

Remnant Life Church

April 7, 2021

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
 - Here are how the books of the OT are divided
 - The Pentateuch are the first 5 books
 - Then we have the 12 books of history (including Ruth and Esther)
 - The 5 books of poetry
 - Then the 5 major prophets
 - And finally the 12 minor prophets
 - For a total of 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 in Babylon...
 - 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 surrounding nations
 - The Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians slaughtered their numbers and exiled them from their land
 - The Roman Empire, the Greeks, the Byzantine and Spanish Empires, 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 sights of satan since their birth with the sons of Jacob, and it continues to this day
 - 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)
 - But every good story needs a villain...
- 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 the One True 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 for mercy for her people and, in doing so, exposes her secret heritage (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!