

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

ESTHER 5-10

The book of Esther is a story full of daring and intrigue. It's what you call "*a cliff-hanger.*" It's one of my favorite Bible books. But it's not without its opponents.

Martin Luther wrote of this book, "I'm so great an enemy to the... book of Esther that I wish it had not come to us at all, for it has too many heathen perversions."

It is true that Esther and her cousin, Mordecai, were not pristine examples of Jewish orthodoxy. They broke dietary laws and Sabbath laws. Esther married a pagan, idol-worshipping king. The two had little or no interest in returning to the Jewish homeland and rebuilding their Temple or reestablishing their nation.

Worse, in its 167 verses the name "Ahasuerus" – the corrupt king – appears 190 times – while God's name, "*Jehovah*" is never mentioned – not once.

But the rejection of this book is due to a misunderstanding of its message.

Esther and Mordecai represent the attitude of the Diaspora Jews throughout the centuries - and in modern times, the state of Israel.

As were Esther and Mordecai in Persia, Jews today are fiercely loyal to their Jewishness. Modern Israelis are prepared to die defending their culture, and heritage, and survival as a people. But they're far more *patriotic* than *pious*.

In Israel today religious Jews are a minority.

Modern Israelis have embraced western culture. They're indifferent to the Laws of Moses. Drive down the freeway in Tel Aviv, and you'll see the billboards full of scantily-clad models selling commercial products. It's Western secularism.

Israeli leaders talk about the indomitable human spirit. Seldom do they give God credit for their country's remarkable resurgence and military successes.

But here's the point of this book... despite the Jews unfaithfulness to God... God has remained faithful to the Jews. It's another example of amazing grace.

God's providence is His overarching supervision in the affairs of man.

And His providence has protected and guided the Jews throughout history. Psalm 121 puts it, "He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

One author sums up the message of Esther as follows... "The absence of the name of God does not mean the absence of the hand of God."

Before we dive into chapter 5, let's recap the first four chapters...

Esther was a Jewish orphan – raised by her older cousin, Mordecai. Esther is a beauty queen who really does become a queen. She's taken into the king's harem in an ancient version of **The Bachelor**. Each girl gets a night with the king, and the babe he likes the best is crowned. Esther interviews and she gets chosen.

Meanwhile, Mordecai has a run-in with a Jew-hater named Haman.

Haman was the king's administrator. He's an egomaniac and expects everyone to bow to him as his entourage passes through the city gate. When Mordecai refuses, Haman puts out a contract to kill all the Jews within the year.

Mordecai believes that God has placed Esther in the king's palace "for such a time as this." It's her duty to go before the king on behalf for the Jews.

Esther knows anyone who approaches Ahasuerus uninvited runs the risk of losing her head. After mulling it over, she's willing to risk it, "If I perish, I perish."

Chapter 5 begins, "Now it happened on the 3rd day that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, across from the king's house, while the king sat on his royal throne in the royal house, facing the entrance of the house." She's trembling. Her life is on the line...

If the sight of his queen doesn't please King Ahasuerus, Esther will be executed on the spot. The golden scepter is her only salvation.

It's been said, "A rash person acts without fear, a brave person in spite of it."

Esther was no doubt afraid, but when *your knees knock you kneel on them*. She refused to buckle under. Her faith and courage rose above her fears.

“So it was, when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, that she found favor in his sight, and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther went near and touched the top of the scepter.

And the king said to her, "What do you wish, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given to you - up to half the kingdom!" Obviously, God softened the king's heart for Esther's arrival... he's in a generous mood.

“So Esther answered, "If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared for him..." Esther is acting shrewdly...

Remember Ahasuerus was a renowned boozier. He was probably an alcoholic.

And in verse 6 Esther invites him to a “**banquet**” – literally, a “**banquet of wine.**” Queen Esther invites the king and Haman to her place for a few drinks. She thinks she stands a better chance of *tipping* the king her way if she gets him a little *tipsy*.

“Then the king said, "Bring Haman quickly, that he may do as Esther has said." So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

At the banquet of wine the king said to Esther, "What is your petition? It shall be granted you. What is your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!"

