

A King and His Kingdom: Lessons from the Book of Esther 1:1-9

In a world often dominated by visible displays of power and prestige, it's easy to forget that true authority often lies hidden, working silently behind the scenes. This truth is beautifully illustrated in the Old Testament book of Esther, a narrative that, surprisingly, never once mentions God by name. Yet, His providence permeates every chapter, reminding us that even when we can't see or feel His presence, He is always at work.

The story opens with a lavish display of earthly power. King Xerxes, ruler of the vast Persian Empire, throws an extravagant party lasting 180 days. He parades his wealth and influence before military leaders and nobles from 127 provinces. Golden goblets, luxurious fabrics, and exotic decorations adorn his palace. It's a scene of unparalleled opulence, designed to impress and intimidate.

But as we peel back the layers of this grand spectacle, we're invited to consider a profound question: Who truly sits on the throne of our hearts? Xerxes may rule over a vast empire, but what rules over Xerxes? His hunger for power and prestige has become his god, driving his every action and decision.

This reality speaks directly to our own lives. If God is not our king, then whatever we place on that throne will become our god. It might be a spouse, political ideology, money, fear, or even our own ego. We nurture these idols, thinking we control them, when in fact, they control us.

The book of Esther serves as a powerful reminder that God's hand is always at work, even when we can't see it. His providence – the supernatural work of His hands according to His will through natural means – is constantly moving behind the scenes. As Romans 8:28 assures us, "We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose."

This truth offers immense comfort, especially for those facing persecution or hardship for their faith. It reminds us that we belong to a greater kingdom, one that transcends all earthly powers and principalities. As Ephesians 1:20-22 declares, Christ is seated "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come."

The narrative of Esther also invites us to reflect on the nature of true kingship. Throughout Israel's history, the people cried out for a human king, forgetting that God Himself was meant to be their sovereign. This desire led to a long line of flawed rulers and eventually to subjugation under foreign powers. Yet, even in this seeming failure, we see God's greater plan unfolding – a plan that would ultimately lead to the coming of Jesus, the true and perfect King.

In Christ, we find a ruler unlike any other. When questioned by Pilate about His kingship, Jesus responded, "My kingdom is not of this world." His authority isn't based on displays of wealth or military might, but on sacrificial love and divine righteousness. This King invites us into a kingdom that will endure long after all earthly empires have crumbled to dust.

As we contemplate these truths, two key principles emerge:

1. Righteousness supersedes royalty. The pursuit of God's righteousness far outweighs any earthly status or power. A person living in poverty but walking in righteousness with God possesses something far more valuable than all the riches of kings.
2. Providence supersedes preference. We're called to align ourselves with God's providential work rather than chasing after our own preferences. This often requires sacrifice and trust, but it allows us to participate in God's greater plan.

The book of Esther challenges us to look beyond the surface, to recognize God's hand even when it seems absent. It reminds us that our lives, no matter how ordinary they may seem, are part of a grand narrative orchestrated by a sovereign God. Just as He worked through the complexities of Persian politics and the courage of a young Jewish woman to save His people, He continues to work through the circumstances of our lives today.

As we navigate the complexities of our own world, with its competing powers and ideologies, let us remember where true authority lies. Let us examine our hearts and ask: Who or what sits on the throne of my life? Are we living for the kingdoms of this world, or for the eternal Kingdom of God?

The invitation is clear – to arise and shine, for our light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon us (Isaiah 60:1). This isn't a call to earthly prominence, but to reflect the light of Christ in a world often shrouded in darkness. It's an invitation to trust in God's providence, even when we can't see how all the pieces fit together.

In a world that often feels chaotic and out of control, the message of Esther offers hope and perspective. It reminds us that there is a King above all kings, working all things together for good. As we yield our lives to His reign, we find ourselves part of a story far grander and more glorious than we could ever imagine.

So let us live with our eyes fixed on the true King, Jesus Christ. Let us trust in His providence, pursue His righteousness, and shine His light in the world around us. For in doing so, we participate in a kingdom that will endure forever, long after the glitter of earthly crowns has faded away.

Takeaways:

If God is not your king, then your king will become your God. We were encouraged to examine what occupies the throne of our hearts and whether we've allowed other things to take God's rightful place.

Righteousness supersedes royalty. The sermon reminded us that pursuing Christ's righteousness is far more valuable than any earthly power or prestige.

Providence supersedes preference. We were challenged to align our lives with God's providential work rather than merely pursuing our own preferences.

As we continue through this series on Esther, let's remember that God is always at work, even in the most obscure or challenging circumstances of our lives. May we be encouraged to trust in His providence and seek His kingdom above all else.

Scripture Reference:

- Book of Esther, Chapter 1:1-9
- Romans 8:28
- Ephesians 1:20-23

Here's a 5 Day Devotional Based on This Weeks Teaching

Day 1: God's Providence in Obscurity Reading: Esther 4:12-16 Devotional: Just as Esther found herself in a position of influence "for such a time as this," God often works behind the scenes in our lives. Even when we can't see or feel His presence, He is orchestrating events for our good and His glory. Today, reflect on a time when you felt God was absent, only to later realize He was working all along. How might this perspective change how you view your current circumstances? Ask God to open your eyes to His providence in the seemingly ordinary moments of your day.

Day 2: The Danger of False Kings Reading: 1 Samuel 8:4-22 Devotional: The Israelites' demand for a human king reflects our own tendency to place our trust in worldly powers rather than in God. What "false kings" might be vying for authority in your life? Career, relationships, possessions, or personal ambitions can all become idols if we're not careful. Take time to examine your heart and surrender any areas where you've allowed something other than God to take the throne. Pray for the wisdom to recognize and resist the allure of false kings in your life.

Day 3: The Supremacy of Christ Reading: Colossians 1:15-20 Devotional: In a world of competing authorities and influences, Christ stands supreme above all. This passage reminds us of Jesus' unrivaled position and power. How does the reality of Christ's supremacy impact your daily life and decisions? Consider an area where you struggle to submit to His authority. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you align your will with Christ's, recognizing that true freedom and fulfillment come from serving the King of Kings.

Day 4: Righteousness Over Royalty Reading: Matthew 6:25-33 Devotional: Jesus teaches us to prioritize seeking God's kingdom and righteousness above all else. In a culture that often values status, wealth, and power, this can be a radical shift in perspective. Reflect on your own pursuits and ambitions. Are you more concerned with building your own "kingdom" or advancing God's? Challenge yourself to make one concrete choice today that puts God's righteousness before personal gain or recognition.

Day 5: Living for an Eternal Kingdom Reading: Hebrews 11:13-16 Devotional: The heroes of faith lived with their eyes fixed on a heavenly homeland, recognizing that this world was not their ultimate destination. As followers of Christ, we too are called to live as "foreigners and strangers on earth." How might your priorities and actions change if you consistently viewed your life through the lens of eternity? Ask God to deepen your longing for His eternal kingdom and to help you live in a way that reflects your true citizenship in heaven.