

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IN THE LIFE OF ESTHER

TEXT: ESTHER 4:1-17

Introduction:

1. The theme of the book of Esther is the Providence of God.
2. The word “providence” literally means pre-vision – a foreseeing. God knows everything – God is omniscient, and therefore He sees everything.
3. Taking this a step further, God not only sees everything, He prepares for that which is foreseen, so prevision leads to provision.
4. One of the names of God is *Jehovah-jireh*, which means, “the LORD will provide.”
5. Here is a good definition of Divine Providence from the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646):
“God the great Creator of all things does uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, according to His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will, to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.”
6. I would like to preach this morning on the providence of God in the life of Esther. Spurgeon said, “The Lord intended by the narrative of Esther’s history, to set before us a wonderful instance of His Providence, so that when we had viewed it with interest and pleasure, we might praise His name and then go on to acquire the habit of observing His hand in other histories, and especially in our own lives.”
7. “Especially in our own lives” – do you see the hand of God at work in your life? The songwriter put it this way:
There is an unseen hand to me,
That leads through ways I cannot see.
While going through this world of woe,
This hand still leads me as I go.

I’m trusting to the unseen hand,
That guides me through this weary land.
And some sweet day I’ll reach that strand,
Still guided by the unseen hand.
8. We can see God’s hand in the book of Esther, and all throughout the Word of God.

9. We see it in the life of Joseph. Joseph said to his brothers, “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good” (Gen. 50:20).
10. We see it in the life of Jonah. “The LORD sent out a great wind into the sea,” and “the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah” (1:4, 17).
11. We see it in the life of Ruth and Boaz. “And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech” (Ruth 2:3).
12. We see it in the life of Joseph and Mary. “And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed” (Luke 2:1).
13. There are many, many more examples found in the Bible, but this morning we will look at the providence of God in the book of Esther.
14. It is interesting to note that the name of God is not mentioned in the book of Esther. “Yet careful study can trace the planning and working of God throughout” (AT Pierson).

I. AN APPOINTED PERSON (4:14).

1. Esther was God’s appointed person – just like Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, David, Elijah, Mary, Paul, and many others.
2. Esther was chosen by God in a very unusual way. Consider the background to the story. Ahasuerus, the king of Persia, was a drunken, boastful, lascivious tyrant (1:11).
3. Vashti, his virtuous queen was too modest to allow herself to be put on display in front of the king’s drunken companions (1:11, 12). Therefore, she was shamefully divorced by her drunken, angry husband, and a new queen was sought (1:19).
4. Mordecai was Esther’s cousin, and he raised her as his own daughter (2:7). The Bible does not commend Mordecai for putting Esther in competition to be the new queen. It certainly was contrary to the laws of God.
5. Spurgeon said it was “dangerous to her soul in the highest degree. It would have been better for Esther to have been the wife of the poorest man of the house of Israel than to have gone into the den of the Persian despot. The Scripture does not excuse, much less commend, the wrong doing of Esther and Mordecai in thus acting, but simply tells us how Divine Wisdom brought good out of evil, even as the chemist distils healing drugs from poisonous plants.”

6. When considering the providence of God, we must remember God uses bad situations for good. That is why Joseph told his brothers, “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good” (Gen. 50:20).
7. Esther, being placed by the providence of God in the king’s mansion, was the means of defeating Satan and the wicked Haman the Agagite.
8. Haman was second in command to King Ahasuerus (3:1). He plotted the massacre of all the Jews in the kingdom (3:8, 9).
9. King Ahasuerus went along with Haman’s plan (3:10, 11).
10. Haman is referred to in the book of Esther as “the Agagite” because he was descended from the royal line of Agag. Way back in I Samuel 15, the LORD told King Saul to kill Agag, but Saul disobeyed the LORD and spared his life.
11. Therefore Samuel the prophet had to do Saul’s job for him. First Samuel 15:33 says, Samuel said to Agag, “As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women.” And then, “Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.”
12. Five hundred years passed from the death of Agag. And now the Jews were “scattered abroad and dispersed among the people,” and wicked Haman the Agagite was in supreme power at the court of Ahasuerus, the king of Persia.
13. Exodus 17:16 says, “Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.”
14. This “war with Amalek” was part of the conflict between God and Satan, good and evil, and Christ and antichrist.
15. This conflict with Amalek began back in the days of Moses. There was this lingering enmity between God and Amalek. And now Haman, the descendant of Amalek, was second-in-command to the king of Persia.
16. Meanwhile (by God’s providence), Mordecai, a Jew sat in the king’s gate. When he saw proud Haman walk by, he refused to pay him the homage which Haman demanded and which others begrudgingly granted.
17. Mordecai would not bow his head or bend his knee to haughty Haman, and this vexed Haman greatly. It especially bothered him because Mordecai was a Jew.
18. Haman asked that all the Jews might all be destroyed, and King Ahasuerus approved it. Taking his signet ring from off his finger, he bade Haman do with the Jews as seemed good to him (3:10, 11).

