

The Women

Esther
Esther 4

Grace Bible Church
August 5, 2019

Introduction: How many of you wished you lived in _____ or another age. How many of you have heard someone say, "I don't want to have children because the days are _____." While it is a natural thought to many of us, it is not wise: "Say not, "Why were the former days better than these?" For it is not from wisdom that you ask this." (Ecclesiastes 7:10)

In the 2nd century, church father Justin Martyr named the four biggest challenges to Christians as "sexual immorality, magic, wealth and ethnic hatred". Sub out magic for technology (magic w/algorithms) and not much has changed for humanity in almost 2000 years. h/t @drewdyck. Justin Anderson

The book of Esther should force all of us to answer Mordecai's question: Have you been born for such a time as this? If you believe in the providence of God the answer is "_____."

To understand Esther's story there are some things we need to know:

- The key people:
 - Ahasuerus or Xerxes king of Persia from 486 to 465 BC. Xerxes was a real king in Persia. His drinking parties were well known. Xerxes did have an irrational temper, occasionally exhibiting fits of rage (1:12; 7:10). He did have a palace in Susa and a large harem there.
 - Mordecai- _____ and raises Esther after the death of her father, his uncle, reveals a plot to kill the king, eventually rises to a high place of prominence in Persia.
 - Haman- promoted to high office by Ahasuerus, offended by Mordecai's refusal to pay respect, convinces the king to command the _____ of the Jew's living in Persia.
 - Esther-a _____ Jewish woman, orphaned, raised and mentored by Mordecai
- Some key facts: Esther's life, like ours, was largely shaped by influences _____ her control:
 - Orphaned, _____ to the king's Harem by the king's messengers because she was beautiful
 - Ordered to the king's Harem because of his anger at his wife, Queen Vashti and the foolishness of his advisors
 - Threatened by the unbridled anger of an offended man (Haman) who has just been given a high position in the palace.
 - Her people are spared because the king _____ one night, he orders records brought in and he reads about Mordecai revealing a plot to kill him
- A few other lessons:
 - The story is similar to that of Joseph rising to leadership in Israel and Daniel in Babylon but there is one big difference. The author presents Mordecai and Esther's actions as _____, never evaluated by the narrator. Esther does not protest life in the harem as Daniel did. They hide their ethnicity. The author does not state the reason for Mordecai's disobedience to bow.
 - This book is a literary masterpiece with profound theology: God fulfills his redemptive promises not only through miracles but also through divine providence working through _____. Even the actions of people who do not know Him are woven into the patterns and purposes by the sovereign Lord alone. The book is full of irony, satire, and humor. Like a parable it makes its point with the whole story. The book is also known for a series of sudden turns of events that reverse the outcome of the story.

- The book answers the question: will God be faithful to his _____ people. The vast majority of the Jews did not return to the promised land following Cyrus' decree in 539 BC. The author was also explaining how the Feast of Purim which celebrates the deliverance of the Jews in Persia from genocide.
- God's name does not appear in the book. God is all powerfully present even where He is most conspicuously _____.

Key thought: It is _____ now. You have been born for this time and place. It is not a mistake! How do we live faithfully in our evil age. (Galatians 1:4)

- I. You must believe in the _____ of God. God is continually involved with all created things in such a way that he (1) keeps them existing and maintaining the properties with which he created them; (2) cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do; and (3) directs them to fulfill his purposes. Wayne Grudem. God is always at work around you. Henry Blackaby. J
- II. You need to know that God uses _____ people and ordinary events to accomplish His work. It is a testimony to God's faithfulness, not an excuse for our disobedience. (1 Corinthians 3:1-2)
- III. A crisis, whether national, local or personal, is an _____ to exercise faith. Crisis often shakes us out of our complacency and apathy. The middle part of this story is a communication between Mordecai and Esther through a mediator, one of her Eunuchs. The goal of this communication is to convince Esther to approach the king for her people.
 - A. Faith cannot ignore facts and wish they went away. Facts often jolt us.
 - B. Faith cannot ignore potential consequences and there is nothing wrong with considering them. If you don't act-you will not be spared. I do the king might refuse to see me. If I do the king might kill me. If I do the king might listen.
 - C. Facts and consequences must be interpreted. This is the job of faith. Has God put you here for such a time as this? There was no voice from heaven, not burning bush, no miracles signs she could perform to persuade the king to let her people go.
 - D. Encouragement can come from good counsel. Esther was a good listener. Most Christian counsel is about interpreting facts. Who are you listening to? 1) she listened to Mordecai when he told her to keep her ethnicity to herself. 2) She listened to Hegei, the king's eunuch in charge of the harem, when he told her what to take to the palace.
- IV. It won't hurt to know how the _____ works. Esther did not approach the king immediately with her concern for her people. She did not immediately reveal she was a Jew. She knew how the palace worked. (Proverbs 25:11; 15:23)
- V. You have to put your faith in God to work out the details of what you _____. _____ . How much of our worry and stress is caused by us trying to control or worrying about things beyond our control.

Conclusion: You were created, redeemed and called for such a time as this. You don't need to be heroic, uniquely gifted, or special, just be faithful with the opportunities God gives you.

We are constantly on a stretch, if not on a strain, to devise new methods, new plans, new organizations to advance the Church and secure enlargement and efficiency for the gospel. This trend of the day has a tendency to lose sight of the man or sink the man in the plan or organization. God's plan is to make much of the man, far more of him than of anything else. Men are God's method. The Church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men. E M Bounds