of the Persian king, Khshayarsha, whom we know better in ancient history by his Greek name, Xerxes. He reigned over the Persian Empire from 486 to 464 B.C. and was the son of Darius I (521-486 B.C.). Eventually, His vizier (and uncle), Artabanus, assassinated him.

***7 *7a Xerxes is famous in secular history for two things: his defeat at the hands of the Greeks, and his building of the royal Persian palace at Persepolis. *8 *8a** A generation after the events the writer described in the Book of Esther, Nehemiah served as cupbearer to Artaxerxes, Xerxes' son. Tom Constable

Like most monarchs of that day, Ahasuerus was a proud man; and we see three evidences of his pride; **his boastfulness, his drunkenness, his weakness in leadership!** This inscription was found in his summer palace: ***"I am Xerxes, the great king, king of kings, king of countries containing many kinds of men, king in this great earth far and wide, son of king Darius..."*** Alistair Begg

Esther 1 ³ In the third year of his reign, he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials. He invited all the military officers of Persia and Media as well as the princes and nobles of the provinces. ⁴ The celebration lasted 180 days (6 months!)—a tremendous display of the opulent wealth of his empire and the pomp and splendor of his majesty. ⁵ **When it was all over, the king gave a banquet for all the people, from the greatest to the least, who were in the fortress of Susa.** It lasted for seven days and was held in the courtyard of the palace garden.

What was the purpose behind the banquet for the nobles and officials of the empire? Scripture doesn't tell us, but secular history does. **The Greek historian Herodotus (485–425 B.C.) may refer to these banquets in his *History*, where he states that Ahasuerus was conferring with his leaders about a possible invasion of Greece. Ahasuerus' father, Darius I, had invaded Greece and been shamefully defeated at Marathon in 490. While preparing to return to Greece and get revenge, Darius had died (486 B.C.); and now his son felt compelled to avenge his father and expand his empire at the same time.**

Herodotus claims that Ahasuerus planned to invade all of Europe and “reduce the whole earth into one empire.” Warren Wiersbe ¹

Esther 1 ⁶ The courtyard was beautifully decorated with white cotton curtains and blue hangings, which were fastened with white linen cords and purple ribbons to silver rings embedded in marble pillars. Gold and silver couches stood on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and other costly stones. ⁷ Drinks were served in gold goblets of many designs, and there was an abundance of royal wine, reflecting the king’s generosity. ⁸ By edict of the king, no limits were placed on the drinking, for the king had instructed all his palace officials to serve each man as much as he wanted.

***9 Esther 1** ⁹ At the same time, Queen Vashti gave a banquet for the women in the royal palace of King Xerxes. ¹⁰ On the seventh day of the feast, **when King Xerxes was in high spirits because of the wine** (“*When the wine had gone to his head!*”),

The clear implication is that Ahasuerus was drunk. There is no direct or absolute prohibition of the use of wine in the Bible. But there is direct condemnation of drunkenness.

***9a** A Japanese proverb warns, “**First the man takes a drink, then the drink takes a drink, and then the drink takes the man.**” Warren Wiersbe

But be aware of the dangers of excess: it clouds your judgment and perverts your thinking, gives you false courage, makes you feel quarrelsome, affects your equilibrium and eyesight, makes your stomach upset, numbs your senses, making you vulnerable to the devil taking advantage of you and causing you to neglect your responsibilities, and spend your money on drink, leaving you poor. If you fall into excess, it is sin. **There are only 14 positive mentions of wine or drink in the Bible, but 53 negative references.**

It was a violation of Persian law for other men to “ogle” another man’s wife! There is obviously a correlation between the effects of alcohol and his foolish decisions!

***10 Esther 1** “...he told the seven eunuchs who attended him—Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas—¹¹ **to bring Queen Vashti to him with the royal crown on her head.** He wanted the nobles and all the other men to gaze on her beauty, for she was a very beautiful woman. ¹² But when they conveyed the king’s order to Queen Vashti, she refused to come. **This made the king furious, and he burned with anger.**

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, [*Be Committed*](#), “Be” Commentary Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), 68–69.

