

# Esther – Humor, Horror, and Revelation

Matthew Vander Els · 2022-03-12 · [foundedintruth.com](https://foundedintruth.com)

## MAIN VERSES

[Esther 1:1](#) · [Esther 3:13](#) · [Esther 4:14](#) · [Esther 5:6](#) · [Esther 6:11](#) · [Esther 7:7](#) · [Esther 7:17](#) · [Esther 8:7](#) · [Esther 9:11](#)

Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love? A place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God? Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family. So welcome home.

Shabbat shalom, everybody. We are so excited to be here today. I'm so excited to be back. Guys, if this is your first time visiting, either here or watching online, we are a community of diverse families and individuals who love the Sabbath. We find joy in the entirety of the Bible. But most of all, we're a community that seeks first and foremost to orbit the person of Jesus who we call Yeshua. So welcome to Founded in Truth. We're glad you're here. Where is he? I don't know. We don't see him, but even though he's there the entire time, just as Esther hid her identity throughout the book as well, just as we will be hidden, however, we will still be present eating the hamataschen together. So please join us for that.

## Seeking Wisdom in Stories

What happens when we are so used to hearing a story that we're never motivated to actually go read it, like a book or even a movie? What happens when for so long, even as children, we've heard the story over and over again, that when we get older, it's like, oh, I know what that story's about. I don't need to spend the hours it would take to read the book, or I don't even need to go see the movie. Anyone relate to that? Maybe, maybe not.

And the tragedy of what happens when we neglect to go back and dive into a story and only rely on what's told to us—sometimes we end up missing out on the wisdom or the lessons or the morals or the impact of what the author was intending to give us all along.

We know the story of Hemingway's Old Man and the Sea, right? Good book. Some of us may have just heard the story. Yeah, it's about an old guy who catches a fish, right? Is that what the book's really about? No, what's the book about? Dreaming of lions, right? Yeah. Short book. You should read it.

But what would you say to someone, for those of you who have dove into that book, dived into that story, if someone was like, yeah, it's just about a big fish. This guy catches it in a shark fight and all this. That's such a disappointing portrayal of the art and the intention and the craft of the story that took place.

Lord of the Flies. I think that's on the banned list now, isn't it? Read that in seventh grade. Yeah, it's a story about a bunch of schoolboys who get stuck on an island and learn how to survive. What? No, it's about what kind of savage place the world and humanity truly is. How quickly we seek to become this primal animal in the absence of order, as well as what the world would most likely look like after nuclear war, per the Easter egg in the beginning of the book.

## The Quickest Way to Segregate People

The quickest way to segregate people and fuel conflict is arrogance and envy. Huge lesson in the story. A lesson that so many who claim to be believers refuse to learn.

Animal Farm. Yes, yes. Packed full of goods. Yeah, it's about a bunch of farm animals. They get in a little fight. They bite some humans. If you've read the book, how disappointing would it be? How sorry would you feel for the person who says, yeah, I'm not going to read it. I know what it's about. It's a story about pushing back tyranny and empire and just becoming the very thing you claim to fight against.

Mark of the Beast, right? Animals shall not sleep in beds with sheets. All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others.

When we use the freedom in Christ and the authority of the Holy Spirit to control people, to manipulate, to abuse, we become nothing more than the pigs we are so disgusted by. It's a very real lesson in that story. We become the devils that we claim deserve to burn.

I was recently exposed, thanks to my wife, about a story called The Great Gatsby. Everyone's laughing. Yeah, it's about a rich guy thinking he wants a girlfriend and he loves showing off his wealth, right? That was a good story. It's really well crafted.

## Past Trauma Controls the Trajectory

From what I gathered, it seemed to be a story about the mistress, the cruel mistress called the American Dream. That even though you have success and you get it, happiness is still just out of reach. This cruel woman.

Now, what's neat about stories is sometimes, after reviewing *The Great Gatsby*, I didn't have that opinion of it. I had to go back and look, what is it really about? Sometimes when you read a story, you draw a totally different moral or lesson or wisdom from the story that may not have even been intended by the author, right?

When I reviewed *The Great Gatsby*, it represented to me how past trauma tends to control the trajectory of our future. And the goals we make for ourselves today are typically fueled by events and experiences that occurred in the past because we're stuck at that point, refusing to grow and move forward. And if we don't recognize that, we will never mature and grow beyond that defining moment of trauma or the lack of needs that we experienced back then.

That was what I drew from it. He was stuck in the past and he couldn't keep up with the relationships that kept moving forward.