Here she's asked a second time to make her request, but again she refuses. Either she's building nerve, or waiting for the perfect time. Maybe both...

“Then Esther answered and said, "My petition and request is this: If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, then let the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said."

She invites Ahasuerus and Haman to another banquet the next day.

“So Haman went out that day joyful and with a glad heart; but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, and that he did not stand or tremble before him, (he refused to be intimidated) he was filled with indignation against Mordecai.”

Haman was feeling fine... if it were not for Mordecai, that stubborn Jew.

“Nevertheless Haman restrained himself and went home, and he sent and called for his friends and his wife Zeresh. Then Haman told them of his great riches, the multitude of his children, everything in which the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the officials and servants of the king.”

Haman hosts an impromptu dinner party, and toasts himself and his success.

“Moreover Haman said, "Besides, Queen Esther invited no one but me to come in with the king to the banquet that she prepared; and tomorrow I am again invited by her, along with the king.” Yet there’s one burr in Haman’s saddle. The fly in his coffee is that *guy*, *Mordecai*. Verse 13 reveals Haman’s

frustration, “Yet all this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.”

Haman should've been happy, but he seethes over the Jew who defies his authority. Mordecai was a thorn in his side - a *type of the whole Jewish race*.

In his book, Mein Kampf, Adolf Hitler sounded just like Haman when he wrote, “Wherever I went I began to see Jews... Gradually, I began to hate them.”

Hitler like many others before and since were jealous of the Jews.

Throughout history, wherever they've settled, God in His providence has blessed the Jewish people with a *Midas touch*. They've been successful.

From the Middle Ages onward, Jews excelled at banking and finance.

A disproportionate number of Jews became physicians and merchants.

Gentile jealousy became one of the leading factors of Jewish persecution.

Mark Twain, himself a Jew, once wrote, “I'm convinced the Crucifixion has not much to do with the world's attitude toward the Jew... the reasons for it are much older than that... The Jew is a money-getter; and in getting his money he is a very serious obstacle to less capable neighbors who are in the same quest... The cost to him has been heavy; his success has made the whole human race his enemy.”

This is the problem in the Middle East today. For hundreds of years the Palestinians cared nothing about the land we call Israel. It was a desert.

Then around the turn of the last century the Zionists returned to the land.

They drained swamps, planted trees and farms, irrigated valleys. They turned the desert into a garden. Now suddenly, the Palestinians want the land back. For centuries they cared nothing about it until the Jews turned it into an oasis.

Once again the Jews have fallen victim to the jealousy of their neighbors. Mordecai was a thorn in a Gentile's side - as Jews have been for centuries.

Verse 14, **“Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, “Let a gallows be made, 50 cubits (about 75’) high, and in the morning suggest to the king that Mordecai be hanged on it; then go merrily with the king to the banquet.”**

Sadly, Zeresh's suggestion has been an all too common response to Gentile jealousy of the Jews... just kill them. Take the Jews to the gallows.

“And the thing pleased Haman; so he had the gallows made.” Apparently the construction took place immediately – the gallows went up overnight. Haman will swing it with the king and Mordecai will be swinging before nightfall.

In chapter 6 the scene shifts to the king's bedroom. Verse 1 **“That night the king could not sleep...”** The guys at Little Caesar put anchovies on his pizza.

The king needed some shut-eye so he brought in the royal records. Surely, reading a few pages of government

regulations will put anybody to sleep.

We're told, "So one was commanded to bring the book of the records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king." And guess what page was read...

Here we go again, God's providence at work. Verse 2 tells us, "And it was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, the doorkeepers who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus."

Remember at the end of chapter 2 when Mordecai uncovered an assassination plot against the king. He snitched to Esther, and it saved the king's life. Mordecai's bravery and loyalty had been recorded, but had gone unrewarded. And I'm sure Mordecai felt cheated. Maybe even betrayed by the king, and even by God...

But there was a reason! *Hey, there is always a reason.* God has His purposes. When we feel cheated, or go unrewarded God has a purpose hidden from view.

