

Providence of God in Esther

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[0 : 0 0] Esther chapter 1. We're going to read the entire chapter. This is the word of God, flawless and eternal.

! For a full 180 days, he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty.

When these days were over, the king gave a banquet lasting seven days in the enclosed garden of the king's palace for all the people from the least to the greatest who were in the citadel of Susa.

The garden had hangings of white and blue linen, fastened with cords of white linen and purple material to silver rings on marble pillars.

There were couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother of pearl and other costly stones.

[1 : 3 0] Wine was served in goblets of gold, each one different from the other. And the royal wine was abundant in keeping with the king's liberality.

By the king's command, each guest was allowed to drink in his own way, for the king instructed all the wine stewards to serve each man what he wished.

Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the royal palace of King Xerxes. On the seventh day, when King Xerxes was in high spirits from wine, he commanded the seven eunuchs who served him, Muhumin, Bista, Harbona, Biktha, Abiktha, Zathar, and Karkas, to bring before him Queen Vashti wearing her royal crown in order to display her beauty to the people and the nobles, for she was lovely to look at.

But when the attendants delivered the king's command, Queen Vashti refused to come. Then the king became furious. And burned with anger. Since it was customary for the king to consult experts in matters of law and justice, he spoke with the wise men who understood the times and were closest to the king, Karshina, Shethar, Adamantha, Tarshish, Maris, Marcina, and Mumikon, the seven nobles of Persia and Media, who had special access to the king and were highest in the kingdom.

According to law, what must be done to Queen Vashti, he asked. She has not obeyed the command of King Xerxes that the eunuchs had taken to her.

[3 : 1 0] The Mumikon replied in the presence of the king and the nobles, Queen Vashti has done wrong, not only against the king, but also against all the nobles and the peoples of all the provinces of King Xerxes.

For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women, and so they will despise their husbands and say, King Xerxes commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, but she would not come.

This very day, the Persian and Median women of the nobility, who have heard about the queen's conduct, will respond to all the king's nobles in the same way. There will be no end of disrespect and discord.

Therefore, if it pleases the king, let him issue a royal decree, and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed, that Vashti is never again to enter the presence of King Xerxes.

Also, let the king give her royal position to someone else who is better than she. Then, when the king's edict is proclaimed throughout all his vast realm, all the women will respect their husbands from the least to the greatest.

[4 : 20] The king and his nobles were pleased with this advice, so the king did as Mumikan proposed. He sent dispatches to all parts of the kingdom, to each province in its own script, and to each people in its own language, proclaiming in each people's tongue that every man should be a ruler over his own household.

Let's hear the preaching of God's word. Before leaving the study on the providence of God, I want to do a case study in the life of Esther.

And we're going to cover the entire book in one sermon, and I should have you home before supper tonight, so let's dig in. God never works without purpose or plan.

And before the creation of the world, he planned to send his one and only son into the world to save hell-deserving sinners. That was his plan. And as soon as man fell into sin in Genesis chapter 3, God announced his plan to send a redeemer.

He would be born of the woman. He would be the seed of the woman, a male seed that would come and crush Satan's head, even as his own heel would be bruised.

[5 : 41] And then in Genesis chapter 12, God told Abraham that the one to bring this blessing to the nations would be the seed of Abraham. The coming Jesus would be a Jew.

And then throughout the rest of the Bible, we find times when the whole Jewish population was threatened with extinction. We've just spent time in the end of Genesis.

It was a severe famine, wasn't it? But God in providence raised up Joseph to save the Jews from extinction, all 70 of them, who then moved down to Egypt to live during the famine.

And while they were there, they multiplied greatly, and they ended up staying much longer than they had planned, for they all became slaves to Pharaoh.

And it would be 400 years after Joseph that God would bring them out of Egypt with a mighty hand and brought them to the Red Sea, where once again they're threatened with extinction.

