



THE CONTEST AND THE CROWN

Esther 1-2

In these first chapters of Esther, we meet a proud, pagan king and two Jewish people who seem to have little interest in following God. But through these people, the unseen and unnamed Player in this drama is setting the stage for dramatic events of eternal importance.

One of the interesting things about the book of Esther is that God never makes a direct appearance. His name does not even appear in the book. But although God's name is not mentioned, His sovereign hand is evident. He is involved, even though He is invisible.

And when we come to the end of this book, beloved, the true hero is not going to be Mordecai or even Esther. The hero will be a faithful God who moves behind the scene, directing people and events to preserve His chosen people.

The first two verses of Esther set the historical context for us:

In the days of Ahasuerus . . . who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces . . . when [he] sat on his royal throne in Susa.

Ahasuerus is another name for the Persian king Xerxes, who ruled the Persian Empire more than four centuries before the birth of Christ (486 to 465 BC).

Ahasuerus was a proud, ambitious king. He wanted to expand his empire; so, verse 3 informs us that he



Persian Empire, India to Cush

throws a feast for his military leaders and all the VIPs in the kingdom.

The guest list included “the army of Persia and Media and the nobles and governors of the provinces.” The king is going to reveal his power and wealth to them to prove he’s capable of going to war with Greece, which he will do a year later.

Verse 4 says, “He showed . . . his royal glory and the splendor and pomp of his greatness for . . . 180 days.” So, for six months, Ahasuerus shows off to his leaders as they lay the groundwork for a military campaign.

Now when the king and his military guests are thoroughly drunk and rather bored, as verse 10 implies



(imagine a party lasting six months), the king calls for his queen, Vashti, to come before him in her royal crown. Shockingly, she refuses to come. And frankly, she deserves our respect here. She does not want to put herself on display as the king's trophy before a bunch of drunken men.

Some commentators, citing ancient sources, suggest that it was common practice among the Persian kings to parade their favorite concubines or wives unclothed before guests in order to show off their beauty. This appears to be the case here. History tells us Xerxes had 360 concubines and several wives, but it's Vashti whom he demands to appear unclothed—decorated only by her crown—before these men.

And she refuses.

This mighty king who commands one of the greatest armies in the world cannot command his own wife. And for good reason. She is not going to take part in this lewd display.

So, here's the irony we are going to see in these first two chapters of Esther: Vashti is willing to lose her crown in order to keep her character, but Esther is willing to sacrifice her character in order to win the crown.

What the king should have done was drink a big pot of coffee, sober up, and apologize to his wife. But instead, he calls for his advisors.

They argue that Vashti must be deposed, otherwise the whole kingdom will be thrown into chaos. They tell the king, "Let a royal order go out ... that Vashti is never again to come before King Ahasuerus" (verse 19).

God is invisibly maneuvering behind the scene, so that a Jewish queen will end up in the palace, eventually protecting her people from annihilation.

Esther 2 opens with the words, "After these things." Several years have passed between these two chapters. Ahasuerus has been defeated by the Greek army and has returned home humiliated. And now he misses the wife he banished for having done the right thing.

Verse 1 tells us:

After these things, when the anger of King Ahasuerus had abated, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her.

The king's advisors know they had better come up with another plan, so they propose that he gather all the beautiful young virgins in the kingdom to his harem. Verses 3 and 4 record, "Let their cosmetics be given them. And let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." In other words, "Let's have a contest, and the new queen will be the woman who most pleases the king."

At this point we are introduced to Mordecai and Esther. Verse 5 tells us that Mordecai is of the family of "Kish, a Benjaminite." His family was among the Jewish people who had been deported from Israel by King Nebuchadnezzar (verse 6).

Verse 7 records that Mordecai had become the guardian of his beautiful cousin, named Hadassah in Hebrew but known by her Persian name, Esther. Mordecai seizes the opportunity to advance their lives in the Persian Empire by entering Esther in this immoral contest (verse 8).

Many try to argue that Esther was taken into the king's harem against her will. That would certainly sanitize this situation. However, the Hebrew verb "to take" here in verse 7—"When her father and her mother died, Mordecai *took* her as his own daughter"—well, that is the same verb used in verse 8 to tell us, "Esther also was *taken* into the king's palace." So, it does not imply force.

