

**God is Involved:  
Lessons from Esther**

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**Introduction:**

The sun rose this morning, again. The water worked in my house, again. I got something to eat this morning, again. On and on it goes. Is God really part of this? Or is this all just a series of actions, reactions, consequences, and natural processes that sometimes work in our favor and sometimes don't? As we strive to answer this question, let's look at the story of Esther. I believe it is designed to help us with this quandary.

**Discussion:**

I. The story of Esther

- A. According to **Esther 1**, Queen Vashti angered King Ahasuerus and was dismissed. So, Ahasuerus needed a new queen. In **Esther 2**, Mordecai, a Jew, was bringing up his cousin, Esther. He wanted Esther to have a shot at being queen so he took her and gave her into the custody of Hegai, who had charge of the women trying to become the new queen. He gave her good advice and she followed it. She won the favor of Hegai (**Esther 2:9**) and he provided her with all she needed to impress King Ahasuerus. When she went before the king, she took only what Hegai told her (**Esther 2:15**). She impressed the king so much, she was chosen as his new queen (**Esther 2:17**).
- B. At some point, Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate and overheard a plot against Ahasuerus by two of his eunuchs. Mordecai revealed the plot to Esther and she passed it on to the king. The conspiracy was uncovered and stopped thanks to Mordecai (**Esther 2:19-23**).
- C. Despite Mordecai's help, nothing was done at the time to honor him. He had merely performed a civic duty and it was duly recorded in the king's chronicles. Another time as Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Haman, the highest official in the land under Ahasuerus, passed by (**Esther 3**). All the king's servants bowed down to him, but Mordecai did not. The reason he didn't bow down was because he was a Jew. Haman decided to seek vengeance on Mordecai, but not only on Mordecai, on all of Mordecai's people also. He sought permission from the king to set aside a certain day in the coming year to wipe out a supposedly insubordinate people (**Esther 3:8-15**).
- D. Mordecai sought the help of Esther (**Esther 4:1-17**). At first, she refused to speak to the king because she feared for her life. But Mordecai convinced her to go to the king, despite the possibility of death. When she entered the king's court, the king extended his scepter signifying that she would not die, but he would meet with her. She invited him to a feast along with Haman. At the feast, she simply invited him to another feast (**Esther 5:1-8**).
- E. That night Haman passed Mordecai again. Though he was happy to be the only one invited to the feast with the king and queen, he was incensed at Mordecai. His family encouraged him to build a magnificent gallows and have Mordecai hanged as a spectacle (**Esther 5:9-14**). While Haman made his plans, Ahasuerus was having trouble sleeping. They pulled out the chronicles to help put the king to sleep. They happened to read of the plot to kill Ahasuerus foiled by Mordecai and realized they had never done anything to honor Mordecai for his great service (**Esther 6:1-3**). As Ahasuerus was thinking of ways to honor Mordecai, Haman entered the courts. Ahasuerus asked what would be a great way to honor someone the king wanted to honor. In his arrogance, Haman couldn't imagine that the king wanted to honor anyone but him and said, the man should get to wear robes the king had worn, ride a horse the king has ridden, wear a royal crown. Then the king should have one of his most noble officials lead the man around the square of the city proclaiming, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor." So, the king had Haman carry a robe and a horse to Mordecai and do exactly as he had said (**Esther 6:6-12**). Haman was miserable despite being the only one invited to the feasts of the king and queen.
- F. Haman was escorted to the feast. When the king asked Esther to finally reveal her request, she asked that she and her people be spared from an enemy who would destroy them all. Keep in mind that up to this point, no one in the palace knew she was a Jewess. When the king asked who would do such a thing, she pointed out Haman. As the king left the room in anger, Haman

fell upon Esther to beg for mercy. When the king returned it looked as if Haman was accosting her. Ahasuerus decreed that Haman would be hung on the gallows he was having built (**Esther 7:1-10**).

- G. Since the king could not revoke the law allowing the Persians to kill the Jews, he passed another law allowing the Jews to defend themselves and fight back. On the day that Haman had assigned for the Jews to be killed, they actually defeated their enemies, killing 75,000 who hated them (**Esther 8-9**). The Jews established a feast in honor of this great victory called Purim. Additionally, Ahasuerus promoted Mordecai to Haman's place of honor.
- H. What an amazing story. What a great victory for God's people in the Old Covenant. And yet, this story is all the more amazing because of something it leaves out. Despite being included in the Bible, this book never once mentions God. It never once tells us of God's actions. It never once tells us of God's law. God is seemingly absent from this book. This story is told just the way it seems life happens. We move from day to day, things happen, we react, other things happen, coincidences occur, we make choices, sometimes they work out to our benefit, sometimes they don't. Some people win. Some people lose. When it is all over, it can very easily seem like a very God-less prospect. It may seem that God is not really involved in our world. There are simply natural ways in which our world works, sometimes we win and sometimes we lose. Why on earth try to get God involved?