[6 : 45] Pharaoh's army is trapping them, hemming them in with no way out. A bloodbath was certain, but God's providence opened a way through the sea, and they passed through on dry land, and God drowned their enemies that they might be saved from extinction.

A thousand years later, the Babylonians conquered the Jewish nation and took many of them into captivity. And then the Babylonians themselves were conquered by the Medes and the Persians.

And during the reign of the Persian king Xerxes, a plan was hatched to exterminate all the Jews in the world. And just as it was God's plan to get Joseph down to Egypt and into Pharaoh's court so that he could save the Jews from famine, so now his plan is to get Esther into the palace as the queen where she will be able to save the Jews from extinction.

And the most unique thing about this book of the Bible is that God is not mentioned anywhere. He's not even referred to at all. And yet he's everywhere working behind the scenes in providence.

And once again, underscoring the theme of his hiddenness. Surely you are a God who hides yourself. Well, let's watch God's invisible hand of providence, thwarting the plan to exterminate the Jews so that he might fulfill his plan to bring from the Jews the Savior of the world.

[8 : 27] There are many links in this chain of God's plan. And if just one of those links is broken, God's plan of a Savior is thwarted and we have no promised Savior.

Link number one, the queen's insult of the king. Xerxes ruled over his world empire comprised of 127 provinces, something that's continually repeated throughout the book.

127 provinces. And in the third year of his reign, he put on this massive display of his wealth. We read of it there in chapter one, the table settings, the golden goblets from which they drank.

The whole thing was just meant to show off the splendor and majesty of this Persian king. And we're told that after the six months of display, he gave a seven-day outdoor banquet for all the important officials of his 127 provinces and all who lived there in the city of Susa, where he, the citadel of Susa, where he reigned.

And again, lavish wealth and glory on display and we're told the wine flowed freely. Meanwhile, Queen Vashti was holding a banquet of her own inside the palace for the women.

[9 : 56] And on the last day of the banquet, when the king and his guests have been drinking for seven days straight, he gave a command to bring Queen Vashti in so that his guests could look at her beauty for she was lovely to look at.

But Queen Vashti planted her heels and refused to come. Now, we don't know why. Maybe she just didn't want to be the showpiece to be gawked at by a bunch of half-drunk men.

Maybe she just wanted to show in the presence of all the women that she's not going to be commanded by this man and do what he wants. We don't know why she refused, but we do know that it was God's providence for her to refuse.

And thereby to bring to pass his own plan. For had Vashti complied with the king's order, there had been no need for a Queen Esther.

Link number two, the overkill of the king. He becomes furious. He rages with anger. It's his wounded pride. He's just been stood up in front of all these important people in his realm.

[11 : 11] Stood up by his wife. He who ruled the whole world couldn't keep his own wife in line. Who's wearing the pants there at the palace? Xerxes. It's a big disgrace.

And his alcohol level doesn't leave him thinking straight nor in control of his rage. So instead of just going and having a calm word with his wife, which might have been a good thing to do, instead he has a word with his advisors.

In the heat of the moment and when the meeting's over, he's brought in, he's brought into their extreme measures. All out of proportion with the offense. We can't have this, they say.

If the word gets out as it invariably will and already is, all of our wives in all the 127 provinces will follow her example and despise the authority of their husbands.

And this would start, what should we call it? A women's liberation movement, perhaps. And we can't have that. And so it appears that these insecure men, fearful of their wives and taking over the authority of the home, actually get the king to pass a law that cannot be revoked, to get rid of Vashti as queen, find a replacement, and thereby to send a message to all the women in the realm to respect their husbands.

[12 : 36] Well, it was sent out to all parts of the kingdom. And we just pause to realize that God has just used insubordination alcohol, anger, insecure men, overkill response, all to create a vacancy for Queen Esther.

That's providence. Link number three, an immoral beauty pageant. And it was immoral on many accounts. Men in the 128 provinces were charged to get the most beautiful virgin girls that they could find, to bring them into the harem of the king.

