

12. Jesus in Esther

February 24, 2016

In this Book of Esther, there is not a direct connection to Jesus. But I still believe that we can find Jesus in it with the help of the Holy Spirit.

The Book of Esther is a rather unique Book. You all know that it doesn't mention the word "God" anywhere in it. But did you know that it also never mentions the word "prayer"? Ah, some of you are thinking, "Wrong, preacher. Queen Esther ordered all the Jews in the kingdom of Persia to pray for three days while she prepared herself for the dinner with the king and Haman." Not so. She told them to fast, not pray.

One more thing, none of the NT authors refer to the Book of Esther in their Books. Does it mean that this Book is not important? Absolutely not. I believe that the Lord is going to show the deep truth of the providential will of God through this study.

A. JESUS IN KEEPING THE PROMISE

Esther 3:1-6 After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above all the princes who were with him. 2 And all the king's servants who were within the king's gate bowed and paid homage to Haman, for so the king had commanded concerning him. But Mordecai would not bow or pay homage. 3 Then the king's servants who were within the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why do you transgress the king's command?" 4 Now it happened, when they spoke to him daily and he would not listen to them, that they told it to Haman, to see whether Mordecai's words would stand; for Mordecai had told them that he was a Jew. 5 When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath. 6 But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai. Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus--the people of Mordecai.

The term "Agagite" is the term for the 'king' used by the Amalekites, the descendants of Amalek, who was the grandson of Esau. When the Jews first came out of Egypt, the Amalekites attacked the rear part – the weak, the sickly, and the aged. They were defeated by Joshua. Haman, the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews, the one who hated the people of God, is a type of the flesh. Mordecai, on the other hand, becomes a type of Jesus who saved His people.

Though the name of God was never mentioned in the Book of Esther, His presence, His promise, and His purpose were with the Jews in Persia during this trying time. The Jewish people ended up there because they had rejected His commandments. They were not seeking His presence in their lives, nor did they want to hear His voice. But His hands were with them and preserved them while they were exiled in a foreign land.

God's purposes are fascinating. He is always at work in the present, preparing for the future. The problem with us is that we don't see how His purpose is going to unfold, so we think that God is not working on our behalf. Sometimes we see our immediate situation and make accusations against God, thinking that He doesn't care. But when the story is over, we always see that our Lord is faithful. The Book of Esther is a great reminder of this truth.

B. JESUS IN SUCH A TIME AS THIS

Esther 4:13-14 And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: "Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. 14 For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

I don't think that Esther had an attitude of "I-don't-want-to-get-involved," rather trying to explain to Mordecai about the palace protocol.

Mordecai reminded Esther of three solemn facts:

1) He told her that her being a palace resident was no guarantee that she would be delivered from death.

Once Haman finds out that Esther is a Jew, he would do anything to have her killed.

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."

Ever since this God's declaration of satan's future in the Garden of Eden, satan has been on the path of destruction of Jesus, Eve's Seed, and the people of the Jews. The Pharaoh tried it; all the heathen kingdoms around Israel had tried it; Haman, the Agagite tried it; Herod the Great tried it at the Bethlehem area; Hitler tried it; the Arab nations around Israel tried it during the Six Days War; Iran and its satellite nations are still trying it. One thing for sure, none of the enemies of the Jews are going to prevail in it because of God's protective hands for Israel and His promise to her.

2) Mordecai reminded her that her silence wouldn't prevent deliverance from coming from some other source.

The reference here is to the providence of God, even though the name of God isn't mentioned. Knowing the Abrahamic Covenant, Mordecai had faith that the people of Israel would be protected from annihilation.

Why would relief and deliverance arise from another place yet Esther might be killed? It is for a punishment for her unwillingness to intercede for the people.

James 4:17 Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.

One of my favorite quotes is "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing," by the British statesman Edmund Burke.

3) Mordecai emphasized that her being in the palace as the queen was not an accident. Because God arranged the whole event, including Esther becoming the queen as a part of His providential will.

Any logical Jewish person can tell God prepared all of these to rescue and preserve the Israelites from extinction.