II. God was involved, however.

- A. Despite God not being mentioned by name, He really is involved in this story and there are some hints as to that involvement. Further, these are hints that both Mordecai and Esther believed God was involved.
- B. *Hint #1: Mordecai was convinced deliverance would arise from somewhere (Esther 4:14).* Mordecai was certain the Jews would be delivered. Mordecai was not in complete despair that this might really be the end of his people. Where did this conviction come from? This is not a wishful thinking. This is not merely a fanciful hope. This was a conviction born out of faith in God and His watchful care over His people.
- C. *Hint #2: "And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14).* What was Mordecai saying here? Was he suggesting that some blind chance and coincidence possibly brought Esther to this particular place in this particular crisis? Of course not. That does not even make sense. Esther could only have been put in that place for that purpose if there was some purposeful mover of events behind the action. Mordecai is saying that he can't read God's mind. Maybe Esther won't be the one to deliver the people. But maybe this is not merely coincidence. Maybe this was God's plan all along so that Esther would be in the right place at the right time.
- D. *Hint #3: Esther asked for the Jews to fast on her behalf for three days (Esther 4:16).* This passage doesn't merely ask them to fast, but to fast on her behalf. If this were merely a matter of not eating or drinking, they couldn't do that on her behalf. She can only fast for herself. We need to understand that there is more to it than simply not eating or drinking. Fasting in the Bible is ignoring the physical needs in order to focus on a spiritual activity. Sometimes it would happen naturally. That is, someone was so taken up with a spiritual activity that they missed meals without real thought. It also could happen purposefully, that is, the person would purposefully choose not to eat or drink in order to focus on a spiritual activity. The most common spiritual activity is prayer. That is why prayer and fasting are often linked together (cf. **Nehemiah 1:4; Psalm 35:13; Daniel 9:3; Luke 5:33**). This was fasting on Esther's behalf because what she was actually asking for was that they be so devoted to prayer on her behalf for the next three days that they not eat or drink anything. However, even if you cannot agree with me about the prayer aspect of this, you must recognize that this fasting was a God-filled act, not a God-less one. Without God's involvement, fasting would be nothing more than going hungry. In fact, rather than helping, it would be detrimental to their efforts because going three days without food does not help one think and act well.
- E. Right here in the central part of the book, we see very clearly that even though God is not mentioned, even though it all appears to be merely coincidental, even though this all just looks like natural occurrences taking place almost by accident, Esther and Mordecai both recognized

God's involvement and sought God's involvement. In the end, they understood that they were not delivered by fortuitous events, by happy coincidences or by time and chance. They were delivered by God. They knew that even though they could not look through this story and see exactly when, where, or how God had worked to provide deliverance, He had provided deliverance.

### III. Lessons for us.

#### A. Understand that God is involved.

1. Just as it is easy to read **Esther** and believe God was not involved in this story, it is easy to walk through life and believe God is not involved. We wake up, things happen, we react, coincidences occur, natural processes take place, consequences occur, we go back to bed. It all just seems to run and we never see God's hand or witness His impact. How very easy it is to believe God is just not involved, even if we believe He exists.
2. However, our story is like Esther's. God is involved. God does take action. Consider **Matthew 5:45**. Consider what may seem to be the most natural of material phenomenon. The sun rises. The rain falls. But notice whose sun it is. It is God's sun. Who sends the rain? God does. No doubt, we can provide scientific explanations for the rain and the sunrise. We know the natural processes by which these things occur, but who is doing it? God is. If God were to cease acting, then the sun would no longer rise and the rain would no longer fall. Where, when, how does God act in those things? I don't know, but I do know God is acting. According to **Acts 17:28**, it is by God's involvement that we live, move, and have our very being. Without his involvement, we could not do any of those things.
3. Do not look around at life and this world and see a God-less planet. God is not in some far off place watching from a distance. God is with us. God is involved

#### B. Cast your cares and needs on God.

1. Mordecai made his case and convinced Esther to go into the king. But she first had them enlist God's help. She asked the Jews of Susa and her own handmaidens to seek God's help by fasting for three days before she went in to the king. If we recognize God's involvement, then we need to enlist God's involvement. We need to ask for His help, strength, and aid.
2. As **I Peter 5:6-7** says, humble yourself under God's almighty hand and cast your cares on Him because He cares for you. Why do you think Peter says we have to humble ourselves? Because when we are proud, we think we can handle it on our own. We press on acting like we've got it under control and don't need God. Then we don't ask for his involvement. Sometimes, in the grand scheme of things it works in our favor and we think even more that we don't need God. Remember, God's sun shines and His rain falls on those who lean on God and those who don't (**Matthew 5:45**). The fact that you don't lean on God and it works out in your favor, doesn't mean you did it all on your own, it just means God blessed you anyway. As **Philippians 4:6-7** says, make your requests known to God and His peace will be with you.