And after 12 months of beauty treatments, each girl would get her chance to spend one night with the king. And then to be sent to the other part of the harem where the concubines were kept for life, perhaps never again to be called upon by the king.

And the one most pleasing to the king would be the winner. Well, there wasn't a lot of appeal if I were a girl to enter this beauty contest when the prize is spend your life secluded as a concubine in the harem or lucky her to be married to this man with a temper for life.

With prizes like that, it most likely was a matter of, not a voluntary matter, but that these girls were not free to refuse the opportunity but were taken by royal order into the king's harem.

[14 : 11] And so in the mystery of God's providence, Esther was taken and she won the crown. God's providence, going back even from the womb, had put her together in such a way that she was beautiful in form and feature.

And that would play into this book and that's one of the links in the chain of God's plan being fulfilled.

She was so beautiful that the king was attracted to her more than any of the other virgins and so he made her queen instead of Vashti. So first runner-up for Esther would not have served the purposes of God's plan, would it?

Before we go on, who was this Esther? Well, she's a Jewess and she's the younger cousin of Mordecai. Mordecai was a Jew that the Babylonians took with them when they conquered the Jewish nation and as they often did, took some of the best and even nobility into captivity with them, much like they took Daniel and his three friends that they might have the brightest minds to serve in their government and so Mordecai is taken.

And Mordecai's aunt and uncle had both died. We're not told how, but they had died leaving their daughter, an orphan.

[15 : 40] Her name is Esther. Maybe the parents were killed when the Babylonians came in and slaughtered so many of the Jews. If so, again, it's a sweet providence that Esther's young life was somehow spared when her parents' lives were taken.

But at any rate, they've died and Esther's alone, so Mordecai adopted his cousin and raised her as his own daughter. And Esther had kept her nationality as a Jew a secret.

And she did that in obedience to her adopted father, Mordecai. So here we have it. The queen of Persia is a Jewess, but that's the best kept secret of the day.

Providence kept it secret. Providence did not let it be found out. So we're told that Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate. And kids, that doesn't mean he was a loafer with nothing to do, so he was just hanging out at the gate.

The city gate was the place where official business took place and often where judgments and courts were held and judgment was dispensed.

[16 : 50] And so here is Mordecai, an exiled Jew, serving as a government official of the king of Persia. And that too is an important link in the chain of God's providence as we'll see that Mordecai is an official there at the king's gate.

And then there's the next link of the foiled assassination plot and this is where the importance of this link is seen that two officials who were guarding the doorway into the palace, the king's quarters, got angry with the king.

Again, we don't know what. Did he overlook them in some advancement? We don't know, but it got under their skin such that they plotted to kill him.

And somehow Mordecai found out about it and got the word to Queen Esther. She told the king and gave the credit to Mordecai. And when it was investigated, it was proven true that indeed these men had tried, were wanting to kill the king and so he had the two men hanged on a gallows, which was the form of capital punishment in the day.

And then the whole thing was entered into the court chronicles, the official record of Xerxes reign. But so quickly, the king forgot Mordecai's kindness without doing anything to honor him, much like the cupbearer forgot Joseph's kindness for two years had forgotten to mention him to Pharaoh.

[18 : 19] But this too was God's providence because it wasn't yet the right time for the king to learn about Mordecai saving his skin. And so next we have Haman's rage and plot to kill Mordecai and all of his people, the Jews.

The king had elevated this Haman to number two man in the land over all his other officials. Already, the seeds of a later destruction were being sown in his heart because this honor fed the pride of Haman, which will lead to his downfall.

So every day as he passed through the king's gate, all the officials would kneel down in honor of Haman.

And this Mordecai refused to kneel before him. And this affront to his dignity so enraged him that he wanted to kill him, but that wouldn't give him enough pleasure just killing him.

So he would kill not only Mordecai, but all of his people, the Jews, along with him in the whole of the kingdom. Haman believed in fate.