To bring Queen Vashti before the king, wearing her royal crown: According to Jewish tradition, this request came from an argument among the men at the feast as to which country had the most beautiful women. Ahasuerus decided to settle the issue by putting his wife the queen on public display. ***10a It is not specifically said, but the implication is that Vashti was expected to display herself in an immodest way. Traditional Jewish interpretation understands this to mean that Vashti was to appear wearing *nothing* but the crown. James Smith**

Esther 1 ¹³ He immediately consulted with his wise advisers, who knew all the Persian laws and customs, for he always asked their advice. ¹⁴ The names of these men were Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan—seven nobles of Persia and Media. They met with the king regularly and held the highest positions in the empire. ¹⁵ **“What must be done to Queen Vashti?”** the king demanded. “What penalty does the law provide for a queen who refuses to obey the king’s orders, properly sent through his eunuchs?”

***11** **“A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult” (Prov. 12:16, NIV).**

***11a** Yet, history’s profile of Ahasuerus shows him to be an unreasonable and foolish man in many cases. **On one occasion, Ahasuerus executed the builders of a bridge because an ocean storm destroyed it; then he commanded that the water and waves be whipped and chained to punish the sea.** David Guzik

***12 Esther 1** ¹⁶ Memucan answered the king and his nobles, “Queen Vashti has wronged not only the king but also every noble and citizen throughout your empire. ¹⁷ Women everywhere will begin to despise their husbands when they learn that Queen Vashti has refused to appear before the king. ¹⁸ Before this day is out, **the wives of all the king’s nobles** throughout Persia and Media will hear what the queen did and will start treating their husbands the same way. There will be no end to their contempt and anger.

This is a total fabrication of ridiculous exaggerated consequences – sounds like CNN! As we would say this is “making a mountain out of a molehill.” ****Do you think he would have done this if he hadn’t been drunk? You can alter your life forever making stupid decisions under the influence!**

***12a** His advisers apparently had been clouded by drinking. Obviously this law would not cause the women of the country to respect their husbands. **Respect between men and women comes from mutual regard and appreciation for each other as those created in God’s image, not from legal pronouncements and orders.** Forced obedience is a poor substitute for the love and respect wives and husbands should have for each other. **Life Application Bible**

Esther 1 ¹⁹ “So if it please the king, we suggest that you issue a written decree, a law of the Persians and Medes that cannot be revoked. **It should order that Queen Vashti be forever banished from the presence of King Xerxes, and that the king should choose another queen more worthy than she.** ²⁰

When this decree is published throughout the king’s vast empire, husbands everywhere, whatever their rank, will receive proper respect from their wives!”

So let me get this straight? You need a law to get proper respect from your wife?

***13 Ephesians 5:25–30 (ESV)** ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her...²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of His body... let each one of you love his wife as himself.

***13a 1 Peter 3:7 (NLT)** ⁷ In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together...

Do you suppose if you obey the Lord and treat your wife like this that you will need a law to earn her respect? Do you think Xerxes was treating Vashti with respect? **When King Ahasuerus heeded this advice from Memucan, he showed himself to be unreasonable and wrong. He should have honored the dignity of his Queen. David Guzik**

Esther 1 ²¹ **The king and his nobles thought this made good sense, so he followed Memucan’s counsel.** ²² He sent letters to all parts of the empire, to each province in its own script and language, proclaiming that every man should be the ruler of his own home and should say whatever he pleases.

Proverbs 20:1 (NIV84) Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.

***14** The Bible doesn’t tell us what happened to Vashti. Many biblical scholars believe she was **Amestris, the mother of Artaxerxes who ruled from 464 to 425 B.C.** Artaxerxes was born in 483, the year of the great banquet described in Esther 1. It’s possible that Vashti was pregnant with her son at that time and therefore unwilling to appear before the men. It was her son Artaxerxes who ruled during the times of Ezra (7:1, 7, 11–12, 21; 8:1) and Nehemiah (2:1; 5:14; 13:6). **Amestris exercised great influence as the queen mother during her son’s reign.** Warren Wiersbe

