

# The God of Esther

by A.B. Simpson

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*God's providence is at work in the affairs of nations and individuals, using even the plans and pleasures of the ungodly for His greater purposes.*

**Scripture:** Esther 4:14, Psalm 76:10, Proverbs 21:1, Isaiah 46:10, Jeremiah 29:11, Matthew 5:16, Romans 8:28, Ephesians 2:10, Philippians 2:13, 1 Peter 4:10

**Topics:** "Divine Providence", "Courage in Crisis"

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## Description

A.B. Simpson explores the story of Esther, emphasizing how God orchestrates events for His glory and the deliverance of His people. He highlights Esther's courage to act in a time of crisis, reminding us that our positions and gifts are divine trusts meant for service. The sermon illustrates how God uses even the wrath of man to fulfill His purposes, and how He prepares His people for significant moments in history. Simpson encourages believers to recognize their roles in God's plan and to act decisively when called upon, as Esther did, for such a time as this.

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## Transcript

"Surely the wrath of man will praise You: the remainder of wrath You will restrain." (Psalm 76: 10.)

"For if you altogether hold your peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but you and your father's house shall be destroyed: and who knows whether you are come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14.)

We have been looking at the divine character and resources as illustrated in the lives of remarkable men occupying a high place in the stage of history and kingdom of God. We will now look at the revelation of God as it appears in a unique and very different situation, in the life of a lone girl and a despised man, far removed from sympathy and influence and called to face the most trying difficulties and the most terrific dangers. The story of Esther tells us how God can meet such a life and make the wrath of man to praise Him and the remainder thereof restrain.

The story is soon told. It is one of the romances of the Bible. It is a chapter from the reign of Xerxes, the rich and splendid king of Persia, whose mighty army of millions was defeated by the brave Greeks. The drama opens with a splendid feast costing millions of dollars. In the height of the gaiety the king called for his beautiful and favorite wife to appear before his drunken lords and gratify their coarse curiosity by what always is to an Eastern woman a sacrifice of modesty, the exhibition of her beautiful face. Vashti refused

and was deposed from her high place and another sought to fill it.

In the family of an upright Jew named Mordecai, was a beautiful maiden, his niece, and to her lot it fell in the providences of God to inherit the crown of Vashti and to become queen of Persia.

The favorite of Xerxes was a proud noble named Haman. Haman and his vanity were deeply wounded by the refusal of Mordecai to pay the worship and obeisance that he claimed from the people. Mordecai disdained to degrade himself at the feet of any man and so Haman tried to destroy him. The plot moves on with dramatic force. Haman was too proud to wreak his vengeance upon Mordecai alone, but determined upon a magnificent revenge, the destruction of his people, the entire Jewish nation scattered throughout the empire of Persia and numbering doubtless many millions. In an evil hour he won the consent of Xerxes and the decree went forth, signed by the king's royal signet, which none could reverse, that on a certain day the whole Jewish population could be massacred under official sanction. In addition to this he planned the destruction of Mordecai himself and even went so far as to erect the gallows on which he was to be hanged.

But God's providences began to work. First it came about that Mordecai was the instrument of saving the life of the king by revealing a secret plot upon his life, and after having been neglected for a long time, suddenly God laid upon the heart of the king the remembrances of his kindness and led him to issue a royal decree which Haman himself was compelled to carry out for a public tribute to Mordecai in the sight of the whole population and of the most distinguished character.

Mordecai did not rest in quiet inaction, but immediately called upon Esther to rise to the occasion and meet the great purpose for which God had exalted her to her high station. This meant nothing less than that Esther should go into the presence of her king and plead for the lives of her people. This was rendered peculiarly difficult by the fact that Esther herself had not been summoned into the king's presence for many days and she felt that her venture unbidden might cost her life. It was then that Mordecai addressed to her the stirring and solemn message of the text. "If you altogether hold your peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but you and your father's house shall be destroyed: and who knows whether you are come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

