

## Esther

### Key Themes:

1. God's **sovereignty** over his people and individual lives
2. Responsibility and **duty**
3. The **difficulty** and need to trust God

### STRUCTURE

- I. Characters
  - a. Mordecai – Descendant of Saul (2:5)
  - b. Haman – Descendant of Agag, king of the Amalekites (3:1)
  - c. Esther – Mordecai's cousin.
  - d. Ahasuerus – King of Persia
    - i. Interesting leadership lesson here.
    - ii. The story is mostly propelled because the king is being lazy and carnal.
- II. The Story
  - a. Set Up (Ch. 1-2)
    - i. The king dismisses his wife – 1
    - ii. Esther selected as new wife – 2:1-18
    - iii. Mordecai saves the king from an assassination plot – 2:19-23
  - b. Conflict (3-5)
    - i. Conflict between Mordecai and Haman – 3:1-6
    - ii. Haman's Plot – 3:6-15
    - iii. Mordecai's Plan – 4
  - c. Climax (5-7:6)
    - i. Esther's Banquet #1 – 5:1-9
    - ii. Climax Delay – 5:9-6:14
      1. Haman's Gallows – 5:9-14
      2. The King Wakes Up – 6:1-3
      3. Mordecai Honored; Haman Humbled – 6:4-13
    - iii. Esther's Banquet #2 (True Climax) – 6:14-7:6
  - d. Resolution (7:7-10:3)
    - i. Haman Hanged – 7:7-10
    - ii. Jews spared – 8-9:19
    - iii. Celebratory Feast Established – 9:20-32
    - iv. Mordecai Honored – 10:1-3

### THEOLOGY

God's **Providence**: "The theme of the book is God's sovereign work in preserving the Jewish people from annihilation."<sup>1</sup> (Schreiner, *Beauty*, 220.)

- a. God is sovereign over **sin** to bring about his purposes.
- b. God is sovereign over "**random**" events to bring about his purposes.
- c. God is sovereign over simple **acts of faith** to bring about his purposes.

### REDEMPTION

- I. Conflict between the **serpent** and the woman (Genesis 3:15)
- II. God's faithfulness to the **Abrahamic** Promise (Genesis 12:3)

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Schreiner, *The King in his Beauty*, 220.

## APPLICATION

- I. Look Back - Look Forward
  - a. Remember God's **subtle** providence in fulfilling his purposes.
  - b. The same sovereign hand governing events in Esther is **governing** your life today.
- II. God's Hand is hard to see in the **middle** of the course of events.
- III. Trust
  - a. Trust means that you **can't see** how it is all working together
  - b. Trust implies a certain amount of **ignorance**.
- IV. Duty to Act in Trust
  - a. **Mordecai**, "who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"
  - b. **Gandalf to Frodo**, "So do I, and so do all who live to see such times, but that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."
  - c. God's providential control is an invitation to us to act **boldly** in faith, not an **excuse** to sit back and do **nothing**.
    - i. "Mordecai was convinced that the Jews would be delivered. That was not the question. The issue was whether Esther would fulfill her **responsibility** at her appointed time in history"<sup>2</sup>.

## DISCUSSION/REFLECTION

- I. Both Esther and the King needed to step into areas of responsibility for the good of their people. What areas of responsibility do you need to step into for the good of others?
- II. It can be difficult to see God at work in the middle of events. When have you been able to look back at life and see some area where God was at work that you couldn't have seen at the time?
- III. It can be difficult to hold God's providence and human responsibility together. The book of Esther shows us that faithful godly living requires embracing responsibility in light of God's sovereign control. It was a high view of God's sovereignty that empowered Esther to take responsibility and act (4:14). How can God's sovereignty empower you to step out in faith in your life now?

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<sup>2</sup> Schreiner, 222.