Stories are written to teach us lessons, impart wisdom, to give us the opportunity to meditate on how it could apply to us.

## Exploring Esther

So, Esther. Have you ever read the book of Esther? Everybody's going to say yes. Just like all of you read the book of Revelation, right? Right? Have you really read the book of Esther or have you just been told the story so many times, seen the play acted out so many times that it just seems fruitless to endure the actual text?

We do it. As I said, Revelation. I know many of us have done it for Jonah, another beautiful story, which is passed down and told and retold and retold. Many people haven't read the book of Jonah, but we think it's about a fish that swallows a guy. When the fish occurs in two, three verses and isn't even like a main character, it's unemphasized. When in reality, the story is about you wanting to be the God who chooses who receives grace and mercy and who doesn't.

Do we dare explore the story of Esther today?

Esther has an incredible history, the story itself. The way it was viewed in the early church, all the way to the way it was viewed by some of the reformists, all the way to the way its interpretation and lessons changed throughout Jewish culture, specifically in the 15th and 16th centuries.

Martin Luther seemed to flat out reject the book, saying he hates it and wished it was never part of the Bible. Now, there is some context to that conversation, but all the same, his issues with it were the secular elements, the over-the-top sexual themes and euphemisms that are common in the book, as well as the gross, violent, raw nature of the story.

## Not a Children's Story

Esther is not a children's story, by far. Same as Jonah. Not children's stories. But we find it approved by the Holy Spirit to dwell in this library that we believe is the Word of God, and so we embrace it.

So when we face the text of Esther, we find it filled with very swift, short scenes that transition very quickly, almost as if it was meant to be read out loud or acted out as a play. We see gross irony, big moments of irony, role reversals, and an overlapping theme that some would suggest is farce comedy, slapstick, if you will, in many areas.

And you also see this underlying lining of dark humor, uncomfortable, satisfying dark humor. One of those points is at the very beginning: the king banishes his wife, right? We know that part of the story. Banishes his wife for not coming when she's summoned. And that right there, that right there should be a moment when we're like, wait a second, what? Like, hey, I need you to come in here, come away from your party and come over here, come to my party. And she says no. And he enacts a law that exiles her from the Persian empire, right? So Persian empire is about three quarters the size of the United States. Jenny, I need for you to come to my party tonight. She says, no, I'm going to stay home. Get out of the United States of America. It's a bit over the top, right?

## Amplified, Exaggerated Drama

Oh, and then this king goes throughout the entire empire and gathers every beautiful virgin in the empire. That's a lot. What is the point of this story being filled with such big and loud moments, a consistent, exaggerated, or inflated beautiful drama with these key moments? Big things, big decrees, big impalement stake. You could point out that the content of Esther tends to show this story that overlays the history of Israel in a very big, loud way, an amplified drama where every scene is filled with a moment that leaves you turning your head, rolling your eyes. Haman, that's how you're going to respond? Like, what a goofball. Maybe smirking or chuckling.

What lessons, what wisdom is hidden underneath? Oh, God is not mentioned anywhere in the book. Not at all. Some would state that it's just a pure secular piece of work that somehow

ended up in the Bible. I don't believe that for a heartbeat. But God is not mentioned at all.

So yeah, you guys ready to dive in? I'm going to tell an overview of the story of Esther. So here's the thing. Have you ever seen an Esther play acted out at Purim that was like really, really serious? Sometimes, but even throughout Judaism, it's always acted out in an amplified manner that's comedy. It's how the story flows. And so I'm going to try to put on the lenses to identify these moments of the story to help us enjoy what it seems the author was trying to portray. So if you find yourself chuckling, I think it's okay. If you find yourself thinking, that is really a dramatic way to respond to that conflict. Yeah, yeah, you're supposed to feel that.

And so my hope today is that you will get a glimpse into the beauty of the literature of the Word of God. And that you will actually take it seriously enough to want to go home and explore it yourself instead of simply marking it off your list because you think you're already familiar with it. There are a lot of juicy elements that I'm going to leave out of my retelling because they tend to be, well, I don't think they're appropriate for the sermon. But we're going to continue anyway.

## **A Celebration Over the Top**

So the first section of Esther starts out, and it's chapters one through three. We're introduced to this king of Persia, Ahasuerus, and he's throwing this party. And it's not just any party. It's just, like, over-the-top in grandeur, hosting officials and staff, the army of Persians, all of the officials. And this party lasts six months. Two people are like, wow, that seems extreme. Right? Six months. Have you ever tried to host a New Year's party at your house? And then it's like a couple hours later and it's like, okay, midnight, yay, go home, right? Six months. This king hosts this party and his massive wealth is displayed. Great Gatsby, right? Just over.