[19 : 31] And so he turns to the dice, to the poor, to reveal the lucky day to be chosen by fate to bring success to his plan.

I'm going to kill them. What day should I do it on, fate? And he throws the dice and it's the 13th day of the 12th month. That's what fate has determined would be the most successful day to carry out this slaughter.

And as it happened, that was the day before the slaughter of the Passover lamb in Israel's history, which you remember was kept annually in commemoration of God's great deliverance of his people out of Egypt.

So there could have been some hope even on the day that was set that God had delivered the Jews earlier in their history. Now, Haman just needs to get the king on board with his plan.

And he did so without mentioning the nation, which nation it was, just telling him he's got this troublesome people who have their own laws and they don't agree with our laws, king, with your laws, oh king, and you really ought not to tolerate them.

[20 : 46] They're a pestilence, they're a trouble to you. So if it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them and I will pay for it myself. It was a handsome price he offered for the men to carry it out.

And again, we see this king is easily swayed by his advisors and takes off his ring and gives it to Haman, showing this blind trust in his top official and says, you can keep your money, we'll pay for it out of our own treasury, do to the people as you please.

Sweet words to Haman, who in this book is called the enemy of the Jews. So 11 months in advance, this decree is written up in the name of the king, sealed with his own ring, sent out with his authority to the 127 provinces, ordering them all to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the Jews, young and old, women and little children, on a single day, the 13th day of the 12th month.

So as the messengers are rushing out with the death warrants throughout the empire, the king and Haman sat down to drink. But the city of Susa itself was bewildered when they read the decree.

It seems the king hardly even known what he had signed. It's one of those things where you sign a blank sheet of paper and then Haman filled out the details and he didn't even know what he had done.

[22 : 13] And Haman relished every moment of it. So there's the real threat, a very real threat, with a man who has the authority and power to annihilate the whole Jewish race. Now watch as God's providence with the pieces already in place now works them together for the saving of the Jews and for the destruction of their enemies.

The next link is Esther's intercession before the king. The palace of the king was somewhat secluded from the rest of the city of Susa.

And that explains why Esther doesn't even know what's going on. The pronouncement has gone out into the city of Susa, but they're here in this citadel of Susa, somewhat secluded from the rest of Susa.

And Mordecai and all the Jews are going into public mourning. And only then does Esther search and find out about the decree through Mordecai who urges her to intervene before the king begging mercy for her people.

Remember now, the king doesn't know that the Jewish people necessarily even have been selected to be killed. Not sure when he finds that out. Doesn't know that Esther, his queen wife is a Jewish either.

[23 : 38] Esther's between a rock and a hard place. Though she's the queen, no one is allowed to go uninvited into the king's presence or their life will be taken. The only exception is if he extends his scepter to them.

But that's a gamble. Will he extend the scepter or not? It's been 30 days since she was called to go to the king. Now, you know, you just begin to see what's going on in this marriage and in this relationship.

He's got a harem to feed his lust. He hasn't called for his wife for 30 days. She doesn't know what mood he's in. She does know what happened to the last queen when she stepped out of line.

Mordecai sends word to her. Three things he wants her to know. Just because you're the queen, Esther, don't think that you will escape with your life. This is your death warrant as well as all the rest of the Jews.

Number two, if you remain silent at this time, you will perish. But relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place. Now, you see, Mordecai knows part of God's plan.

[24 : 51] The part that he knows is that God's promises cannot fail and he has promised to send a savior from the Jews. So he knows that's going to happen. Doesn't know how. But the Messiah must come from the Jews and the whole history of the Jews up to this point has demonstrated God's faithfulness to that promise as over and over he raised up deliverers to spare the Jews from annihilation.

You find it in Joseph's life. You find it in Judges, the kings. God raises up deliverers. So Mordecai knows that God is not limited in his resources to rescue his people.

And if you don't step up and do it, Esther, it will be done with or without you. But what he does know is that God had planned and chosen to use what he doesn't know is whether God has chosen and planned to use Esther as the one to deliver the Jews.