God's purpose is about to be revealed in Mordecai's life... "Then the king said, "What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" And the king's servants who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him." Amazing!

What are the odds... out of thousands of pages in the royal register the one that's chosen to put the king asleep happens to mention Mordecai's kind deed?

This was obviously, no accident. This is God's providence on display!

The king needs a courier to deliver Mordecai's reward. He asks if anyone is in the building. And guess who shows up for work early that morning?

“So the king said, "Who is in the court?"

Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace to suggest that the king hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him...”

As the rabbis say, “Coincidence is not a kosher word.” There are no accidents with God. I wonder how many circumstances have occurred in our lives that were the hand of God, yet we chalked them up to coincidence, “*It just so happened.*”

It's amazing how many interesting circumstances “*just so happen*” in the book of Esther. We need to make sure we give God the credit when credit is due.

Verse 5 “The king's servants said to him, "Haman is there, standing in the court." And the king said, "Let him come in." So Haman came in, and the king asked him, "What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?"

“Now Haman thought in his heart, "Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?" Haughty Haman assumes the king is talking about him, so he lays it on thick. He gets lavish, “And Haman answered the king, "For the man whom the king delights to honor, let a royal robe be brought which the king has worn, and a horse on which the king has ridden, which has a royal crest placed on its head.

Then let this robe and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that he may array the man whom the king delights to honor.

Then parade him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him: 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!' "

Here's Haman's suggestion to the king: *Deck this man out in royal threads, put him on a white stallion, throw a parade in his honor, sing his praise in the streets...*

"Then the king said to Haman, (I like your idea) "Hurry, take the robe and the horse, as you have suggested, and do so for Mordecai the Jew who sits within the king's gate! Leave nothing undone of all that you have spoken."

"New robe... \$800. Horse... \$2000. Parade... \$5000. Look on Haman's face... *Priceless...*" Haman turned white as a sheet. His jaw must've dropped 3 feet.

Verse 11 "So Haman took the robe and the horse (He had no choice. It was now the king's command.), He arrayed Mordecai and led him on horseback through the city square, and proclaimed before him, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!" Haman died ever step of the way.

And Mordecai's reaction to all this had to be just as funny. How did he react when his mortal enemy becomes the leader of a parade held in his honor?

"Afterward Mordecai went back to the king's gate.

But Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered.

When Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him, his wise men and his wife Zeresh said to him, "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish descent, you will not prevail against him but will surely fall before him." Perhaps they were aware of God's blessing on the Jews. *Pick a fight with God's kids and you pick a fight with God.*

"While they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs came, and hastened to bring Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared." The limousine arrives that's to take Haman to the banquet with Queen Esther. *He'll never return home.*

You think this is as low as he can go. Haman gets a 23 month sentence for dog fighting, but believe it or not it's about to get worse... His coach is going to quit.

Chapter 7 "So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther.

And on the 2nd day, at the banquet of wine, the king again said to Esther, "What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you.

And what is your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!"

Finally she spills the beans and gets to her request... "Then Queen Esther answered and said, "If I have found favor in

your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request.

For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. Had we been sold as male and female slaves, I would have held my tongue, although the enemy could never compensate for the king's loss."

Verse 5, "So King Ahasuerus answered and said to Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who would dare presume in his heart to do such a thing?"

And Esther said, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!"

So Haman was terrified before the king and queen." I suppose so... Haman wants to go home, crawl back into bed, and try getting up on the other side...

What happens next is wild... "Then the king arose in his wrath from the banquet of wine and went into the palace garden; but Haman stood before Queen Esther, pleading for his life, for he saw that evil was determined against him by the king."

Ahasuerus is furious. His trusted officer has plotted to kill his wife, and in-laws.

Recall when Ahasuerus gets mad he makes rash decisions. His anger caused him to banish his former queen, Vashti. In the anger management class he's been taking, Ahasuerus has learned it's a good idea to leave the room and settle down.

Regain your composure - then make a decision. So the king steps out of the room to take a walk in his royal gardens. He needs a little cooling-off period.

Of course when Ahasuerus leaves the room, Haman begs for his life. And as he grovels before Esther he slips and falls over the couch where she's seated.