Then after this six-month party, he's like, you know what? I'm not done yet. So he throws a week-long party, and in this party, you don't need an invitation. Everybody's welcome, rich, poor, whoever, minorities, whatever. Everybody can come. Gosh, he invites everyone, and it says that the wine flowed infinitely. Can you imagine? Some of you smirked. Can you imagine? Infinitely just keeps coming. And the king makes a decree: drink with no restrictions. What? For the week, as the young kids would say, this party was crunk. Thank you, sir.

## **A Law That Can Never Be Revoked**

Now, the king gets mad at his wife during this drunken episode, very clear. And he gets enraged because she won't come to him. And he exiles her from the kingdom because she didn't do what

he commanded her to do. Then he follows it up with a decree, right? He emphasizes that you know what else? This law can never be revoked.

Have you ever been in a fight with your spouse? You got so mad. You know what? And what I say right now, my future self can never revoke it. This is what happens. It can never be revoked. So he makes a law. After this, he looks around and he makes another law. And he says, you know what? This is the new law. All women, you have to do what your husband commands and honor him. Do what he says. This is the law.

Now the irony and humor are starting to come in, right? The king goes on to marry a girl named Esther, who tells him what to do the whole book, right?

After this king wakes up and gets over his hangover, he remembers what he did. It's like an "oh, snap" moment. He remembers that his wife is not there anymore because he decreed a law that his wife can never return to him, right? And then like an idiot, he realizes that he emphasized that this law can never be revoked. Picture the scene, right? And I know no one here has ever been slightly intoxicated at any point before they became believers and done something rash, then woke up the next day and remembered it, and was like, "That's the scene, right?" This is what's happening. I got drunk, banished my wife, and made a law that no matter what my future sober self does, I can never get her back.

## Every Virgin in the Empire

So he decides he's going to round up every pretty young virgin in the entire empire and bring them all back to his fortress. Again, the empire was about three-quarters the size of the United States. So the whole United States, every virgin needs to come back except for those in Washington, California, Oregon, Nevada. And they're all coming back to Washington, D.C., right? All coming back.

And after they get here, he's going to choose a new queen. He specifically says, replace Vashti, his first wife. He wants a replacement for her. There is a void in his life and he wants to replace her. Every girl would come and spend the night with the king. And whoever he ends up liking the best will be queen. Scandalous, right? Yeah, it was a little beauty contest. Okay. They spend a year putting on makeup. And then every girl gets one night with the king, one night each with every young virgin in the empire.

## Esther Becomes Queen

Now, in this section, we are then introduced to the protagonists in the story, Mordecai and Esther. Now, this alone, of course, Esther's real name was Hadassah, but she hid her identity, right? She's known as Esther. This alone should make your head turn because of a weird irony: the Judeans, the Jews, who are a heavy minority in the Persian Empire after the exile, are depicted as most likely named after two Babylonian gods, Ishtar and Marduk. What? Just the shock factor of reading this. What?

Well, Esther becomes queen. And Mordecai ends up finding out about an assassination attempt that's going to be placed on the king. And he reports it. And Mordecai saves the king's life. That's a big deal, right? Is it a big deal? Of course it is. Very next verse. After Mordecai saved the king's life, the king honors Haman and gives him the highest position in the kingdom. Oh, here we go.

## What a Roller Coaster

So I want you to picture the story. What's the story? Favorite superhero story? I don't know. Who saves someone? Robin Hood saves, I don't know. The hero comes, saves the most important character in the story, right? And you're like, all right, yes, honor, honor. Very next verse, some Joe Smoe out of nowhere gets elevated and promoted second to the king. What? What? What happened with the guy who saved the life of the king and what did this guy do to get promoted? Doesn't say, doesn't care. What in the world? What roller coaster is this? Story doesn't even say why Haman was promoted. Everyone had to bow down to him, though. But Mordecai refused to bow down to him.

And how does Haman respond? Now, you'd expect someone perceived as disrespectful to this official, beat him up a little bit. Maybe punch him. Get a stick. I don't know. Have the guards kick him a little bit. No. Haman says, mass genocide to all of the Jews and all of the empire. It's one of those, what? What? Mass genocide. You didn't bow to me, every Jew will die in the entire Persian Empire. Yeah, wow. Drama. Get your feelings hurt? Genocide.