#### C. Do what you know is the right thing to do.

1. Do not make the shallow mistake that if God is involved that means all you need to do is pray and then you get to sit on your hands and do nothing, simply waiting for God to act. Mordecai was absolutely certain that God would deliver His people, but Mordecai still sent Esther in to petition the king. Why should Esther do that? Because they were certain that was the means God would use to deliver the Jews? No. She should do that because it was the right thing to do. She was in a position of possible influence, if she didn't do all she could to deliver her people, she would be judged even when God delivered her people (**Esther 4:13-14**). Esther did not tell Mordecai that instead of going in to the king they should simply fast and wait for God to act, she had them fast on her behalf and then she got up and went into the king's presence.
2. Consider another great example. In **II Samuel 15:31**, David was fleeing for his life from Absalom who had taken over the kingdom and he prayed that God would thwart the counsel of Ahithophel. However, David did not just go out into the wilderness and wait for God to do

something. In **II Samuel 15:32-34**, David sent Hushai the Archite to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. God acted through Ahithophel.

3. Sadly, some folks believe they are absolutely spiritual by doing nothing but praying. For instance, they lose their job and say, "Oh, I know it will work out, I prayed about it." Then they don't do anything to find a new job. After a few weeks they begin to wonder why God isn't getting them a job. Or they start to get sick and they say, "Oh, I know I'll get better, I prayed about it." Then they don't do what the doctor tells them to and they wonder why God isn't getting them better. Or they are having an interpersonal problem with someone, perhaps even a spouse, and they say, "It will all work out, I prayed about it." Then they do nothing to resolve the issue with the other person, sometimes they even do things that worsen the situation, and they wonder why God isn't fixing the relationship.
  4. We need to recognize that we have absolutely no idea what means God is going to use to accomplish His will. We have no idea through what means God is going to accomplish our requests. That means we need to do what we know is right that we have opportunity to do. Who knows, but maybe that is the means God will use to accomplish it.
- D. Let God do His job.
1. Sadly, some folks lean so heavily on the fact that we must act, that they cast their cares on God and then they pick them back up again. They worry and fret, they manipulate and try to control, they work and work on trying to produce the outcome they want. Instead, we need to cast our cares on God, do what we know is right, then let God handle the outcomes. Let God do His job. He may use us. He may not. He doesn't need us trying to do His job for Him.
  2. I always get back to **Romans 8:28**. We know that God will work everything out for our ultimate good. He knows how to do that. He knows what my ultimate good is even when I don't. I don't need to worry and fret. I've cast my cares on God. I've done what I know is right. God will now work it out for my good and His glory. I can rest in peace, trusting Him.
- E. Acknowledge God in all your ways.
1. **Proverbs 3:6** says, "In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." The point is recognizing God's involvement. As we review our day and see our blessings, we need to count them as just that—blessings from God. They are not accidents. They are not mere coincidences. They are not simply serendipitous by-products of the natural working of the world. Every good gift comes from God (**James 1:17**).
  2. We need to give God thanks for His blessings (**I Thessalonians 5:18**). We need to give God the credit for His involvement in our successes. If we take the glory for ourselves, we'll end up like Herod in **Acts 12:22-23**. We need to honor God for the great things He has done in our lives. Do you have food to eat today? Do you have a job? Were you able to walk? Have you overcome temptation? Give glory to God. Acknowledge His involvement and give Him thanks.
- F. Honor God when things don't go our way.
1. Sadly, we need to understand another side of this. When Mordecai said, "Who knows..." the point was that he didn't know if God actually would use Esther to deliver the people. God may have done something else. Esther may have gone into the king and it turned out very badly for her. But she understood it was the right thing to do. If she perished, she perished (**Esther 4:16**). Esther was willing to accept whatever God did.
  2. We need to learn to honor God no matter what He does. It's very easy to give God thanks when it is going our way. But sometimes what we want is not what God gives. We must learn to give God the praise and honor no matter what. We must trust that His way is best for us and in the end we will be able to look back and see that what He has said and done is for our ultimate good. As Paul in **II Corinthians 12:7-10**, we need to see God's blessing even when He says no to us. Like Job, we must learn to bless God when He gives and when He takes away (**Job 1:21**).

### Conclusion:

God is involved. God is near. What a sad, sad world we would live in if God had abandoned us to face this on our own. Of course, there are some who don't care. They think they can handle things on

their own. I feel pity for these because they do not know the blessings they are missing by trying to face life alone. Most of all, I feel pity for them because right now they do not know what being alone is truly like, but they will learn in eternity when they are cast completely away from the presence of God (**II Thessalonians 1:9**). Why not come into God's presence now. Accept the love He wants to offer. Submit to the blessings He wants to give. Acknowledge Him and allow Him to make your paths straight. It is such a better life. Let God be your refuge and your rock (**Psalms 18:1-3**). He will not ever forsake you (**Hebrews 13:5-6**).