***15** ***It was at this time that the battle for Greece which was a disaster for Xerxes and Persia. In 481 B.C. he took about 200,000 soldiers and hundreds of ships to Greece to avenge his father Darius’ defeat at the battle of Marathon (490 B.C.). However, he suffered defeat in a three-fold manner. His soldiers lost the battle of Thermopylae to the Spartans, his army also lost at the battle of Plataea, and the Greeks destroyed his navy in the battle of Salamis. Tom Constable

***16** According to Herodotus, the king's words were these: **"My intent is to throw a bridge over the Hellespont and march an army through Europe against Greece, that thereby I may obtain vengeance from the Athenians for the wrongs committed by them against the Persians and against my father."** The king's uncle, Artabanus, strongly opposed the plan, but the king persisted and succeeded in convincing the princes and officers to follow him.

So the defeated king came home humbled and sullen – 4 years later.

***17 Read Esther 2:1-20**

***18 Esther 2** ¹ But after Xerxes' anger had subsided, he began thinking about Vashti and what she had done and the decree he had made.

The king lost his head and the queen lost her crown! God didn't force him to get drunk or make a silly law – but God is going to use his actions and decisions to help save His people. **Notice he came home and wanted a queen – he was lonely. This emptiness was for more than fulfilling fleshly desires – because he still had a massive harem. This was a wounded warrior in need of what a more equal woman – someone to talk to, Vashti could have provided, but she was gone from him! (by his own stupidity & arrogance)

***18a** As you study the **Book of Esther**, you will discover that **this mighty monarch could control everything but himself**. His advisers easily influenced him; he made impetuous decisions that he later regretted; and when he didn't get his own way, he became angry. Susceptible to flattery, he was master of a mighty empire but not master of himself. Ahasuerus built a great citadel at Shushan ("**Susa**" in most translations), but he couldn't build his own character. **"Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls"** (25:28, NKJV). The king could control neither his temper nor his thirst. Warren Wiersbe

Esther 2 ² So his personal attendants suggested, "Let us search the empire to find beautiful young virgins for the king." ³ Let the king appoint agents (These young women were conscripted against their will and made a part of the royal harem) in each province to bring these beautiful young women into the royal harem at the fortress of Susa. Hegai, the king's eunuch in charge of the harem, will see that they are all given beauty treatments. ⁴ After that, the young woman who most pleases the king will be made queen instead of Vashti." This advice was very appealing to the king, so he put the plan into effect.

This was sort of a "Miss Persian Empire" contest, and the winner would be queen instead of Vashti. The ancient Jewish historian Josephus says that Ahasuerus had a total of 400 women selected.

***19 Esther 2** ⁵ At that time there was a Jewish man in the fortress of Susa whose name was **Mordecai son of Jair. He was from the tribe of Benjamin**

and was a descendant of Kish and Shimei. ⁶ His family had been among those who, with King Jehoiachin of Judah, had been exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar.

Esther 2 ⁷ This man had a very beautiful and lovely (“beautiful in form and lovely to look at.”) young cousin, **Hadassah, who was also called Esther** (Hadassah means “Myrtle”; the Persian name *Esther* means “star”). When her father and mother died, Mordecai adopted her into his family and raised her as his own daughter.

One of the key elements in this story is the fact that the people in Shushan didn’t know that Mordecai and Esther were Jews.

Esther 2 ⁸ As a result of the king’s decree, Esther, along with many other young women, was brought to the king’s harem at the fortress of Susa and placed in Hegai’s care. ⁹ Hegai (Hegai is specifically mentioned by the Greek historian Herodotus as being an officer of king Ahasuerus.) was very impressed with Esther and treated her kindly. He quickly ordered a special menu for her and provided her with beauty treatments. He also assigned her seven maids specially chosen from the king’s palace, and he moved her and her maids into the best place in the harem. ¹⁰

Esther had not told anyone of her nationality and family background, because Mordecai had directed her not to do so. ¹¹ Every day Mordecai would take a walk near the courtyard of the harem to find out about Esther and what was happening to her. ¹² **Before each young woman was taken to the king’s bed,** she was given the prescribed twelve months of beauty treatments—six months with oil of myrrh, followed by six months with special perfumes and ointments. ¹³ When it was time for her to go to the king’s palace, she was given her choice of whatever clothing or jewelry she wanted to take from the harem.