C. JESUS IN THE PROVIDENTIAL WILL OF GOD

Genesis 1:27-28 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Speaking of the providential will of God, we must think about this. The perfect will of God would have been Adam and Eve had never sinned against the Lord and be

obedient to His ways and had populated the earth with their offspring and live happily ever after. But it was not the case. They have sinned and the Lord had to bring forth the rescue plan – the salvation of mankind through Jesus Christ. Does it mean that Jesus was the 'Plan B'? No. We humans have a problem in distinguishing the difference between God's perfect will and providential will because they run together seamlessly.

Listen, God does not cause or approve of sin, but only limits, restrains, overrules it for good. The mode of God's providence is altogether unexplainable. We only know that it is a fact that God does govern all His creatures and all their actions with His foreknowledge and is consistent with His own perfection, and to His own glory.

We can learn more about some basic truth of God's providence from Mordecai's comments that are important for Christians today.

1) God has divine purposes to accomplish in this world.

God's purposes involve the Jews, Gentiles, churches, and individuals. His purposes touch the lives of heads of the nations and common people, godly people and wicked people. There is nothing in this world that is outside the influence of the purposes of God.

2) God permits wicked people to do evil things in this world. But He can work in and through unbelievers and His own people to accomplish His purposes.

3) God will accomplish His purposes, even if His servants refuse to obey His will.

If Esther rejected the will of God for her life, God could still save His people. But Esther would be the loser. When pastors and missionaries appeal to the church for volunteers for Christian service, they sometimes give the impression that God's work is at the mercy of God's workers. Not in our lifetime or in eternity.

If you and I refuse to obey God, He can get somebody else to do the job, and we will lose the reward and blessing. Or He can discipline us until we surrender to His will.

Two examples come to mind. Since John Mark left the mission field and returned home in Acts 13, God raised up Timothy to take his place in chapter 16.

When Jonah ran from God, the Lord kept after him until he obeyed, even though he didn't obey from his heart.

When God isn't permitted to rule, He overrules. He always accomplishes His purposes.

Only a sovereign God is great enough to decree freedom of choice for men and women, and only a sovereign God could fulfill His wise and loving purposes in this world and even make evil cooperate in producing good.

Remember Joseph, the favorite son of Jacob? He was sold to the Ishmaelite slave trader by his own brothers in Genesis 37 and he became a slave for 11 years and got a false rape charge and was thrown into prison for another 2 years. At age 30, he became the prime minister of Egypt to rule over the entire country. Was this just for Joseph? No, it was not only for him, but also to bring the rest of the family into Egypt for 400 years and to make them into a nation so that the Lord could bring them back to the Promised Land. Sometimes understanding the providence of God is like Hebrew letters. It must be read backward to understand it.

Genesis 50:20 But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

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, not a part of the problem? We don't have to be hardened unbelievers like Haman to be apathetic and unconcerned about the condition of the world's billions of lost souls.

We cannot comprehend the providential will of God without thinking about the sovereignty of God. Yes, I am talking about another heavy weight theological subject.

Our greatest error in considering the choices of God is to think that God chooses for arbitrary reasons, as if He chooses in an "eeny-meeny-miny-moe" way. We may not be able to fathom God's reasons for choosing, and they are reasons He alone knows and answers to, but God's choices are not impulsive. He has a precise plan and a perfect reason.

No doctrine is more despised by the human's natural mind than the truth that God is absolutely sovereign. Human pride despises the idea that God orders everything, controls everything, and rules over everything. The carnal mind, burning with enmity against God, abhors the biblical teaching that nothing comes to pass except according to His eternal purposes.

Can we ever get a good grasp of God's sovereignty and providential will with a couple of studies? Ha, no. Even if we have the time of eternity, we will never be able to comprehend. That is where a simple faith in Him comes in.

Romans 11:33-34 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! 34 "For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?"

D. APPLICATIONS

1) Sometimes God has more to teach us from His denials than from His permissions.

2) If you and I refuse to obey God, He can get somebody else to do the job, and we will lose the reward and blessing. Or He can discipline us until we surrender to His will.

3) When God isn't permitted to rule, He overrules. He always accomplishes His purposes.