

Remnant Life Church

March 8, 2020

Esther

Pt 1

“Introduction”

The book of Esther is one of the most unique in the Old Testament if not the entire Bible

- First, it really doesn't fit where it is
 - The Pentateuch are the first 5 books
 - Then we have the 10 books of history (including Ruth)
 - The 4 books of poetry
 - Followed by the major and minor prophets that comprise the 39 books
- Immediately following the books of history and before the books of poetry is this short story, only 10 chapters, of Esther
 - The same could be said for the book of Ruth regarding its placement
 - Ruth seems jammed into those books of history
 - Amidst the warring and all of the subterfuge of the kings of Israel and Judah is the love story of Ruth and Boaz
 - That is how Esther reads
- Other aspects that are strange or unique
 - While the other books of this segment of the Bible all take place in Israel, Esther's story plays out in Susa – Persia's winter capital.
 - The name of God, Yahweh, is never used once (the only book of the Bible where God is not mentioned)
 - And the Jewish heroine of the story marries a pagan, Gentile king
- What is significant about the location of this story?
 - It takes place in Persia located in modern Iraq/Iran
 - The country mentioned most often in the Bible is Israel
 - The second is the land of Iraq/Iran; one kingdom in the Bible
 - Called Babylon, Shinar, Mesopotamia, Elam, Assyria, and Persia
 - Much of the OT happened in this region
 - The Garden of Eden was...
 - The name Mesopotamia means between 2 rivers
 - Specifically, the Tigris and Euphrates
 - Two of the four rivers given as the location of the Garden ([Gen 2:11-14](#))
 - Noah built his ark...
 - The Tower of Babel was located...
 - Abraham was from Ur of the Chaldeans – located in S. Iraq
 - Jonah preached in Nineveh located...
 - Isaac's wife was from Iraq – she the grandmother of the 12 tribes of Israel
 - Daniel spent the majority of his life...
 - Lion's den
 - Fiery furnace
 - Belshazzar saw the hand write on the wall...
 - The 3 wise men were...
 - Peter preached...
 - And the events told in the book of Esther all happened in Iraq

- Is it any wonder that such evil has planted itself in that country as satan tries to overtake such an important place in the Bible?

A theologian was once asked to summarize the book of Esther

- He answered with 2 words, “The Jews”
- From ancient history to modern day, no other nation has been targeted for extermination more than the Jews and the nation of Israel
 - Starting with the ancient Egyptians and their enslaving of the Jews for over 400 years
 - When they arrived in Canaan it became the Philistines and the other neighboring nations
 - The Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians slaughtered their numbers and exiled them from their land
 - The Roman Empire, the Greeks, the Byzantine Empire, the Spanish Empire, the Crusaders, Nazi Germany, and Russia have all singled out the Jews for persecution and attempted extinction.
 - This tiny nation, roughly the size of NJ and Del has been in the sites of satan since their birth with the sons of Jacob, and it continues today
 - Yet they continue to survive and persevere as God guards and protects His people
- The book of Esther is a story of God’s providential care and mighty Hand

The story of Esther rivals any movie script ever written

- There are twists, turns, betrayal, plotting, scheming, romance, and the good guys win!
- But in it all there are lessons to be learned and yet another demonstration of the hand of God intervening to preserve and protect His people

Cast of Characters

- King Xerxes (1:1)
 - He was the king of Persia at that time
 - He went by several names, but it is what helps to date this story historically
 - Took place approximately 480 years before the birth of Jesus
 - He is mentioned prominently in the book of Esther but also in **Ezra** and **Daniel**
 - He is the Persian king at the height of their power, influence, and strength
- Queen Vashti (1:9)
 - Thought to perhaps be the daughter of Belshazzar the Babylonian king who interacted with Daniel and experienced the hand of God writing on the wall
 - What we know of her is she is very beautiful, throws a good party, and is very head-strong
 - She loses her royal position when she openly defies the king in front of his guests
- Mordechai (2:5)
 - The name Mordechai is ascribed to two men in the Old Testament
 - One found in Ezra and Nehemiah
 - The other in this story
 - His family was one of the exiles taken from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian king in 587 BC (2:6)

- Mordechai raised his cousin Hadassah (also called Esther) after her parents died (2:7)
- Esther (2:7)
 - She was very beautiful in every physical way
 - Part of a group of young women taken to the palace of the king to be placed in his harem
 - Her beauty set her apart from the others (much like Joseph in Genesis)
 - She kept her nationality a secret on Mordechai's instruction figuring she had a better chance of survival (2:10)
 - She had to go through 12 months of beauty treatments before she might be called to go be with the king (2:12)
 - Once she had been with the king she was then removed from the harem and would then be called a concubine and would never go back to the king unless he requested her by name (2:14)
 - He was so taken with her beauty that he made her queen instead of Vashti (2:18)
- Haman (3:1)
 - The highest official in the court of Xerxes
 - The custom was that when Haman passed by everyone had to bow to him
 - Mordechai refused to do this
 - According to the Greek historian Herodotus, when the Persians bowed to their king, they were paying homage to a god.
 - Bowing was a posture of worship and Mordechai knew that no one but God was to be worshipped (3:2)
 - This so infuriated Haman that he not only wanted to kill Mordechai but all of his people, the Jews (3:6)
 - He convinced the king that the “people scattered among them” were threats and got him issue a decree to have them eradicated from the kingdom (3:8-9)
 - Esther pleads to the king from mercy for her people exposing her secret (5:1-5)
 - Haman evil plot is revealed, and he loses his own life and property to the people he wanted to have killed

There is even more to this story...

- It demonstrates God's hand of direction through every aspect
- It shows that even in the apparent black moments of life, God is present
- Evil will always try to overwhelm good
- But God is greater...always!