The uncomfortable truth here, beloved, is that Esther willingly enters this contest. Unfortunately, neither Esther nor Mordecai have much concern at all about following the law of God until later on. Both she and Mordecai have been absorbed into this pagan Persian culture, and Esther's beauty now gives them the opportunity to rise to the top of Persian society.

Listen, the storyline in the book of Esther is not that God uses faithful people but that God can use



unfaithful people to bring about His purposes. And I am so glad He does.

Now when Esther arrives at the palace, she impresses the official in charge of these women, but verse 10 informs us, “Esther had not made known her people or kindred, for Mordecai had commanded her not to make it known.” In other words, Mordecai has said, “Listen, Esther, if you want to win this contest, make sure nobody knows you are a foreigner—an Israelite. Let’s just keep that little secret to ourselves.”

I wonder how many Christians today live and work and play, and people around them have no idea they are Christians? It’s their little secret.

Well, after twelve months, these women have been given beauty treatments and instructions on court etiquette; and each woman is given one night to spend with the king.

When it’s Esther’s turn, we read this in verse 17:

The king loved Esther more than all the women, and she won grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

Esther wins the contest. But at what cost? She engaged in a night of immorality with the king and then, to top it off, violates God’s law even further by marrying this idolatrous man.

But in spite of this, God is at work. The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord (Proverbs 21:1); it is not the king who places Esther on the throne, but God. God is moving people into place to protect His chosen people.

Let me say it again, beloved, when you come to the end of this book, the hero of this narrative is not going to be Mordecai or Esther. It will be God—and God alone.

In what ways have you faced the opportunity to gain a worldly prize or position but on some level your testimony before God, it turned out, was the cost? What did you learn about temptation and consequences from this experience? How would you advise a fellow believer whose facing similar temptations?

What heart-motivations might contribute to a believer keeping their faith in Jesus under wraps? Why is such a choice counter-productive to their relationship with God? Their circle of fellowship? Their influence on unbelievers?



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DEFINING MOMENTS

Esther 3-4

It is easy to question why we must suffer through difficult situations. As chapters 3 and 4 of Esther illustrate, however, we can be assured that in the subtle work of God's providence, He has placed us exactly at the time and place where we can most effectively serve Him.

We're about to witness the signature moment in the life of Esther. Chapter 3 introduces us to the villain in the book of Esther—a wicked man named Haman. Verse 1 records that King Ahasuerus promotes this man “above all the officials who were with him.” He is second only to the king.

We also learn here that Haman is an “Agagite.” He's a descendant of the Amalekite king, Agag. The Amalekites were long-standing enemies of Israel. King Agag was executed by Samuel the priest back in 1 Samuel 15 as judgment from God.

Even after King Agag's death, his descendants continued to spread, and a deep hatred of the Jews spread with them. And now a descendant of King Agag is prime minister in the kingdom of Persia.

We are told back in chapter 2, verse 21, that Mordecai is now an official, “sitting at the king's gate,” more than likely appointed by Queen Esther. Now “sitting at the king's gate” does not mean he is sitting at the end of the king's driveway. The gate is a reference to the administration building inside the palace. Esther 3:2 records what happened whenever Haman, Mr. Prime Minister, showed up for work:

All the king's servants who were at the king's gate bowed down

and paid homage to Haman . . .

But Mordecai did not bow down.

Why not? Verse 4 implies that it has something to do with Mordecai being Jewish. I personally believe Mordecai is finally deciding to take a stand for the God of Israel. Bowing would have been akin to idolatry. And he is not going to do it.

Haman is filled with fury over Mordecai's lack of respect, but he holds back. Verse 6 tells us Haman sees this as the perfect opportunity to “destroy all the Jews . . . throughout the whole kingdom.”



People bowing before a ruler



Now you need to understand that this hatred Haman has for the Jewish people—this desire to kill them all—runs much deeper than some old family feud. His hatred is inspired by the unseen enemy of God and His people. Throughout human history Satan keeps trying to destroy God's covenant nation in order to erase God's promise of a future nation of Israel in a future kingdom of Christ on earth.