This decided her, and asking her uncle to help her by his prayers, she ventured into the presence of the king. God was with her. The golden scepter was stretched out and her royal lord bade her ask anything she chose even unto half of the kingdom. Esther was tactful enough not to press her petition too soon but she asked the king to a banquet that day and invited Haman to accompany him. But again Esther waited another day, renewing the invitation and still waiting on God to prepare the way and show her the very moment when she was to act. At last the crisis moment came and it came just after Mordecai had been signally honored by the public tribute ordered by the king. Haman had just returned from the hated service when he went into the presence of the king and queen to the banquet and then it was that Esther, turning indignantly upon him, demanded protection from his wickedness and cruelty for her people. Haman unwittingly in pleading for her mercy insulted her before the king, and then it was that the royal wrath would brook no delay but ordered his wicked courtier to immediate execution. Then Esther obtained not the reversal of the decree of the massacre which was impossible under the Persian law, but the issue of another decree under the royal seal by which the Jews throughout the empire were permitted to defend themselves and were even invited to do so under royal approval. This turned the scale on their side and when the eventful day came their threatened destruction was turned into a universal triumph and their

enemies fell before them while they had life, deliverance, honor and joy. The feast of Purim is the memorial of this great deliverance and to this day it is celebrated among the Hebrew people as one of the most joyous observances of all their sacred year.

This romantic story is full of spiritual lessons and revelations of God.

One, it teaches us that God rules in the affairs of nations and overrules political events for His glory and the establishment of His kingdom. Above the throne of the king of Persia was the authority of the King of kings and Lord of lords. Christ is "the head over all things to the church," and the government of nations and the events of providences are but the working out of God's higher will, the scaffolding on which He is building up His spiritual kingdom and His eternal purpose for His people. The very king of Persia arose in the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy. The very throne of Xerxes was but a foundation on which God had meant to build the story of Esther and her people. God used the kingdom to be at once a refuge for His people, a discipline for them in their sins, and an occasion for His wonderful providences in their deliverances.

Two, we see the plans and pleasures of the ungodly used by God for higher purposes. The costly and extravagant banquet of Xerxes, the deposition of his queen, and even his own selfish desire for the most beautiful maiden in his empire -- all these became links in God's providence for bringing Esther to the front and using her for the great trust which she should afterwards fulfill in the deliverance of His people.

And so the business and the pomp and pleasure of the world are simply occasions for God to introduce the history of His own people and the working out of some greater plan. Just as the court of Persia was but the home of Nehemiah and the house of Pharaoh the place for Moses to be trained, so Xerxes' place was but a providential door through which Esther might pass upon the stage of providence and work out her beautiful and glorious career of faith and victory.

Three, our gifts, qualities, talents, and stations in life are all part of the divine plan and trusts given us by God to be used for Him. Esther's beauty was not her own, but God's endowment. Esther's high and queenly place was not an opportunity for a selfish and splendid life, but was a door of service for God and her people. Her influence over the king was not given her that she might aggrandize her own interests and fortune, but that she might use it in time of need to help the cause of Jehovah. And so our natural qualities of person, our wealth, our social position, our plans, our public positions of power or influence -- these are all sacred trusts that God has placed in our hands for us to use for Him, and of us He says as He did of Esther, "Who knows whether you are come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Beloved, are we so using them? Do we count all things His and not our own, and are we watching every opportunity to turn them to account for the purpose for which they are given us?

Four, we learn from the story of Esther that God often permits things to occur and then be apparently forgotten for the purpose of using them at a later period as links in His providential plan. The little incident of Mordecai saving the life of the king which was allowed to pass by without recognition was not God's fault, and in due time came up at the opportune moment and became the turning point in Mordecai's career, arousing for him the sympathy and recognition of the king and the people and preparing him for a place of high trust that he afterwards filled. So God lets things happen in our lives, little acts of obedience, faith, sacrifice, unrecognized, and we forget all about them perhaps, but in due time the wheel of providence turns round and they come to the front and God makes them the occasion of some high calling, some marvelous opening, some grand reward.

Let us count nothing insignificant. God is working in everything and far in advance of all that we can see. Let us watch for the fulfillment of His plan and we shall always have providences to watch.

Five, God often lays His burdens on the hearts of men who do not know Him and uses them to carry out His plans. "I have surnamed you, though you have not known me," was His word to Cyrus, that mighty king who was God's direct instrument for carrying out one of His greatest plans, although he himself was an ignorant and superstitious heathen. And so He spoke to Xerxes and made him understand His will. There was a night when the luxurious Persian king was unable to close his eyes in sleep. As he lay dozing on his bed he felt something was wrong, and when the morning dawned, he sent for his counselors and had them search the records of the kingdom until they found that the faithful Mordecai had never been rewarded for his great service in saving the king's life.

What a glimpse this gives us into the mysteries of divine government. What a meaning it adds to the mighty announcement of our ascended King, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." He is able to move the hearts of men for our defense at His will while we calmly wait, keeping our hands off and looking to Him to work for us and to shield us with His mighty wing. I have known an ungodly man to become so impressed that he must give a large amount for some of God's suffering children that he could not rest until the trust was discharged, although he wondered at himself and could not explain or even justify his impulsive action. One of the largest gifts ever offered for missions in this country was a bequest made by a man who had never had any special interest in missions until his last days and who made this bequest after some friends had specially prayed that God would send help for His cause. We have a God that can reach all hearts, and there are people whom we could not reach directly whom we can always touch by way of the throne.