Verse 8 "When the king returned from the palace garden to the place of the banquet of wine, Haman had fallen across the couch where Esther was..." The king sees Haman's posture and it looks like he's making a pass at Esther.

"Then the king said, "Will he also assault the queen while I am in the house?" As the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face." And when someone throws a black hood over your head it's never a good sign...

When Mordecai and Haman woke up that morning there's no way either man could've envisioned the change in fortune they would experience that day.

This is why I'm always excited to wake up in the morning! I never know the amazing moves or reversals God will want to do in my life. There are no limits.

Verse 9 is the irony of all ironies. "Now Harbonah, one of the eunuchs, said to the king, "Look! The gallows, 50 cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke good on the king's behalf, is standing at the house of Haman.

Then the king said, (Hang him high!) "Hang him on it!"

So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's wrath subsided." Haman hangs

from the gallows he built for Mordecai. How quickly God turned the tables on the enemies of the Jews.

And this has been the case throughout their history. God told Abraham He'd bless the nations that bless Israel, and curse the nations that curse them.

Interestingly, even though Hitler killed six million Jews, God turned the tables on his intentions. It was the Holocaust that softened world opinion, and convinced the United Nations of the need for a Jewish homeland. Hitler, the man who wanted to annihilate the Jews, was the primary cause in the formation of the modern state of Israel. What a strange twist, **as Germany crumbled, Israel was reborn.**

Chapter 8 **“On that day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews.”** Esther gets Haman's wealth.

Mordecai gets his job. **“And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told how he was related to her. So the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai; and Esther appointed Mordecai over the house of Haman.”** This story also applies to us - *God is faithful to His people.*

When circumstances become grim – when all seems lost - when your fate seems hopeless – don't forget Esther. How quickly God can turn the tables.

“Now Esther spoke again to the king, fell down at his feet, and implored him with tears to counteract the evil of Haman the Agagite, and the scheme which he had devised against

the Jews.” Even though Haman is dead, Esther knows the clock is still ticking on the annihilation of the Jews. In 12 months a bounty will be out on the Jews. Assassins all over Persia will be trying to cash in.

“And the king held out the golden scepter toward Esther. So Esther arose and stood before the king, and said, "If it pleases the king, and if I have found favor in his sight and the thing seems right to the king and I am pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to annihilate the Jews who are in all the king's provinces. For how can I endure to see the evil that will come to my people? Or how can I endure to see the destruction of my countrymen?"

Verse 7 “Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, "Indeed, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows because he tried to lay his hand on the Jews.

You yourselves write a decree for the Jews, as you please, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's signet ring; for a letter which is written in the king's name and sealed with the king's signet ring no one can revoke."

Under Persian law once a king signed an edict it became irrevocable.

Even the king himself can't reverse his decree. But what Ahasuerus can do is issue a new decree that counterbalances his previous orders. He commands the Jews all over Persia to arm and defend themselves against their attackers.

Verse 9 describes how the Persian scribes record Ahasuerus' new orders.

It's interesting that verse 9 is *the longest verse in the Bible* – 81 words...

“So the king's scribes were called at that time, in the 3rd month, which is the month of Sivan, on the 23rd day; and it was written, according to all that Mordecai commanded, to the Jews, the satraps, the governors, and the princes of the provinces from India to Ethiopia (the whole Persian empire is put on notice), 127 provinces in all, to every province in its own script, to every people in their own language, and to the Jews in their own script and language.”

And he wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, sealed it with the king's signet ring, and sent letters by couriers on horseback, riding on royal horses bred from swift steeds.” The Persian Pony Express delivered the new decree.

“By these letters the king permitted the Jews who were in every city to gather together and protect their lives - to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the forces of any people or province that would assault them, both little children and women, and to plunder their possessions, on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the 13th day of the 12th month, which is the month of Adar.” The Jews were even given first strike authority. They could launch a preemptive attack if necessary.

And this has been the strategy of the modern state of Israel.

In 1981, as Saddam Hussein grew closer to producing a nuclear bomb, Israeli jets blew up his reactor. They couldn't allow him to obtain nuclear weapons.