So, Haman's just another pawn in the hand of a desperate devil who is trying to destroy God's chosen nation. Haman is not the first person to try to annihilate the Jews, and he certainly is not the last. The hatred for Jewish people traces back to an ongoing, invisible conflict between the Kingdom of Darkness and the Kingdom of Light.

Verse 7 tells us that Haman cast lots, or "Pur," to determine the perfect day for killing the Jews. That day selected would be eleven months later, according to verse 13.

Now Haman has to get the king on board, so he approaches the king and speaks to him:

"There is a certain people . . . dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces . . . they do not keep the king's laws, so . . . it is not to the king's profit to tolerate them." (verse 8)

Haman does not identify the people he is referring to, but he convinces the king that they are a threat. In verse 9, Haman even offers to donate "10,000 talents of silver [to] the king's treasuries" to cover the costs of this annihilation. This amounts to millions of dollars in today's economy. No doubt Haman plans to confiscate the wealth of the Jews and pay himself back many times over.

The king agrees to let Haman do as he pleases, and a royal edict is sent throughout the empire, instructing the Persian people "to annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children . . . and to plunder their goods" on this designated day (verse 13).

Even when the devil seems to be moving the pieces around the chessboard of human history, God is arranging it all to fulfill His divine purposes.

Satan seems to have won the day; but remember this: even when the devil seems to be moving the pieces around the chessboard of human history, God is arranging it all to fulfill His divine purposes.

Chapter 4 gives us the reaction of the Jewish people. Verse 1 says, "Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes . . . and he cried out with a loud and bitter cry." Tearing your clothing was a symbol of having a broken heart; and all throughout the land, there is weeping and fasting among the Jewish people.

Now Esther is secluded in the palace and unaware of this decree. So, Mordecai gets word to her and tells her what is happening. We read here in verse 8 that he urges her "to go to the king to beg his favor and plead with him on behalf of her people."

But Esther is not so sure. She sends word back to Mordecai in verse 11 that anyone who "goes to the king . . . without being called" will be put to death unless the king extends his scepter, indicating his favor. So, she has a major legal problem here.

But there is a personal problem as well. Esther admits to Mordecai that she has not been called to see the king for a month now; he might *already* be displeased with her in some way. So, as far as Esther is concerned, the timing could not be worse!



Mordecai's reply to Esther is powerful. He delivers three incentives for Esther to act on behalf of her people.

First, he tells her in verse 13 *she cannot escape in the palace*. In other words, even though it has been about five years since she married the king and he still doesn't know she is Jewish, the truth is going to come out. She cannot escape this decree.

Second, *she cannot erase God's promise*. Mordecai says here in verse 14:

"If you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish."

Now Mordecai hasn't exactly been a model of faithfulness, but here he alludes to God's covenant faithfulness to Israel. He basically says to Esther, "If you don't help, God will intervene in some other way."

The third incentive for Esther to act is that *she cannot ignore God's providence*. In verse 14 Mordecai delivers that classic challenge: "Who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

In other words, "Esther, you didn't win that crown because of your beauty; you won it because of God's strategy. He placed you in the palace to be His agent of deliverance. This is your defining moment, Esther; this is your moment to stand and speak on behalf of God's people."

And let me tell you, this grips Esther's heart. For the first time, she acknowledges the need to go to God for help as fasting was typically accompanied by prayer.

She tells Mordecai in verse 16:

"Gather all the Jews . . . and hold a fast on my behalf . . . I

and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish."

Wow, what an example for us today. Defining moments for you and me today might not be as dramatic. They might be small steps of obedience that identify us as disciples of Jesus Christ. Defining moments can be those small acts of faith when we simply trust God with our lives.

So, take a stand today; identify yourself with your Savior and the people of God; live with the understanding that you are who you are and where you are, right now, for such a time as this.

In what ways can you relate to Mordecai's spiritual awakening that led to taking a stand for God? What moved your heart to draw near to God? What wayward or struggling believer or curious unbeliever might benefit from hearing your story wisely told?

Are you facing impossible odds today, even if only on a small scale? The convictions of Mordecai and Esther hold many lessons. How does their experience stir you to face your current trial with faith and courage? Why is prayer such an important step in surrendering your heart to God's providence?