Six, God often permits the wicked for a time to triumph and the cause of His people to reach a crisis of danger and the crisis almost to go too far. How imminent the peril of Esther's people! How close the coincidences! How sudden and swift the interposition of God and the deliverance of the doomed nation. It almost seemed as if things had gone too far. Everything was encompassed with difficulty. Only the Divine hand could avert it. But how perfectly everything fitted together. How sharply the whole drama was focused into one short day of astounding surprise! Truth indeed was stranger than fiction, and as is ever true, the story of faith is the sublimest romance of history. Beloved, is He trying you? Are your difficulties and adversaries thickening on every side? Does it almost seem as though the promise has lingered so long that it might come too late? Trust Him. His path is in the whirlwind and the storm. The clouds are the dust of His feet. He will not let the promise fail. "Though it tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not tarry."

Seven, God has His plans prepared in advance of the devil's maneuvers and His instruments ready to counteract his deepest designs. Zechariah tells us in one of his visions of four horns that the enemy sent out to pierce God's people but four carpenters followed close behind them to fray their horns and take away their power to harm. So here while the devil had his weak and unscrupulous Xerxes ready by his rash decree to destroy a nation, God had His wise and upright Mordecai in the place of faith and influence prepared to counteract his folly. The devil had his diabolical Haman but the Lord had His Esther a little nearer the center of power to interpose just at the right moment. There are no surprises in the government of God. He is always prepared for the enemy and if we abide in Him and closely follow Him there is no power in earth or hell that can ever harm us.

Eight, while God is ever watching and working to defend His people and His cause, yet He expects from them their prompt, obedient and courageous cooperation in the crisis hour. There are occasions when there is nothing for us to do but wait and trust, but there are moments for prompt, wise, decisive action, and when those moments come there must be no parleying and hesitation or half-heartedness. Such a moment came to Esther when her uncle directed her to go into the presence of the king and plead for her people. It was natural for her to hesitate, but it would have been folly for her to have disobeyed. God had other agencies that He could have raised up, and, indeed, Mordecai firmly believed that deliverance and enlargement would come from some other quarter if she had failed, but she would have perished and her father's house. There are times, dear friend, when you and I must speak brave words for right, must incur prejudice and misrepresentation because we stand by a cause that needs assistance, but the safest thing is always to be brave and true. Let us not hesitate to speak a word of vindication, to stand at the risk of interest, friendship or even life itself for the cause of truth, for the work of God. It needs much wisdom to show us just when to be still and when to act. There is a moment when the order is, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord," but there is another moment when the order is, "Speak unto the (people) that they go forward," and when that moment comes decisive action is the only course of safety and honor.

Nine, God not only saves us from the wicked but lets them fall into their own snares. The gallows that Haman erected for Mordecai furnished the means for his own execution. The decree that called for the massacre of the Hebrews brought instead the destruction of their enemies. The man that was doomed to death by the conspiracy of his adversaries was lifted into the place that these very enemies had formerly held. The way of the wicked was turned upside down, and their shafts reverted upon their own heads. It is a terrible thing to take a stand against God or His people. Christ counts the persecution of His children as His own. Our hatred and opposition to the cause of Christ and the servants of Christ is counted by the Scriptures as our fighting even against God, and it is a fearful thing to plunge against the sword of the Almighty. Let us be careful how we touch God's anointed or wrong His servants. Such weapons will be turned against ourselves in bitter failure and retribution. We cannot be too careful in speaking against the children of God. We are liable to be misled and even where we are not able to commend, silence is often the safest course. But they who scatter firebrands, arrows and death shall find their own houses on fire and their own hearts pierced by the returning shafts.

Ten, there are crisis times in the history of individuals and religious movements and those are times of peculiar responsibility. Such a time had come in the life of Esther and on that moment converged all the significance of her life and all the preparation of God's providence in the years before. Surely if ever there was a crisis time in the history of the world it is today. Beloved, let us remember that we too are come to the kingdom for such a time as this. All things are focusing into the consuming light of the world's last crisis. God has given to each of us our kingdom of opportunity, natural ability, providential environment, or spiritual endowment for the most solemn and important responsibilities and ministries. May He help us to be wholly true, "redeeming the time."

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