What's beautiful about Haman's character is the way the author displays him as this archetypal enemy, but you're never really scared of him in the book. No one's really scared of him in the book. Mordecai. Never scared of him. And because of that, he's kind of annoying. And so you enjoy the downward spiral. You get satisfaction every time when you see him finally spiraling down. It's beautiful.

## Chaos in Susheh

The story then spends so much detail on how Haman has the decree sent forth to the kingdom. Now here's what's happening in this scene, right? This is being done. All of this commotion is coming on. It says that Susheh was just in chaos, confusion. And Haman sits down with the king and they have a cocktail while it's literally chaos and confusion outside. They're drinking. Here we go again, right? Just no idea what they're doing.

Kind of like David sitting at home, napping and looking at girls in the bathtub when all of Israel was out to war, right? Chaos, just no idea what's going on. The impact of their decisions? Don't even care. And the king is the one who's really painted as the guy who doesn't care about his own kingdom. He's swayed by every emotion and everybody's opinions.

## If I Die, I Die

Then the scene shifts to something very suspenseful, edge-of-your-seat. Esther is told she needs to go before the king. Y'all know that part of the story. And so Esther goes unannounced into the throne room of the king, something punishable by death. And he even says, if I die, I die. I need to do something to save my people. King hasn't summoned me, I'm going anyway. And she enters the throne room prepared to die in an attempt to get the king to denounce this decree to kill all of her people.

Now, here's the king. King and Esther have not spoken since she won the dance contest. And there's the king. Esther walks in, he sees her, welcomes her in, and he accepts her. She doesn't get executed. And then the king, the first words out of his mouth, he instantly offers her half his kingdom. Just instantly. You want it? What? This is the same impulsive king that we saw at the beginning of the story.

Esther then, of course, invites the king and Haman to a banquet party. So here we go again. Guess what the king is doing at the banquet party that Esther invites him to. Here we go. Another scene change. [Esther 5](#), 6. I'll read it: [Esther 5](#), verse 6. So here we go again.

King's drinking. Again. No other dialogue is exchanged. Hey, you want that half kingdom? It seems like his kingdom isn't a huge priority for him. Instead, he's drunk and continually enamored by Esther's beauty. Another banquet is planned, and the scene changes once again. Here would be like a great place for an intermission if it was acted out.

Haman is frustrated, and so he has 75-foot gallows erected. He's going to commit mass genocide, but he's going to kill Mordecai too. And not just kill Mordecai, he's going to hang him 75 feet in the air. How does that even work? This wasn't like a rope and a noose—it was most

likely an impalement stake that you were hung on or a crucifixion stake. Again, how does that work? But it's a big deal, right? Big, long impalement stake, 75 feet high. So unnecessary.

So we have big parties, big contests, big genocide, and now we have a big impalement stake. What is going on?

## The King Can't Sleep

But wait, there's more. The king, for whatever reason, can't sleep. So he requests the records of the court to be brought to him and read, because that's exactly what you do at 3 a.m. when you wake up and can't sleep. And he reads how Mordecai saved his life. And he remembers, "Wait a second. Did we honor the guy who saved my life? Because now that I think about it, that's kind of a big deal." So we're all like, "Yeah, about time, dummy."

## Cue the Irony

So cue the comedy. Cue the irony. Cue the role reversal that's happening here. An over-the-top scene is coming. The king asks his advisor Haman, "How should the king honor somebody? What would you do for someone that the king wishes to honor?" Because the king doesn't make any decisions—the whole book, right? He relies on everyone else.

So Haman thinks, "He calls me in here because he wants to honor me." So Haman begins to think. He's like, "Man, what would I want?" He says, "Well, king, I'm glad you asked what you would do for someone you want to honor. I think that the clothes that you wear and walk around in, you should put the clothes on the guy that you want to honor. And I think that you should put him on the royal horse. And I even think that pretty crown, you should put that crown on the head of the guy that you want to honor and have him paraded around the city. This is what is done for the man the king wants to honor."

The king looks at Haman and he says, "Man, that is a great idea. Do all these things for Mordecai the Jew." Yeah, it's obvious at that point. This is supposed to be funny, right?

## The Guy on Top

So [Esther 6:11](#). "So Haman took the garment and the horse and he clothed Mordecai and paraded him through the city square calling out before him, this is what is done for the man that the king wants to honor."

Right? So the guy that was supposed to bow down is now on top. The scene changes abruptly to the second banquet where Esther has Haman and the king again.