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A SERIES OF TWISTS AND TURNS

Esther 5-7

Unbelievers see in the events of life coincidences, fate, and luck. Those who know the God of the Bible recognize it is His hand at work in all things, assuring His promises are fulfilled and His will is done. Esther 5-7 gives us a glimpse of His behind-the-scenes activities.

In this historic drama in the book of Esther, so much of what happens next hangs on a sleepless night in the king's palace. As we begin here in chapter 5, we are going to try to keep up with all the surprising twists and turns.

After three days of fasting, Esther approaches the king as planned, at the risk of her own life. Her fears are put to rest, however, as verse 2 says, "She won favor in his sight, and he held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand."

He is evidently in a good mood because he promises to give her whatever she wants. But all she wants to do is to invite the king and Haman, his prime minister, to come to a private dinner.



Ruins of Susa

During her three-day fast, the wisdom of God obviously was at work in Esther's mind and heart. She formulated this plan to get the king and Haman alone with her and away from the public embarrassment that is going to come to the king when he discovers his own hand has effectively signed the queen's death warrant. At this point, neither the king nor Haman know that she is one of the Jewish people.

At this private banquet, the king asks Esther what she wants. She replies to him in verse 8, "Let the king and Haman come to the feast that I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said."

Was Esther paralyzed with fear at this moment? No, I personally believe God has providentially moved Esther to postpone making her request. You see, between this banquet and the next one, several things are going to transpire that set the stage for a dramatic deliverance.

For his part, Haman could not be prouder of himself. He has just been invited by the queen to a second private banquet. Verse 9 says:

*Haman went out that day joyful
and glad of heart. But when Ha-*



man saw Mordecai . . . that he neither rose nor trembled before him, he was filled with wrath against Mordecai.

When Haman gets home, he recounts for his wife and friends how the king has promoted him and how the queen has invited him to her private banquets with the king.

But he adds here in verse 13, “Yet all this is worth nothing to me, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate.” Despite everything he is enjoying, he’s distracted by the hatred he carries toward the Jewish people—and this one Jewish man in particular.

Haman’s wife and friends advise him to build a gallows and then ask the king to let him hang Mordecai the next morning. That will get rid of Mordecai! Chapter 5 concludes by saying, “This idea pleased Haman, and he had the gallows made.”

So, Mordecai is surely going to hang the next day unless God does something during the night to save his life. And does God ever do something!

Chapter 6 tells us what happened next:

On that night the king could not sleep. And he gave orders to bring the book of memorable deeds, the chronicles, and they were read before the king. (verse 1)

The king can’t sleep, so he has someone read to him from the historical records. He assumes that will knock him right out. Yet providentially, the servant reads from a five-year-old report telling how Mordecai had discovered a plot to assassinate the king and relayed this information to Esther, saving the king’s life. Chapter 2 ended by giving us that brief account. But there’s more. The record indicates that Mordecai was never honored for his loyalty to the king.

God doesn’t just deliver us from the problems of life; He develops us through the problems of life.

So now it is early morning, and Haman arrives at the palace to petition the king to hang Mordecai.

But before Haman can speak, the king asks him, “What should be done to the man whom the king delights to honor?” (verse 6). Haman thinks the king is talking about him.

It sounds like Haman has given this some thought already, from his response in verses 8-9:

“Let royal robes be brought, which the king has worn, and the horse that the king has ridden . . . lead him on the horse through the square of the city, proclaiming before him: ‘Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.’”

Haman has to be thinking that with this public honor, along with the execution of Mordecai and another private banquet with the king and queen, this is going to be the best day of his life!

Can you imagine the shock when the king says to him in verse 10, “Hurry . . . do so to Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king’s gate”? This is the beginning of the *worst* day in his life!

Haman returns home to relate to his wife and friends how he had to honor Mordecai. They offer him no comfort at all. In fact, they warn him in verse 13, “If



Mordecai . . . is [truly] of the Jewish people, you will not overcome him but will surely fall before him.” And with that fearful prediction, Haman heads to the palace for his second private banquet with the king and queen.