But he somewhat suspects that it might be so as he considers the strange providence that there is a Jewess at the right hand of the king as queen.

And that's the third thing he says to her. Who knows? You see, he doesn't know. He says, who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this.

[26 : 13] So without knowing God's eternal plan, he lays on her her responsibility. Given her circumstances, the fact that God has a secret plan in providence does nothing to remove human responsibility.

Yes, the secret things belong to God, but what is known, Esther, is that you are the queen. What will you do with that responsibility before the Lord?

Could it not be that the reason you are queen at such a time is for you to use your position and to go and beg for the life of your people?

Well, Esther felt the pressure of those words from Mordecai, the truthfulness of them, and after pleading for all of them to fast, she says, I will go, and if I perish, I perish.

And the next link is the king's scepter is raised, sparing Esther. For a dead Esther can't save the Jews any more than a dead Joseph would have spared them.

[27 : 19] And so it's looking more and more like it is God's plan to use her. The king asked her once he lifts the scepter, what's your request? And he promised half the kingdom to her.

And she puts him off saying, if it pleases you, come together with Haman to my banquet today. And at once they go, and after the meal as they're drinking wine, he asks her again what she wants.

And again, she defers to a later point. Let the king and Haman come tomorrow to my banquet and then I'll make my request. Was she too scared to ask at that point?

Was he wanting to be sure he's in a good mood? We don't know, but it's definitely building curiosity on the part of the king and interest as he's made to wait to hear of her request.

The tension mounts. But we know that timing is often everything, isn't it? And that was never more true than what happened this night and the next day.

[28 : 21] The timing of God's providence is amazing. Because Haman goes home from the banquet on cloud nine. He's enjoying the elevated status and he can't wait to boast about it to his wife and friends.

All about his vast wealth, his ten sons, the many ways the king had honored him and the fact that he was the only one that Esther invited along with the king today to her banquet. But his joy siveled as he passed through the king's gate on the way home and sees Mordecai there refusing to kneel in reverence before him.

What a fragile joy to be spoiled by one man on the planet. As long as that man is there at the gate, I don't have any joy. All of the blessings that he has, none of them will satisfy him as long as he's there.

And so his wife and friends have just the answer for him. Have a gallows built. It's 75 feet high. Like a seven, eight, ten story building.

And in the morning ask the king to have Mordecai hanged on it. He'll do whatever you ask. And then go with the king to the dinner and be happy. No more the problem about Mordecai.

[29 : 49] Perfect. Why didn't I think of that, he says. And so he spends the rest of the evening overseeing the building of this gallows and goes to bed with a smile on his face knowing of his plans for tomorrow.

Reminding us of Psalm 36, for even on his bed he plots evil. He commits himself to a sinful course and does not reject what is wrong. Meanwhile, across town, the king's having trouble sleeping.

Did he eat something that didn't sit well with him? Did he drink too much? We don't know. But we know God's providence was at work in keeping him awake this night.

It's a huge link in the chain. But another link in the chain is the way he deals with his insomnia. Not with chamomile or melatonin, but by reading.

I'll be read back to sleep. So the more boring the better, right? And another link in the chain of providence is what was chosen to be read to him.

[30 : 54] None other than the king's court chronicles. Perhaps there was much there to put him to sleep, but as they came to the part of this assassination plot on him that was found out about by this man Mordecai and that indeed it was true and how the king had hanged the two guilty ones and the king sits up at once in his bed and says, what honor and recognition has been done to Mordecai for this sweet action on his part?

And his attendants answered, nothing has been done for him. And here's where we learn of the providence of God making people forget. Nothing done, no honors given, what were we thinking?

How did we overlook that? Well, it was providence. It wasn't time yet, but now it is time to do something to honor Mordecai. And as he's wondering what should be done to honor Mordecai, there's a sound out in the court and who should it be but Haman who's coming to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai.