## The Second Banquet

First line of the scene, Esther chapter 7, verse 7. God, that one is funny. "The king and Haman came to the feast with Esther, the queen, once again. Once again, on the second day while drinking wine, the king asks Esther, 'Queen Esther, whatever you want, I'm going to give you half my kingdom. What do you want?'" Sipping on wine.

What does she say? She says, "King, I just don't want to be killed. Don't have me killed." Remember, here we go. The king is drinking once again, tying us back to when he drank before. He gets some news that he doesn't like. How does the king act when he gets unexpected news and he's been drinking wine?

He says, "Who's going to do this to you? What are you talking about?" She says, "Haman is the enemy and the adversary trying to kill me and my people."

## The King Walks Out Mad

Again, what happens to the king when he drinks and gets news that he doesn't like? [Esther 7:7-17](#). "The king rose in anger and went from where they were drinking wine to the palace garden." He just walks out mad. The author here emphasizes something from beginning to the end of the scene. He starts the scene mentioning that the king has been drinking, and now as the king exits, "the king arose in anger where they were drinking wine." The author is overemphasizing the use of alcohol here, and that's supposed to help you paint the picture for how the king is acting.

He's mad at Haman now, and Haman is just terrorized, and the king just walks out. What's about to happen to me?

Haman then falls on Esther on the couch. We don't know what's happening here. It's probably insinuating that he's begging her for some type of mercy. But he does this right as this enraged, toasted king walks back in the room. What does the king see? He sees his wife that he's ready to give everything to all the time. Doesn't even talk to her. Give her everything. And he sees the guy that's going to kill her, on her behalf. "You would grope my wife in my house, right?" He accuses him of assaulting Esther, his wife.

Again, maybe some irony here: just as Haman accused the Jews of transgressing the king collectively when they really didn't, here Haman is accused of transgressing the king in a manner that he wasn't likely doing.

You could see Haman's face. Like it went from bad to worse, right? At this point, he didn't know he was begging. As soon as the king says this, a bag is held over Haman's head. And guess where Haman goes? Gets impaled on top of that 75-foot spike. Yeah, good, yeah.

## Role Reversal

Esther then inherits all of Haman's possession. And guess what position Mordecai is promoted to? Role reversal, right? Haman's position. Love that. Role reversals. The bad guy's defeated. Honor comes to the good guys. Great story, right? Awesome ending to a great story.

## Still a Law

But wait, there's more. There is still a law that all the Jews are going to die on the 13th day. Esther brings this to the king's attention. And I love how this is written, okay? We can kind of see a character profile of the king at this point, right? He's not very bright, right? He makes very emotional decisions. If he makes any decisions at all, every single major decision is someone else telling him what to do.

And so here's what happens after Esther and Mordecai bring this to his attention. It's in [Esther 8](#), verse 7. "Look, I've given Haman's estate to Esther, and he was hanged in the gallows because he attacked the Jews. You know what? Write in the king's name whatever pleases you concerning the Jews. And seal it with the royal signet ring." Here you go. A document written in the king's name and sealed with the royal signet cannot be revoked. So yeah, do whatever you want. Take my full authority. Plagiarize my name on it. Do whatever you want. Look, I did this for you. Do whatever you want. Doesn't care. Here is all my power and authority. Do whatever you want with it.

This is what he does the entire story. He wants everyone else to make the decisions—from the command to banish his wife, to killing the Jews, to honoring Mordecai. And even Haman's execution wasn't his idea. That was someone else. "Hey, should we go throw him in the gallows? Yeah, throw him up there." And here we go. Another problem. What am I going to do? Here's my name. Just write the bill.

## Reversal and Slaughter

When Haman was writing all of those edicts and sending out all of the messages and all of the horses and everything, that exact same thing happens again, except this time it's at the command of Mordecai, and it's not that everyone can kill the Jews. Now the Jews can kill you. The exact same measure of violence in the first decree is now given to the Jews.

And on the 13th day, guess what happened? The Jews overcame everyone that was hostile toward them, and all of the nations feared Mordecai because of the power he had. I thought that was an interesting verse. It seemed kind of dark when it said that, but you take that what you wish. Yeah.

## Getting Kind of Dark

And so chapter 9 continues to get kind of dark. The Judeans end up killing a lot of people, even hundreds of people in the fortress of the king. And Haman's 10 sons.

And in verse 11 of chapter 9, the king acts surprised almost at the death toll that has taken place by the Jews. He's like, "The Jews have killed 500 people in my own fortress. What have they done in the entire province?"