After dinner, the king again asks his wife what her request is. And now—at the perfect time in God’s plan—she answers here in chapter 7, verses 3-6:

“Let my life be granted me for my wish, and my people for my request. For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated.” . . . Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, “Who is he, and where is he, who has dared to do this?” And Esther said, “A foe and enemy! This wicked Haman!”

The truth is finally out. Haman is stunned to learn Esther is Jewish. The king is enraged and rushes out of the room to think about what to do next, while Haman pleads for his life from Esther. When the king comes back inside, he finds Haman falling on Esther’s couch.

Persian law allowed no man within seven paces of the queen. In fact, touching the king’s wife was punishable by death.¹

The king sees Haman as being physically aggressive and says in verse 8, “Will he even assault the queen in my presence, in my own house?” One of the servants, steps forwards to reveal that Haman has just built a gallows on which to hang Mordecai, the man

who had saved the king’s own life. And that does it. Haman is taken out and hanged on that gallows.

What a series of twists and turns! And it all reveals the hand of the master-mover of human history—our sovereign, unseen God. He placed Esther on the throne, allowed Mordecai to uncover a plot, disrupted the king’s sleep, and timed everything perfectly.

Now why not deliver Esther and Mordecai and the Jewish people without this hair-raising plot and the anguish of a murderous edict? Well, we don’t know all the reasons, but what we do know is that even to this day God doesn’t just deliver us *from* the problems of life; He develops us *through* the problems of life.

How often do you face problems in your life, and you automatically stop to thank Him for developing you to be more like Him?

This drama has changed Esther and Mordecai forever. They are not the same people; they are now openly taking a stand in their world with the people of God. In fact, His work is only beginning to show fruit in their lives. There is much more to come.

Revisit Esther chapter 4, what two influences, noted above, did God use to prepare her to “hear” and accept His delay? How has the counsel of godly people and praying given you courage and wisdom to trust God’s will for your life?

¹ Anthony Tomasino, “Esther” in *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, vol. 3, ed. John H. Walton (Zondervan, 2009), 496.





INVISIBLE . . . INVINCIBLE!

Esther 8–10

Esther and her cousin Mordecai are the heroes of the book of Esther. But behind these two is the ultimate Hero of the book to whom all glory belongs. God is the one we see working through Esther and Mordecai and directing events to deliver His people.

It's easy to think that with the death of Haman, Esther's work is now finished. The truth is, she is actually needed now more than ever. Haman might be dead, but his edict of death is still very much alive.

Chapter 8 opens with the promotion of Mordecai to prime minister. Just imagine this. These two cousins, Mordecai and Esther, now occupy the two most powerful positions in the Persian Empire, next to the king. God has orchestrated an amazing turnaround in their lives.

Just don't forget that the royal decree that declared a day when the Persians could annihilate the Jewish people and plunder their wealth, is still in force. Esther cannot be content until this is resolved. Verse 3 tells us:

She fell at [the king's] feet and wept and pleaded with him to



Illuminated Esther scroll to be read at Purim

avert the evil plan of Haman the Agagite and the plot that he had devised against the Jews.

Specifically, she says to him in verse 5, “Let an order be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman . . . which he wrote to destroy the Jews.”

Well, that is not going to be easy, as we can tell from the king's response to Esther in verse 8:

“But you may write as you please with regard to the Jews, in the name of the king, and seal it with the king's ring, for an edict written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's ring cannot be revoked.”

In other words, not even the king can revoke his previous edict—this is the law of the Medes and Persians. But he comes up with a clever alternative. He suggests that Mordecai write his own proclamation



that counteracts the first one. And the king agrees to seal it with his signet ring.

Mordecai writes a new edict that essentially gives the Jews throughout the empire the right to organize and take up arms to defend themselves against any attack. We are told here in verse 13 that copies of the decree issued in Susa, the capital, are to be quickly distributed throughout the empire. Verse 14 tells us that couriers mounted on swift horses deliver the news throughout the empire.

The Greek historian Herodotus recorded that the Persian Empire was connected by postal stations every 14 miles. They invented the original Pony Express. Herodotus's description of the diligence of these message carriers gave us the famous words: "Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night stays these courageous couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds."¹ These lines, which come from the time of Esther and the Persian Empire, are chiseled in granite over the New York City Post Office on 8th Avenue.²

Earlier this pony express had brought news of death to the Jewish people, but now it is bringing news of deliverance.