Don't you just love the irony of God and his providence? So Haman's invited into the king's present, but before he could open his mouth and make his request, the king speaks first and he says, what should be done for the man that the king delights to honor?

And never did two men's minds refuse to meet than that day because the king is obviously thinking of Mordecai and Haman, proud man that he is, well, who else would he be thinking about wanting to honor than me?

[32 : 41] I'm the one that he's made number two. I'm the one invited to the queen's banquet alone with him and so they're thinking about different people, the king about Mordecai, Haman about himself.

So Haman says, well, what shall be done for the one the king delights to honor? Well, let him wear a robe that the king has worn and let him ride a horse that the king has ridden, one with a royal crest on its head and then let one of the king's most noble princes lead him on the horse through the city streets proclaiming before him, this is what is done for the man the king delights to honor and the king exclaimed, that's it, Haman.

That's exactly right. Now you go get the robe and the horse and do just as you've suggested for Mordecai, the Jew, who sits at the king's gate.

Do you know him? Do it for Mordecai, the Jew, and don't neglect any detail that you've mentioned. never was a command more reluctantly obeyed as Haman paraded Mordecai through the city streets proclaiming, this is what is done for the one that the king delights to honor.

And he hurried home in grief to cry on his wife's shoulders and those of his friends and they too are followers of fate and they see in this the turning of the tables of fate.

[34 : 09] And the fate is against Haman and so they said, since Mordecai before whom your downfall has started is of Jewish origin, you cannot stand against him. You will surely come to ruin.

Well, with friends like that, who needs enemies? They were worse comforters than Job's friends, weren't they? But just then the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried Haman off to Esther's banquet and the next link is chapter 7, the hanging of Haman instead of Mordecai.

For as the three were drinking wine, the king asked Queen Esther, what is your petition? And she says, if I have found favor with you, O king, and if it pleases your majesty, grant me my life.

This is my petition. And spare my people. This is my request. For I and my people have been sold for destruction and slaughter and annihilation.

And the king's reply shows how isolated he was from what was going on in his own kingdom as he asked the queen, well, who is this? Where is the man who has dared to do such a thing?

[35 : 20] And Esther pulls no punches but says, the adversary and enemy is this vile Haman. And then Haman was terrified before the king and queen.

The king got up in a rage, left his wine, went into the outer palace garden, but Haman, realizing his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life.

And just as the king returned from the palace garden, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining and the king exclaimed, will he even molest the queen while she's with me in the house?

And as soon as the words left the king's mouth, they covered the head of Haman and one of the king's eunuchs told the king about the 75-foot gallows that Haman had built beside his house on which to hang Mordecai who spoke up to help the king.

Hang him on it, the king said. So they hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai and then the king's fury subsided. The queen now told the king how she was related to Mordecai and he exalted Mordecai to the position that Haman had had second in command to the king much like Joseph was elevated second to Pharaoh.

[36 : 45] But there was still the evil decree to annihilate the Jews on the 13th day of the 12th month. And so Esther begged the king to overrule that decree.

But he says no, the law of the Medes and the Persians can't be revoked. But another decree could be issued. And so he tells Mordecai and the queen to do that. Make your own decree and he will have it sealed with his own ring.

So they crafted a decree and had it sent throughout the empire to all 127 provinces on fast horses especially bred for the king. And the king's edict was this.

It granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves to destroy, kill, and annihilate any armed forces of any nationality or province that might attack them and to do so on one day, the 13th day of the 12th month, the same day as the decree of disaster.

So throughout the empire, the Jews' sorrow was turned to joy. and their mourning into glad feasting and celebration and gift exchange. And the city of Susa that had housed the king's palace joined in the joy of celebration whereas once they were bewildered they're now celebrating.

[38 : 05] And when the day arrived the Jews did just that. They assembled and they protected themselves and they killed all their enemies who attacked them. And so on that day the victors or the victims became the victors.

on the very day that was planned for their destruction. And every year thereafter the Jews have kept the day of Purim the day of the casting of the lots celebrated by Jews to remember their deliverance.