Historians have documented Ahasuerus’ amorous affairs in Persia, Greece, and elsewhere.

Whitcomb

Esther 2 ¹⁴ That evening she was taken to the king’s private rooms, and the next morning she was brought to the second harem, where the king’s wives lived. There she would be under the care of Shaashgaz, the king’s eunuch in charge of the concubines. She would never go to the king again unless he had especially enjoyed her and requested her by name. ¹⁵ Esther was the daughter of Abihail (a Benjamite), who was Mordecai’s uncle. (Mordecai had adopted his younger cousin Esther.) When it was Esther’s turn to go to the king, she accepted the advice of Hegai, the eunuch in charge of the harem. She asked for nothing except what he suggested, and she was admired by everyone who saw her. ¹⁶ Esther was taken to King Xerxes at the royal palace in early winter of the seventh year of his reign.

Hmm, God is using one of His children, hiding her identity and “marrying” an uncircumcised pagan king. She is not living as a Jew or “keeping Kosher.” They are not bold with their witness like Daniel and his friends. Not all our decisions glorify God at their outset and yet He uses it all for His glory and plan. No excuse to sin but there is a rest in knowing that we are serving a God who loves us and cannot make a mistake!

Esther 2 ¹⁷ And the king loved (“Now the king was attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women” NIV “was pleased with” NCV) Esther more than any of the other young women. He was so delighted with her that he set the royal crown on her head and declared her queen instead of Vashti. ¹⁸ To celebrate the occasion, he gave a great banquet in Esther’s honor for all his nobles and officials, declaring a public holiday for the provinces and giving generous gifts to everyone. ¹⁹ **Even after all the young women had been transferred to the second harem** (When the virgins were gathered together the second time. NASB) and Mordecai had become a palace official, ²⁰ Esther continued to keep her family background and nationality a secret. She was still following Mordecai’s directions, just as she did when she lived in his home.

Now, an event happens which is crucial and it turns out to be one of the most important events in the Book of Esther!

Read Esther 2:21-23

Esther 2 ²¹ One day as Mordecai was on duty at the king’s gate, two of the king’s eunuchs, **Bigthana and Teresh**—who were guards at the door of the king’s private quarters—**became angry at King Xerxes and plotted to assassinate him.** ²² But Mordecai heard about the plot and gave the information to Queen Esther. She then told the king about it and gave Mordecai credit for the report. ***20** ²³ When an investigation was made and Mordecai’s story was found to be true, the two men were impaled on a sharpened pole. This was all recorded in *The Book of the History of King Xerxes’ Reign*.

This threat of assassination was real. Ahasuerus was eventually murdered (14 years later) by his prime minister (Uncle), who placed Artaxerxes I on the throne. David Guzik

***20a** “Rather than being hanged by the neck on a modern-type gallows, the men were probably impaled on a stake or post. This was not an unusual method of execution in the Persian Empire. Darius, Xerxes’ father, was known to have once impaled 3,000 men.” John A. Martin

*21 Read Esther Chapter 3

***22 Esther 3** ¹ Sometime later (4 years) King Xerxes promoted Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite over all the other nobles, making him the most powerful official in the empire.

***22a** Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite: Haman appears to be a descendant of Agag, who was the king of the Amalekites, the people who were Israel's sworn enemy for generations (Exodus 17:14-16, 1 Samuel 15). **By mentioning both Kish, Saul's father, and Agag, the Amalekite king, the writer may have been indicating that both men were heirs to a long-standing tradition of ethnic enmity and antagonism. Bush**

Esther 3 ² All the king's officials would bow down before Haman to show him respect whenever he passed by, for so the king had commanded. But Mordecai refused to bow down or show him respect. ³ Then the palace officials at the king's gate asked Mordecai, "Why are you disobeying the king's command?" ⁴ They spoke to him day after day, but still he refused to comply with the order. So they spoke to Haman about this to see if he would tolerate Mordecai's conduct, since Mordecai had told them he was a Jew.

