CHAPTER 20
Esther’s Story—And Ours
ESTHER 1-9

THE STORY

Yet it identifies itself as scripture (1:1)
• Now after the death of Moses . . . it came to pass – Josh 1:1
• Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass – Judg. 1:1
• Now it came to pass . . . when the judges ruled – Ruth 1:1
• Now it came to pass after the death of Saul - 2 Sam. 1:1
• The words of Nehemiah . . . And it came to pass – Neh. 1:1

THE STORY

What is this strange book doing in the Bible?
Esther raises and answers four key questions:

THE STORY

1. Where in the World is God’s Kingdom? (Esther 1)

THE STORY

a. What we see (1:1-7)
Persia’s size and wealth

THE STORY
Persian government
• People are commanded to drink freely (8)
• The Queen’s presence is commanded (10)
• Vashti refuses the king’s command (12)
• Xerxes asks, What does law command? (15)
• The king’s command will be ridiculed by women (17)
• A command (19)

b. What we don’t see

Kingdom of Man
Highly visible
Seemingly victorious
Ruled by law
Without God: indignity, injustice, will of powerful elite
Submission enforced

Kingdom of God
Invisible
Apparently defeated
Ruled by grace
Under God: dignity, justice, universal shalom
Submission invited

God’s kingdom is where it has always been, exposing our self-made “empires,” calling us to see and believe.

2. What Are the Main Challenges Facing God’s People? (Esther 2-4)

a. Anxious non-presence (2:5-7, 10)
b. Angry over-presence (3:1-2, 5-6)c. Faithful presence

“The way through pain is not around it but right through it. Our faith exists to help us confront the scariest things under the sun: things like the explosion of dreams, the hard edge of suffering, and the magnet of death. I don’t think it makes much sense to try to pretend things don’t make us anxious. Fear and trembling are part of faith. Our task is to follow hard after God.”
The king asked me, “Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill?” I was very much afraid . . . Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered – Neh. 2:2-5

Nehemiah prayed and he engaged in the most God-honoring way he knew how. So should we.


- Israel’s Redemption = miracle
- Israel’s Formation = prophetic voice
- Israel’s Exile = providence

Providence is the belief that our heavenly Father “provides” for us.

In Esther 6:1-4, it “just happens” (or does it?) that . . .
- The king can’t sleep
- He has the court records read to him
- The section he read concerned Mordecai's forgotten deed
- Haman just happened to be in the court

"What a great God we serve. Any deity worth his salt can do a miracle now and then. Our God is so great, so powerful, that he can work through ordinary events. Think about it: God delivered an entire race of people because the king had a sleepless night.

“In our day, as in Esther’s, God’s care and protection seldom come by mighty miracles, but with the unfolding circumstances of each day. Tiny miracles of God’s providence direct your steps.

“Of course, not all of life’s circumstances are pleasant. Tragedies occur, life can be ugly and destructive. The death of a loved one, serious illness, wayward children, broken relationships, shattered hopes—none of these things is good in itself. Yet even in the worst of life’s circumstances God is working to fulfill his perfect promises.” – Karen Jobes
4. What Are the Prospects for Salvation?

**THE STORY**

- a. The principle of sacrifice (4:16)
  “From the moment Queen Esther is prepared to sacrifice herself, all elements of the story begin to combine smoothly.”
- b. The principle of identification (7:3-4a)
- c. The principle of exaltation (10:3)

**CONCLUSION**

How do we respond when our visible kingdom is shaken, when we find ourselves in exile, when no miracles are forthcoming, and destruction looms large?

- Look again at your vision of kingdom
- Practice faithful presence: Pray and engage in the most God-honoring way you know how
- Trust in God’s wise providence
- Remember that sacrifice and identification are God’s path to glory