And many people were told of other nationalities became Jews because the fear of the Jews had fallen upon them. So what did we learn about God's providence in the book of Esther?

Well the the hiddenness of God's providence as he's nowhere mentioned but everywhere working quietly behind the scenes such that unbelieving eyes miss him all together.

He hides himself so wondrously as though there were no God. Blessed are your eyes if they see. if they've been enlightened by the light from heaven to see the invisible hand of God working in your life in your nation in your world even as providence was working in Esther's world.

[39 : 29] Second lesson God's providential control clearly extends to the sinful acts of sinful men. It's God upholding and controlling all his creatures in all their actions all the time all their actions include sinful actions of sinful men.

What have we had in subordinate wives harsh husbands abuse of alcohol uncontrollable rage a harem of lust unjust laws abuse of power runaway pride murderous hatred it's all here there's sin everywhere within this Persian government and over it all God reigns as king and conductor and even uses their sinful acts to accomplish his good and holy will and he does that without in any way participating in the sin or in any way tempting them to sin or being the author of sin he does it without removing their own human responsibility not violating their own freedom of will which itself is bound to their depraved human nature and yet he controls it all to see his plan brought to fulfillment controlling their sinful thoughts and deeds third lesson

God's providence extends to the smallest of things even the outcome of a lot that's thrown a dice that's thrown we have that in our memory packs Proverbs 1633 it's every outcome is from the Lord the mood of the king such a small thing but sometimes large outcomes hinge on little events and that's not only true in Esther it's true in all of history some very little insignificant things are often the linchpin on which the whole battle goes the whole unfolding of the situation small things little things like the reading materials chosen for an insomniac king what shall he read you know that's a little thing in itself what did he read that night he couldn't sleep and yet perhaps that more than any other event becomes the thing that turns the tables and makes the king pro Mordecai the Jew number four

God's providence extends to the timing of events God not only controls what happens but when it happens and that's huge because as we see sometimes timing is everything none of these links in and of themselves are all that earth shattering but it's the coordination and the exquisite timing of all these events that's the wonder of God's providence like Haman fixing to hang Mordecai on the very morning that the king is fixing to honor Mordecai that's an amazing timing of bringing those two things together so God takes things that are maybe ordinary we should say and works them into something very extraordinary so you've got one of those old clocks with all the gears and it's just a bunch of pieces before you and not anything really there on the table looks very significant but take those gears and put them together and work them together and they will turn hands on the face of a clock and they will keep time accurate time little ordinary things but when working together they do something rather unusual think how ordinary these things were

Esther keeping her secret whereas the two couldn't keep their assassination plot a secret disobedient wife the rage of a king those things happen all the time right I mean the overreaction of husbands of the winning of a beauty contest a proud ego that's upset because somebody is not honoring them like they think a feast for three ordinary events but it's the timing and coordination of those events that brought about an extraordinary result so providence takes a lot of ordinary and works them together to produce what is extraordinary it's like a recipe and all the ingredients there they are individually distasteful and nothing really special but when they're mixed together and they're worked together they can produce a lovely something to eat that's

[44 : 36] Romans 8 28 I like the King James we know that God works all things together for the good he's working them he's mixing them together he's putting all the ingredients into the pan and he's working them together and it's the working of them together that turns out the wonders of God's providence to turn something that is in and of itself bad and evil into something that is beautiful and good number five with God in control of his universe a lot can happen in just one day we saw that didn't we in Joseph's life as well so we see it here in Esther on one evening Haman is confidently building a high gallows in which to hang his enemy and on the next day he's hanging providence to completely turn the tables just one day his purposes can ripen fast unfolding hour by hour providence can work very quickly because all the variables are in the hands of