***22b** There does not seem to be a Biblical command against bowing or paying homage to a political leader as a sign of respect (Genesis 18:2; 23:7; 43:26; Exodus 18:7; 2 Samuel 16:4). Rather, Mordecai must know something about this man Haman, which persuades him that Haman is unworthy of such honor – perhaps simply his ancestry. **"No self-respecting Benjamite would bow before a descendant of the ancient Amalekite enemy of the Jews."** Huey

We must worship God alone. We should never let any person, institution, or government take God's place. When people demand loyalties or duties from you that do not honor God, don't give in. It may be time to take a stand. Life Application Bible

Esther 3 ⁵ When Haman saw that Mordecai would not bow down or show him respect, he was filled with rage. ⁶ He had learned of Mordecai's nationality, so he decided it was not enough to lay hands on Mordecai alone. **Instead, he looked for a way to destroy all the Jews throughout the entire empire of Xerxes.**

Haman's anger led him to take out his wrath upon all the Jews in the kingdom. The problem with Haman exposed his basic hatred for all Jewish people and his attempt to kill the Messiah by killing the blood line. **(Genesis 3:14-15)**

Esther 3 ⁷ **So in the month of April**, during the twelfth year of King Xerxes' reign, lots were cast in Haman's presence (the lots were called "*purim*") to determine the best day and month to take action. And the day selected was March 7, nearly a year later.

This shows pagan superstition ("You are of Your father the devil...") involved in Haman's thinking and actions.

PUR was the Persian word for the lot, something like dice, used to leave a decision to chance – or to the God who guides every chance. Since this took place in the first month, the casting of the lot determined that the Jews would not be attacked and

massacred for at least 11 months. The long delay between the first month and the month of massacre against the Jewish people was ordained by God.

***23** The Eastern peoples in that day took few important steps without consulting the stars and the omens. A century before, when King Nebuchadnezzar and his generals couldn't agree on a campaign strategy, they paused to consult their gods. "For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the road, at the fork of the two roads, to use divination: he shakes the arrows, he consults the images, **he looks at the liver**" (Ezek. 21:21, NKJV). Warren Wiersbe

***23a Proverbs 16:33 (NASB95)** The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from YahWeH.

***23b Proverbs 21:30 (ESV)** No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against YahWeH.

***24** "Though determined by lot, the day chosen seems maliciously ironical. The number 13 was considered unlucky by the Persians and the Babylonians, while the thirteenth day of the first month, the day on which the edict decreeing the Jews' destruction was dispatched (v 12), is the day preceding Passover, the commemoration of the deliverance from slavery in Egypt." Bush

**So God gave the Jews almost a year to prepare for their defense and time for Esther to establish her influence so God could work His solution with Esther, the King and Haman!

Esther 3 ⁸ Then Haman approached King Xerxes and said, "There is a certain race of people scattered through all the provinces of your empire who keep themselves separate from everyone else. Their laws are different from those of any other people, and they refuse to obey the laws of the king. So it is not in the king's interest to let them live. ⁹ If it please the king, issue a decree that they be destroyed, and I will give 10,000 large sacks of silver (According to the Greek historian Herodotus (Book III, Section 95), the annual income of the entire Persian Empire was 15,000 talents of silver.) to the government administrators to be deposited in the royal treasury."

Esther 3 ¹⁰ The king agreed, confirming his decision by removing his signet ring from his finger and giving it to Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. ¹¹ The king said, "The money and the people are both yours to do with as you see fit."

Esther 3 ¹² **So on April 17 the king's secretaries were summoned, and a decree was written exactly as Haman dictated.** It was sent to the king's highest officers, the governors of the respective provinces, and the nobles of each province in their own scripts and languages. The decree was written in the name of King Xerxes and sealed with the king's signet ring. ¹³ Dispatches were sent by swift messengers into all the provinces of the empire, giving the order that all Jews—young and old, including women and children—must be killed, slaughtered, and annihilated on a single day.

