



ESTHER

GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN AN EVIL DAY

Questions of Ambiguity

Difficult Decisions



Why Esther?

Paul states: “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of Scriptures we might have hope (Rom 15:4).

Why Esther? – So that we may have hope.

The Great Paradox

God is omnipotently present
even where God is most
conspicuously absent.

Three Scenes in Chapter 1

1. The Magnificence of Persia (vs. 1-9)
2. The Limitation of Power (vs. 10-12)
3. The Knee Jerk Reaction (vs. 13-22)

The Author's Intent (vs. 10-12)

1. The Persian court is not a safe place with a King who holds great power which he unpredictably wields, making decisions from dubious motives with impaired judgment.
2. Esther is entering into a marital relationship with a man with a furious temper, who carelessly uses women for his own glory and easily discards them when they don't please him enough.

The Author's Intent (vs. 13-22)

3. Divine providence works through human behavior that flows from ambiguous and confused motives.
4. Even great and powerful men are frail humanity and mere footnotes in the plan of God.
 - Do not place your trust in righteous leaders. They may fail.
 - Do not fear wicked leaders. God can use them (Isaiah 45).

Sinful Compromise or Wise Contextualization?

1. Brewers playing at Wrigley Field – What are you going to wear?
2. Muslim Convert living in Saudi Arabia – What are they to do? What are the determining factors?
 - What is the knowledge level of the participant?
 - Are there other cultural options?
 - Is this a question of accommodation or violation?
 - What is the biblical priority of the issue?
 - What is the intensity of the punishment?

The King's Unhappiness (vs.1-4)

- Timeframe: 483 B.C. (War Council) – 479 B.C. (Esther made queen)
- State of Mind: Herodotus describes Xerxes' life as one of “sensual overindulgence.” He dallied with the wives of his officers and leaders.
- Small Minded: His search for a “better” wife focuses on only beauty.

The Introduction of Mordecai (vs. 5-7, 10-11)

Positive:

- Lineage: Jew of the family of Benjamin
- Character: Protector of his orphaned cousin

Neutral:

- Jewish Concealment: He kept his heritage secret. He had partially adopted the lifestyle of the Persians.
- Failure to Protect: He allowed Esther to be taken.

Conclusion: Mordecai is introduced as a neutral figure. He has both strengths and potential weaknesses.

The Introduction of Esther (vs. 8-9)

Positive:

- Physically: Lovely in form and feature
- Socially: Pleasing to the eunuchs

Negative:

Law Breaker: There is no indication that Esther made any attempt to maintain fidelity to God's covenant.

Conclusion: The reader is not sure what to make of Esther. A law-abiding Jew would be repulsed by her compromise. Yet, they would know that she was a 'savior' for Israel.

Author's Intent

Regardless of motives and practices, God uses less than perfect individuals to achieve His ultimate, perfect purpose for good.

Our Response

How do we expect God to bring about good in our life?

- Do we feel that God is obligated to “split the Red Sea” to save us from trouble?
- Do we believe that God uses the poor decisions of your boss, husband, family, teacher, neighbor, or government for good?
- Do we feel that God is obligated to act immediately on our behalf?
- Do we believe that God is already working for our good in all situations?



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