19. Thus God's chosen people were in the hands of wicked Haman the Agagite, who yearned to annihilate them.
20. AT Pierson said of this, "This is the Mystery of the Ages. Things, here and now, are not right; so much is wrong that one feels tempted to think at times that there is no God to hold the balances with an even hand...The silence of God – His apparent inaction and indifference, while wrong goes on and right is under foot, has stumbled the faith of many and wrecked the faith of not a few."
21. But the Book of Esther shows that God was indeed "holding the balances." God was working behind the scenes in a remarkable way.

II. AN APPOINTED PLACE (4:14)

1. Mordecai said to Esther, "Who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (4:14).
2. The place was "the kingdom" (4:14), i.e., the kingdom of Persia, but in a wider sense – the kingdom of God, because God provided for His people by using Esther to preserve them from death.
3. Esther was placed by God on the throne next to the king of Persia. She was God's instrument in a heathen land.
4. Are you God's instrument in God's appointed place?
5. Esther was God's appointed person, and so was her cousin Mordecai. A conspiracy was hatched against the king, which Mordecai discovered and passed on to Esther, who in turn notified the authorities (2:21-23).
6. Mordecai saved the king's life, but at the time the king didn't know it. But this was all part of the Lord's providential plan as we see later on in the book (6:1-14).
7. Things turned quickly after this, and in Esther chapter 7, wicked Haman is hanged (7:10).
8. "So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai" (7:10).
9. Psalm 9:16 says, "The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands."
10. The providence of God is seen in Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern were hired by the king to lead Hamlet to his death. But they themselves were killed. "For 'tis the sport to have the engineer hoist with his own petard" is the way Hamlet put it.
11. He meant, "to blow oneself up with one's own bomb; to be undone by one's own devices."

12. The providence of God is also illustrated when Hamlet says to his friend Horatio, “There’s a divinity that shapes our ends, Rough-hew them how we will.”
13. And then when Horatio advises Hamlet not to fight with Laertes, Hamlet replies, “there’s a special providence in the fall of a sparrow.”
14. Shakespeare was quoting Matthew 10:29. Our Lord said, “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.”
15. Oftentimes we do not know how God is working, why He does what He does, or what the outcome will be. But we must always remember – God is in control.
16. First Samuel 2:3 says, “The LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.”
17. God is working. Jesus said in John 5:17, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.”
18. Those who wait on God will find all wrongs will eventually be righted – if not in this life, then certainly in the next.
19. Spurgeon said, “Whatever mischief may be brewing against the cause of God and Truth, and I dare say there is very much going on at this moment, for neither the devil, nor the Jesuits, nor the atheists are long quiet, this we are sure of, the Lord knows all about it and He has His Esther and His Mordecai ready at their posts to frustrate their designs! The Lord has His men well placed and His ambushes hidden in their coverts to surprise His foes. We need never be afraid but what the Lord has forestalled His enemies and provided against their mischief. Every child of God is where God has placed Him for some purpose... God has put each one of you in the right place, even as a good captain well arranges the different parts of his army. And though we do not know His plan of battle, it will be seen during the conflict that He has placed each soldier where he should be...Forget not, then, the fact that God, in His Providence, places His servants in positions where He can make use of them!”

III. AN APPOINTED TIME (4:14)

1. “For such a time as this” (4:14). This was God’s appointed time.
2. It was God’s appointed time for Esther and for Mordecai.
3. It was God’s appointed time for Joseph in Egypt, and Daniel in Babylon.

4. God always has His appointed people at His appointed time. The Bible tells us this over and over again – Noah, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Nehemiah...and Esther.
5. When Mordecai advised Esther to compete in King Ahasuerus' worldly beauty contest, they had no idea how God would use them in such a remarkable way.
6. Esther just happened to be the most beautiful of the women gathered at the palace at that particular time (2:7-9).
7. Mordecai just happened to be sitting at the king's gate at the right time (2:21-23).
8. Daniel just happened to be available at the right time to interpret King Nebuchadnezzar's dream.
9. Joseph just happened to be in prison with Pharaoh's chief butler.
10. God is always on time. He has an appointed person, an appointed place, and an appointed time.

CONCLUSION:

1. I have read a few interesting biographies of Evangelist DL Moody. They point out that God brought Moody to Chicago when the city was just starting to grow rapidly.
2. Moody was an ambitious young man and went to this thriving boomtown to make a lot of money. But God called him to preach the Gospel and he went on to become one of the greatest preachers America has ever produced.
3. God placed DL Moody in Chicago. He was God's appointed man in God's appointed place at God's appointed time.
4. Make sure you are doing what God wants you to be doing and where God wants you to do it!