***25 Esther 3** This was scheduled to happen on March 7 of the next year. The property of the Jews would be given to those who killed them. ¹⁴ **A copy of this decree was to be issued as law in every province and proclaimed to all peoples, so that they would be ready to do their duty on the appointed day.** ¹⁵ At the king's command, the decree went out by swift messengers, and it was also proclaimed in the fortress of Susa. Then the king and Haman sat down to drink, **but the city of Susa fell into confusion.**

Haman's death decree was against all Jews in the Persian Empire; thus, it would have included the land of Israel. There were perhaps 15 million Jews scattered throughout the Persian Empire. **If his decree had been carried out, all of God's chosen people could have been exterminated,** and God's plan to send His Son to earth as the Messiah of Israel could have been ruined. But God's plans cannot be stopped. Haman was doomed to fail. Life Application Bible

So the king and Haman sat down to drink: When the king sat down to drink, he thought he had done well – but he did not really understand what he had done. Haman also sat down to drink, and thought he had done well – and he knew exactly what he intended to do. Despite this, the city of Shushan was perplexed. The citizens of the empire knew Jewish people who lived among them, and they knew that they were good citizens who caused no trouble. Therefore, they were confused that such a decree came forth, declaring that these Jews were dangerous enemies.

***26 Read Chapter 4**

***27 Esther 4** ¹ When Mordecai learned about all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on burlap and ashes, and went out into the city, crying with a loud and bitter wail. ² He went as far as the gate of the palace, for no one was allowed to enter the palace gate while wearing clothes of mourning. ³ And as news of the king's decree reached all the provinces, there was great mourning among the Jews. **They fasted, wept, and wailed, and many people lay in burlap and ashes.** ⁴ When Queen Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai, **she was deeply distressed.** She sent clothing to him to replace the burlap, but he refused it. ⁵ Then Esther sent for Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs who had been appointed as her attendant. She ordered him to go to Mordecai and find out what was troubling him and why he was in mourning.

There are some things that going shopping at the mall will not fix! The queen starts the "fix" by throwing money at the problem, which shows that she is out of touch with what is going on outside the palace, and so her suggestion seems foolish.

***27a Lawson:** *"The faith of God's people does not interfere with the exercise of emotion suited to mournful dispensations of providence"*

Feelings are spontaneous, involuntary responses to life. They are not willed into being and God doesn't judge us for our emotions themselves but only for what we DO with them.

Esther 4 ⁶ So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the square in front of the palace gate. ⁷ Mordecai told him the whole story, including the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. ⁸ Mordecai gave Hathach a copy of the decree issued in Susa that called for the death of all Jews. He asked Hathach to show it to Esther and explain the situation to her. **He also asked Hathach to direct her to go to the king to beg for mercy and plead for her people.** ⁹ So Hathach returned to Esther with Mordecai's message. ¹⁰ Then Esther told Hathach to go back and relay this message to Mordecai:

Esther 4 ¹¹ "All the king's officials and even the people in the provinces know that anyone who appears before the king in his inner court without being invited is doomed to die unless the king holds out his gold scepter. And the king has not called for me to come to him for thirty days." ¹² So Hathach gave Esther's message to Mordecai.

It's always difficult to have a conversation with someone without seeing them face-to-face (no tone of voice or body language to read), so we can sense the frustration of Esther in trying to communicate with Mordecai about these life-threatening happenings. She seems to be saying, "Mordecai, what are you thinking? You know the rules around here: if I try to enter the presence of the king without him sending for me, I'm just gonna get my head cut off! What good would that do? How does that help our people? Help me out here. I need your sound counsel and some sort of guidance here, bro'!"

***28 Esther 4** ¹³ Mordecai sent this reply to Esther: "Don't think for a moment that because you're in the palace you will escape when all other Jews are killed. ¹⁴ **If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?"**

This exposes Mordecai's faith in the covenant-keeping God and His plan for Israel. Well, if you don't do something – you are going to die with the rest of us – so you've simply got to take that risk. It's the only strategy we have! The dilemma is die for sure with the rest of us or die trying to save us. Which identity are you going to choose – queen, or princess of Israel? God doesn't need Esther to save the Jews; but His will is to use her, if she will have faith and act!

Esther 4 ¹⁵ Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: ¹⁶ "Go and gather together all the Jews of Susa and fast for me. **Do not eat or drink for three days, night**

or day. My maids and I will do the same. And then, though it is against the law, I will go in to see the king. **If I must die, I must die.**" ¹⁷ So Mordecai went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.