And then he asks Esther. He says, "All right, cool. What else do you want, my dear? What else can I give you?" Do you know what Esther asks for? "Yeah, I would like another day of slaughter for the Jews to kill people. I would like a second day. Give us another day to go out and do this. And Haman's sons, let us hang them on the gallows as Haman."

If historians are correct, and this is an impalement stake, this is supposed to make your eyes big with this gruesome scene. As if Haman is already still up there, and now his 10 sons will be stacked on top like pieces of meat on a kebab. That's dark. But if you're kind of into the story and you're like, "Yeah, the bad guy's going to lose," you're kind of satisfied with it. You're like, "Yeah, yeah, it's right." It's horrible, right? You should feel bad.

Chapter nine continues. And then, yeah, the king says, "Whatever you want, babe, do it."

And like I said, in one aspect, it's like, yay, they get to defeat everybody. But on another, she requested another day for the slaughter to continue.

The law that Haman decreed says to kill all the Jews and plunder them on a single day—the 13th—in [Esther 3.13](#).

But here, Esther says two for us. And they did just that. And then there was peace at the end of the 14th day and the 15th day. There was a time of oppression from the enemy of Israel and

then relief and redemption occurred at the end of the 14th day into the 15th. Why does that sound familiar? It's kind of like Passover. So the Jews that were outside of the city, Susa, they killed 75,000 people. That's what it says. And then the story wraps up in the final chapter, chapter 10. And chapter 10 is made up of three verses. King Ahasuerus imposed attacks throughout the land, even the farthest of shores, all his powerful and magnificent accomplishments. And the detailed account of Mordecai's great rank, with which the king had him honored. Have they not been written in the book of historical events? Mordecai the Jew was second only to the king Ahasuerus. He was famous among the Jews and highly esteemed by many of his relatives. He continued to pursue prosperity for his people and to speak for the well-being of all of his descendants. Now is the moment you're like, that was a roller coaster, but yes, like the good guys win.

## Story Concludes: Mordecai Honored

Verse two, I love it. The king records all of his powerful and magnificent accomplishments. What did he do? What did he do? He was a yes man. Yeah, I'll take credit for that. I'll take credit. Yep, yep, yep. This is an ancient story. Hundreds of years written before the time of Yeshua, and a beautiful piece of literature. So just like the stories of the great Gatsby or the old man of the sea or the Lord of the Flies, what wisdom or lessons can we draw from this Holy Spirit-inspired story that benefits our own lives? Now we get to the edifying part, right?

You could read the story at face value, which we've always done, and it's beautiful, and it's impactful, and it's edifying even at face value. You could conclude that even though God is never mentioned once in the entire story, his providence is clearly seen. Outside of the laughs or the eye rolls contained in the narrative of Esther, real life lessons are found. That's why comedy is so funny. You realize that? Comedy is funny because there's always a but to every joke, right? And there's always a real example that we tend to relate to when we see a caricature of it displayed. When we fall down and laugh at ourselves, some of us, right? You laugh at funerals. Why do you do that? It's in pain. You can't help but to.

## Providence in the Hidden

How many times have we been in places in our lives where we don't know where God is at? We feel like he's nowhere to be found. Bad things are happening and I don't know what to do. I don't know how to move forward in this situation at this point in my life. Those moments of extreme anxiety, extreme stress, frozen in fear, just like Esther before she went into the king. Some of us empathize with Esther after Mordecai tells her that, listen, you need to buck up and

go and approach this king and tell him to stop this genocide. And what does she say? What does she say? No, I don't think I will. I don't think I want to. I don't want to. I'm sure it will be fine without me involved. Fight or flight? Fight or flight when it's time to stand. I'm sure it'll be fine if I don't get involved.

And you remember what Mordecai says? Oh man, this is like the verse that everyone knows from Esther, right? It's Esther chapter four, verse 14. "If you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will come to the Jewish people from another place, but you and your father's family will be destroyed. And who knows, perhaps you have come to your royal position as there's such a time as this." If you keep silent, deliverance will come. You just won't be a part of it. What a damning statement.

## Standing or Remaining Silent

You have to make a decision. And you don't have to act. You don't have to do it. You don't have to stick out among the crowd. Injustice is happening in the world. You can remain silent in the face of this injustice. Someone else will stand up. That's fine because justice will prevail. It will be taken care of by you or someone else. But if you choose to remain silent, you'll never see it. You'll never see it. What if you have been placed in the here and the now to be in the situation that you find yourself in to engage boldly and stand? What if God has placed you in a situation to produce action so that his justice will abound? I think that's a big lesson. And this is the lesson that everyone goes for. It's blatant in the book.

