

One of the biggest challenges we face is developing an accurate understanding of who God is and how operates within the time and space of our existence, which is primarily through human history. The primary source to gather this information about him from Scripture.

Hebrews 11: [NIV] Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Issac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab 32 *And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground. 39 **These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.***

Romans 11:33-36 [The Message] *Have you ever come on anything quite like this extravagant generosity of God, this deep, deep wisdom? It's way over our heads. We'll never figure it out. Is there anyone around who can explain God? Anyone smart enough to tell him what to do? Anyone who has done him such a huge favor that God has to ask his advice? Everything comes from him; Everything happens through him; Everything ends up in him. Always glory! Always praise! Yes. Yes. Yes.*

Undercover Sovereignty: Esther

Undercover; no mention of God, prayer, the Law, the Levitical sacrifices, worship, miracles. Yet God is controlling everything for His purpose all throughout this book. Are we comfortable with God flying undercover? God is!

Psalms 139:1-6 You have searched me, LORD, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

He can be undercover, but He is always sovereign.

Daniel 4:35 He [God] does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth.

Proverbs 16:9 In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps.

Proverbs 19:21 Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.

Acts 17:28 For in him we live and move and have our being.

John 19:10-11 "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?" Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above."

God's Providence (Jerry Bridges): **His constant care for and His absolute rule over all His creation for His own glory and the good of His people.**

Chapter 1:

Verse 1: Xerxes 486 – 465 BC; third ruler of Persian Empire (539 – 331 BC); Ahasuerus (Heb.); from India to Ethiopia

Verse 2: Susa (Shushan) one of four capital cities; **Verse 3:** 483 BC;

Verses 4-8: 6 months open house to impress his leaders to back him militarily against Greece/ banquet for those who served for six-month feast; drinking encouraged but not forced.

Verse 9-18: Queen Vashti banquet for the women/refused the king's request. Xerxes: became furious and burned with anger/overstatement by wise men/banish Vashti.

Verses 19 – 21: Sounds more pragmatic than law. Verse 21: "Every man should be ruler over his own household."

Summary: God is at work among pagan people to move that pieces in place that will rescue the people of God from potential destruction.

Chapter 2

Verses 1-4: The problem and solution. "Later" four years later (478 B.C.); during which he won battle but will lose war with Greece. Battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC. He was trying to avenge his father's military loss; he was more than likely feeling down. He listens to others too easily.

Verses 5-18: The people and the process. Meet Mordecai and Esther. She wins the contest and another banquet is held. It really was a poor choice from the world's perspective.

Verses 19-23: The right person in the right place at the right time. Esther's secret for two possible reasons – fear (Ezra 4:4-6) and antisemitism (Haman, chapter 3 and others). Hiding but not lying.

Ezra 4:4 [during the rebuilding of the temple] *Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building. They bribed officials to work against them and frustrate their plans during the entire reign of Cyrus king of Persia and down to the reign of Darius king of Persia. At the beginning of the reign of Xerxes, they lodged an accusation against the people of Judah and Jerusalem.*

Two Takeaways:

- 1) **God uses the choices the others, the good ones and the poor ones, to accomplish His plan/purpose. Joseph**

Genesis 50:20 *You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.*

A.B. Simpson: *God is preparing His heroes, and when the opportunity comes, He can fit them into their places in a moment, and the world will wonder where they came from.*

Who are the “others” in your life? (doctors, children, spouse, political leaders, others in charge) How about the next president of the United States? Pray and participate!

- 2) **Don't ever think circumstances limit God's providence. Esther, Daniel, Ruth, all those listed in Hebrews 11**

Ephesians 1:11 *In Him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him **who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will**, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory.*

What circumstances are challenging your faith and trust in Jesus, our Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, and Coming King? Every one of them are designed by God to encourage and strengthen your faith. Pray and participate

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