If the Jews did indeed fast for three days, as Esther requested, they would not have been able to celebrate the Passover, which their Law commanded (Exod. 12), **since their fasting would have begun on the eve of Passover.** David Clines

"If I must die, I must die." "I don't have to live, but I have to do what I know is right!" This is a complete commitment to God; not the secret Christian life where we have our personal beliefs but we keep them to ourselves, we don't make waves, but just attend church on Sundays and keep our faith well-hidden. No this is a public profession of faith that might mean death! Courage doesn't mean that you're not fearful; it just means that you're willing to act *in spite of* your fears.

***29** Today, God gives to His people many exciting opportunities, if only we will commit ourselves to Him. Not only in your church, but in your home, your neighborhood, your place of employment, your school, even your sickroom, **God can use you to influence others and accomplish His purposes, if only you are fully committed to Him. The question is not, "Is God in control of this world?" but, "Is God in control of my life?"** Are we cooperating with Him so that we are a part of the answer and not a part of the problem? Warren Wiersbe

What is going on in what is going on?

***30** If you are reading the Book of Esther for the first time, you might become impatient with **God and conclude that He was doing nothing. In chapters 1 and 2, a drunken king and his** flattering advisers seem to be in charge. From chapter 3 to chapter 6, it looks as though wicked Haman is in control. Even after Haman is off the scene, it's the king's unalterable decree that keeps everybody busy. *But where is God?* **God is never in a hurry. He knows the end from the beginning, and His decrees are always right and always on time.** Warren Wiersbe

***31** Cliffhanger! Is the King going to hear what Esther has to say? Is she going to die? Are the Jews all going to be annihilated? You'll have to wait till next weeks episode or read ahead! 😊).

Have you seen the hand of God in this story? Let's look at some providential happenings:

1. God in His providence allowed drunken King Ahasuerus to think of demanding that his wife, Queen Vashti appear before the whole court to display her beauty. He also strengthen her heart not to appear! Her refusal caused the king to search the kingdom for a new queen (1:12).

2. History tells us that then Ahasuerus (against the advice of his adviser/uncle) decided to go to battle with the Greeks in order to teach them a lesson for having defeated his father. God had him to be defeated by a smaller Greek navy/army and Xerxes had to come home a defeated man, needing the comfort of an encouraging wife.
3. God in His providence allowed Esther to become an orphan and go to live with her cousin Mordecai. God fashioned her to be intelligent, beautiful and of gentle character. She “just happens” to be picked by the King’s men for the forced “Beauty Pageant” (2:2-4) – all the while protecting her Jewish identity. (Why didn’t one of the King’s men ever mention this to anyone?)
4. God gave Esther favor and special treatment by Hegai, the keeper of the women (2:9).
5. God allowed King Ahasuerus to be more attracted to and pleased with Esther than to any of the other virgins so that she became his new queen (2:17) for such a time as this (4:14).
6. God in His providence enabled Mordecai to be raised to a position of honor at the King’s gate and hear about an assassination plot against the king. He notified Queen Esther and saved the king’s life (2:19-22) though he was providentially not rewarded for this act of loyalty until later, in God’s perfect timing (6:3). Everything happens in “the fullness of time” (Ga 4:4).
7. God in His providence enabled Haman to be promoted to chief officer of the empire in order to fulfill His purposes through him, demonstrate His power in dealing with him, and gain greater glory for His name (Ex 9:16; Ro 9:17) (Es 3:1). **Proverbs 16:4 (NLT)** YaHWeH has made everything for His own purposes, even the wicked for a day of disaster.
8. God in His providence determined that the lot that was cast in which wicked Haman would be able to carry out his slaughter of the Jews would fall on March 7th, almost a year away (3:7) from when the lot was cast. This gave Esther time to establish her influence, and the Jews time to prepare for their defense.

And there is more – God is in the details of life. Pleasant and unpleasant working it all out for the ultimate good of His children, though they may not see it at any given moment. Are you one of His children? Rest assured whatever you are going through the God of all comfort, the God of Creation, the God of Grace who has saved you is with you!