Maybe God is fully present in the situation where he seems hidden, but it's only seen through the action of his covenant people. God is seen when you choose to act like the person that God intended you to act like when he placed you in this position. But if you continue to remain quiet, if you continue to remain motionless, if you continue to remain content with the world the way it is, it's no wonder that no one sees God because his emissaries, his ambassadors, his representatives are nowhere to be seen.

That's the story of the entire Bible. God creates man to bear his image, to be his image to the world. When the world sees his images, they see him. That's what the word in Hebrew, the word image, means. It's the Hebrew word *selim*. It means idol, is what it is. Let's get right down to it. It means idol. When Joshua went into the land and tore down the images of the false gods, it's the same word.

## God's Images in the World

Yahweh doesn't have an image in his holiest of holies. He has a mercy seat. Why not? Why doesn't Yahweh have an image? He already does. That's the impact that [Genesis 1](#) is saying. He already has his images. Why do you think the golden calf incident was such a big deal? Because his images were trading that status in, saying, "No, that's the image of Yahweh." The images of Yahweh move. The images of Yahweh speak, and they put action into motion. God is seen through his images. Are you willing to accept the fact that you're an image of God? Will you remain silent? Because this is how our world sees God.

Now, there's a ton of other cool connections in Esther. And I want to put these out so that you can go home and study and just have fun with this amazing book. The motif of Esther being parentless but becoming a leader. She has no parents, just like Moses is displayed in being raised. Just like Joseph becomes as he's sold. And all three of them, through action and faith, boldness and courage, become the leaders that they were intended to become.

Mordecai is a foster parent. Oh no, Matt's gonna get in his soapbox. Yeah, I am. Be a Mordecai because you may contribute to raising up the next Esther or the next Moses. Seriously, be a foster parent and show the world a little bit of God's existence through your actions. Praying is great. Don't ever stop. Good job. Let's do that. Now do something with it.

## Themes of Courage and Action

So what Esther did, pray, fast, and then I'm going to do something. And if I perish, I perish. Put salve on the hell's burn wounds of this world. Daniel prayed in the lion's den. What do you think got him there? His action. You also have some awesome themes of Yom Kippur and Israel in Esther.

We see in Esther where there are three divisions of the king's courts. We see Haman standing in the outer courts. And then when Esther makes the decision to enter in, that bold decision to enter into the face of the king, she changes her clothes and puts on a distinct set of clothes, the royal garments. On this one occasion, she puts on these new special garments and it says that she's in the inner court. And then the king sees her and invites her in to the court of his throne, where she enters in and touches his scepter.

The high priest wore the same outfit every single day of the year, except for one day, the day of purgation or the day of atonement, Yom Kippur. Then he changed into all white linen. And it was on this day that he went from the outer court into the inner court and through an invitation from God, was invited to come into his throne room where the mercy seat was, this

place of intimacy, this place of redemption, a place where redemption is poured out. I love that. I love that. I think that's neat.

The idea of casting lots—because remember Haman cast lots to choose the day. Lots is interesting. It's like kosher divination with Israel. But that was also done on Yom Kippur, remember? The lots were cast to determine which goat is what it is, kosher divination. Which goat was chosen whose blood would be carried in to purge the sins, the transgressions from Israel out of all three altars, the mercy seat, the incense, and the outer. Neat.

## Parallels and Redemption

You could even draw, if you wanted to, we can play with stories to draw meaning out of. Do it with the Bible all the time. You could even draw an alternative story where a king rashly gives his wife a letter of divorce. Until he finds one girl. This girl reminds him of what he lost, a Judean, a minority among the others in the land. The king makes rash decisions. He doesn't even care about his kingdom. Why? His only concern, his only prize is his bride that found herself in exile in Persia.

The bride yearns to approach him. This bride does not refuse to come to him. No, she yearns to be before him, standing outside and he delights in her presence. The evil adversary, as he's called in the story, the one who attempts to separate the king from his bride, is defeated. And a new law is given, not one that brings death to his bride, but one that gives life to his bride. What if Vashti and Esther represent Israel, refusing to obey, being sent into exile, and then being drawn out of exile as this reborn people that yearns to be with him?

Could that be an interpretation of the story? I admit it's unlikely. But just like I drew wisdom from the great Gatsby that was not intended to be there, I see the same things in the same story that is printed throughout all of the scriptures that lead us to our King Yeshua. Maybe it's a story of reoccurring hope.