God and he can quickly turn your sorrow into joy as he did for the Jews and he can quickly turn your joy into sorrow as he did for Haman and so the scriptures say do not boast about tomorrow for you do not know what a day may bring forth you don't know what God might do by his providence in just one day you like Haman may be enjoying God's good gifts of life today and wake up in hell tomorrow don't boast about tomorrow providence can accomplish much in one day get into Christ where everything will be made to work together for your good not for your damnation and then sixthly and lastly God's providence proves the faithfulness of God to his promises God's made some wonderfully great promises to his people and his providence is employed to see that they happen so

God makes the promise and then his hand of promise excuse me promise providence God makes the promise his mouth speaks and then his hand of providence brings to pass what his mouth promised and it never fails whatever I have said that will I do and so any study of the providence of God ought to deepen a sense of the faithfulness of God to his word many many promises have been made to us but especially we think of that oft repeated promise of his great plan of salvation that came with ever increasing clarity throughout the scriptures that from the Jews from the family of Abraham a male descendant would come to bring salvation to those from every nation that would trust in him and we've just seen another instance of the threatened annihilation of the Jewish people with all the human authority and power to pull it off and yet at the end of the book of

Esther there's still a surviving Jewish population from which the Messiah who was promised to come with an everlasting salvation it's it's it's just one chapter in the big story then isn't it it's it's a promise that the Jews would remain a people because from them would come the savior so we owe our salvation to the providence of God for fulfilling that promise keeping alive a remnant of Jews so that it was a Jewish virgin that laid her son in the manger a Jewish Jesus just as had been promised and yet was threatened to extinction at many different points along the way of history but providence kept history on track kept the Jews alive and brought Jesus to birth at the right time in the right way well he's come and that's what we're celebrating this time of year he's come he's he's lived the perfect life we were commanded to live and didn't live and he's died the atoning death that we would have died forever in hell and never got to the end of the payment have you trusted him have you put all your hopes for heaven upon this

Jesus that's what the whole book's about that's why providence is active in the world it was to bring forth this savior that you might be saved would God go to all of that and you just wrinkle your nose up and say I'd rather not I like it my way rather than his way what a sad reality what a sad response and yet that is the message of the new testament isn't it that light has come into the world and men love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil he came to his own and his own received him not oh but as many as did receive him he gave the right to become children of God receive the savior that's what the book of Esther is all about that's what the book of Genesis and Joseph's story is all about it's what the providence of God is all about to bring a savior can you see how this book of Esther would have been an encouragement to the Jews living in the 5th century under very dark providences they're scattered they're no longer in the promised land they're scattered throughout the whole world is God with us or his promise is still going to be fulfilled and here we have this little book what was happening in the very center the place where the king was reigning at that time

[50 : 53] Xerxes and what God did to preserve his people throughout the world what an encouragement for them to keep waiting God will fulfill his promise and so it was with that come thou long expected Jesus this was the encouragement of their hope and we want to close with a song that reminds us of that same posture oh come oh come Emmanuel but we too are waiting on promises he's come but he's coming again and so we too are needing encouragement well this is the world we live in it's the world where God reigns he is most high and he's working his plans and everything he's promised his providence is fulfilling so here's the God to trust here's the God to hope in here's the God to wait upon here's a God to pray to and most of all here's a God to bow before and worship he's an awesome God whatever I have said that will

I do pray with me almighty God our father a story like this in history reminds us just how determined you were to bring your son into the world to save sinners we can't help but see your heart in that that you so love the world that you sent your one and only son into this world sent him to the cross there to be damned for hell deserving sinners that whoever would believe on him would not perish but have everlasting life don't let any here peruse your works of providence in history and see how you worked all of these things out perfectly according to your plan to bring this savior forth don't let anyone walk away from this savior unimproved but to fall before him to confess have mercy on me the sinner and thank you that you are just as delighted to save sinners as you were to bring the savior into the world do it this day send us on our way trusting you and worshiping you and waiting for that second coming of our savior we thank you in

Jesus name amen