Verse 17 records that the Jewish people began to celebrate with gladness and joy. In fact, it says, "Many from the peoples of the country declared themselves Jews, for fear [awe] of the Jews had fallen on them." In other words, many Persians saw the miraculous hand of God in all of this, and they were in awe—even to the point that many of them aligned themselves with the Jewish people as proselytes.

Now in Esther 9, verse 1 sums up what happens about nine months later, on the day when the two edicts take effect:

On the very day when the enemies of the Jews hoped to gain the mastery over them, the reverse occurred: the Jews gained mastery over those who hated them.

Verse 2 continues: "The Jews gathered in their cities . . . And no one could stand against them, for the fear of them had fallen on all peoples." Those who dared attack the Jews met with disaster. Even regional officials sided with the Jewish people out of respect for the Jewish prime minister Mordecai, whose fame was now empire wide.

Verses 6-10 inform us that in the capital of Susa, the Jews killed 500 men that day, including the ten sons of Haman. But then Esther does something surprising. In verse 13 she goes to the king and begs him to give her people one more day to defend themselves. Evidently, she has discovered a plot in the capital city of Susa, more than likely devised by Persians loyal to Haman and his family. She also asks the king to publicly display the bodies of Haman's ten sons to discourage any further uprisings.

The king agrees, and another 300 Persian enemies die in Susa; and according to verse 16, 75,000 enemies of the Jewish people are killed throughout the empire.

It's important to notice that three times here the text says that the Jews did not lay their hands on any plunder (verses 10, 15, 16). They defended themselves but did not enrich themselves, even though legally they had been given that right. The Jewish people were interested in defense, not vengeance. This must have greatly impressed their Persian neighbors.

My friend, do you want to impress your world? Well remember, vengeance is fueled by bitterness and anger, and it will never be satisfied. In fact, it will rob you of your testimony and your joy. There is no vengeance here, so it's no surprise that joy dominates the remainder of chapter 9.

Esther and Mordecai are not about to let the deliverance of the Jewish people be forgotten by future generations. So, they establish an annual two-day thanksgiving celebration of this event.

These days, verse 26 tells us, are called "Purim, after the term Pur." You might remember that Haman cast "pur," or lots, to determine what day to attack the Jews. Well, that word is now used to mark this Jewish celebration.

They all make a commitment here. We read in verses 27-28:



The Jews firmly obligated themselves . . . that without fail they would keep these two days according to what was written . . . that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation.

Several thousand years later, beloved, the Feast of Purim is still celebrated among the Jewish people. There is a lot of feasting; and the book of Esther is read, with the audience booing and hissing every time Haman's name is read. Psalm 124 also is typically sung. That psalm includes these words from David:

If it had not been the LORD who was on our side . . . then they would have swallowed us up alive . . . Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth. (verses 2-3, 8)

The book of Esther concludes with a very brief chapter—chapter 10 is only three verses—and it focuses on the *honor* given to Mordecai. Even though this book is titled “Esther,” it could just as easily have been named after Mordecai.

He is honored to this day as a hero of Israel. And he ought to be. Note the closing verse:

Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Ahasuerus, and he was great among the Jews and popular with the multitude of

his brothers, for he sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all his people.

*God might be unseen,
but He is not absent
or uncaring*

With that, we come to the end of our wisdom journey through the book of Esther—a book in which God is not mentioned but is clearly revealed through His works.

And that is true for you today, beloved; God might be unseen, but He is not absent or uncaring; He might be *invisible*, but His plans and His power are *invincible*.

Read Romans 12:19 and then reflect on how obeying the command of that verse is God's grace to help you avoid falling into bitterness and anger.

How has your understanding of “God's providence” been affected by the history recorded in the book of Esther? If asked, how would you explain what “God's providence” is and why you trust it?

¹ Anthony Tomasino, “Esther,” in *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, ed. John H. Walton, vol. 3 (Zondervan, 2009), 480.

² “Postal Service Mission and Motto,” usps.com.

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