## Lessons for the Exiled

There were more commentaries written about Esther during the 16th century than all of the years before it combined. The century before, the 15th century, had the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal. That took place, shaking the entire diaspora community in the world. You have transitions of people moving into new territories, Jews kicked out of kingdoms, exiled, and all of these territories are controlled by kings. And it causes these people to wonder, which king is going to enable us to live like Jews, to thrive?

The story helped them come to grasp and come to terms with identifying who is our enemy and who isn't. And so during this time, the lessons that we draw from Esther were very different from how the text was used by the people mimicking the scenario itself in the 15th and 16th centuries. Jews in exile, facing persecution, death, being pushed out of lands and searching for their Esther-reformed Asherahs, all while reminding themselves during this journey that God is still with us and he is here and it's gonna be okay and his plan is going to be fine and we will just keep moving and standing. He is with us. God is driving this entire thing, so have hope.

This is what the story of Esther teaches us. Keep moving.

## Dive Into the Story

And so guys, that's my hope for you today: yes, I hope that you get excited about diving into the story of Esther, the text, the genre. I hope you're interested to go home and read it all the way through and allow yourself to be entertained and drawn in by it. Even if you disagree, dive in, dive into it. But also that you would not be blind to the lessons and the wisdom that it holds underneath.

And don't forget the encouragement that it gives to those of you who find yourself in a situation, frozen, anxious, not knowing what to do and where God is. For such a time as this that you would be placed right here, right now in that situation, for such a time as this. Maybe, maybe it's not random.

## Standing in Prayer

And so please stand as we conclude services with worship. Guys, just like Esther called her people to pray for her as she engages this situation that seems so anxious, with God not to be seen. Guys, I encourage you, if you're in a situation right now of anxiety, of stress, you don't know what to do, has God abandoned you? Guys, you can take that same scenario, that same pattern of Esther with our prayer team. We have prayer warriors on the other side of the room. Don't miss out on that opportunity. If you need prayer today for any situation or just want someone to come alongside you, take advantage of that. We wish to pray for you.

Alvina Malkinu, our Father, our King, we thank you for this time that we get to dive into this beautiful Word that through your Holy Spirit has come to us so that we can navigate, meditate, and learn these lessons. Father, give us the hope that this book tells us we have in you, that you would give us the encouragement to keep moving—the boldness, the courage to be your warriors, to be your images to the world. And when we see injustice, when we see a time when

we need to stand, that we would not listen to the voice of the enemy and say, "You know what, someone else would do that," but rather that we will know we were placed here for this moment to stand and represent you, that the world would see your power, your love, your grace, your mercy through your images. We thank you, Father, for King Yeshua. We thank you for the invitation to come before him as he delights in his bride. In Yeshua's name we pray. Amen.

## Closing Words

Shema Israel, Adonai Elohe Adonai HaRukshem. Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one. Blessed is the name of his glorious kingdom for all eternity. May the God of patience and encouragement grant you to be like-minded with one another in the manner of Messiah so that together with one voice you glorify the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah. Hallelujah. Shabbat Shalom everyone.

I'm Matthew Vander Els and I hope you enjoyed this message. Founded in Truth exists to build a community that bears the image of God and lives the redeemed life only Yeshua gives. If this message impacted you or if this ministry has been a blessing to you, we invite you to take part in making sure the message of Yeshua and the truth of God's Word continues to reach others. To make sure this happens, you can donate through our online giving portal at [foundedintruth.com/give](https://foundedintruth.com/give) or by texting any amount to 205-0752.

Don't forget to like and subscribe for new content every single week, and we thank you for your continued support. For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at [foundedintruth.com](https://foundedintruth.com), email [Info@foundedintruth.com](mailto:Info@foundedintruth.com), visit us on Facebook at [facebook.com/foundedintruth](https://facebook.com/foundedintruth), visit our website at <https://www.foundedintruth.com>, or search on Google at <https://g.co/kgs/az3iPeM>.

---

Watch or listen: [foundedintruth.com/bible-teachings/esther-humor-horror-and-revelation/](https://foundedintruth.com/bible-teachings/esther-humor-horror-and-revelation/)

This automated transcript has been lightly edited for readability; scripture quotations appear as spoken. For the authoritative teaching, watch the video. • Founded in Truth Fellowship, Rock Hill SC • Saturdays 11:00 AM • Your giving keeps every teaching free: [foundedintruth.com/give](https://foundedintruth.com/give)