And this is the dilemma facing Israel today. Ahmadinejad and Iran are on the verge of having nuclear capabilities, and the Israel's can't allow it to happen.

A preemptive strike is on the horizon. When we were in Israel we saw F16s training at the Dead Sea. We also saw American military leaders on the ground.

Our guide commented that something is up. He believes it's only months before Israel bombs Iranian reactors. Israel will strike before Bush leaves office.

It's interesting today the Persian or Iranian leader is Israel's enemy. In Esther's day Ahasuerus was Israel's friend. He was the one who mobilizes their defense.

“A copy of the document was to be issued as a decree in every province and published for all people, so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.” When the day arrives they'll be loaded for bear.

The couriers who rode on royal horses went out, hastened and pressed on by the king's command. And the decree was issued in Shushan the citadel.

“So Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, with a great crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple; and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. The Jews had light and gladness, joy and honor. And in every province and city, wherever the king's

command and decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a holiday.

Then many of the people of the land became Jews, because fear of the Jews fell upon them.” It was obvious to all that God’s blessing was upon the Jews.

When D-day rolls around Jews all over Persia are armed to the teeth...

“Now in the 12th month, that is, the month of Adar, on the 13th day (or March 7, 473 BC), the time came for the king’s command and his decree to be executed.

On the day that the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, the opposite occurred, in that the Jews themselves overpowered those who hated them. The Jews gathered together in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm.

And no one could withstand them, because fear of them fell upon all people.”

“And all the officials of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, and all those doing the king's work, helped the Jews, because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them.” Even government resources were directed to help defend the Jews.

“For Mordecai was great in the king's palace, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces; for this man Mordecai became increasingly prominent.”

It’s interesting how many Jews have ascended to high level posts under Gentile rulers...*Joseph in Egypt – Daniel in Babylon – Mordecai in Persia.*

Henry Kissinger under Richard Nixon - Casper Weinberger under Ronald Reagan - Madeline Albright under Bill Clinton...

FYI, we saw Madeline last week in Jerusalem. She visited the Wailing Wall the same day we did.

Back to Esther, verse 5, “Thus the Jews defeated all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, with slaughter and destruction, and did what they pleased with those who hated them. And in Shushan the citadel the Jews killed and destroyed 500 men. Also... the ten sons of Haman... the enemy of the Jews - they killed; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder.” Verses 7-9 list Haman’s 10 sons.

“On that day the number of those who were killed in Shushan the citadel was brought to the king. And the king said to Queen Esther, "The Jews have killed and destroyed 500 men in Shushan the citadel, and the 10 sons of Haman. What have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? Now what is your petition? It shall be granted to you. Or what is your further request? It shall be done."

Then Esther said, "If it pleases the king, let it be granted to the Jews who are in Shushan to do again tomorrow according to today's decree, and let Haman's 10 sons be hanged on the gallows." So the king commanded this to be done; the decree was issued in Shushan, and they hanged Haman's 10 sons.

Remember verse 2, “*No one could withstand them.*” The Jewish counterattack goes so well, Esther asks for an additional day to totally wipe out the enemy.

Verse 15 “And the Jews who were in Shushan gathered together again on the 14th day of the month of Adar and killed 300 men at Shushan; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder. The remainder of the Jews in the king's provinces gathered together and protected their lives, had rest from their enemies, and killed 75,000 of their enemies; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder.” Haman was not the only Anti-Semite in Persia – 75,000 prejudice Persians were killed by Jews.

This was on the 13th day of the month of Adar. And on the 14th day of the month they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

But the Jews who were at Shushan assembled together on the 13th day, as well as on the 14th; and on the 15th of the month they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. Therefore the Jews of the villages who dwelt in the unwalled towns celebrated the 14th day of the month of Adar with gladness and feasting, as a holiday, and for sending presents to one another.”

The victories all over Persia were obvious reasons to celebrate.

The rest of chapter 9 discusses the institutionalization of this Jewish celebration. The Jewish Feast of Purim originated at this time.

Recall “*pur*” means “*lots*”. Haman *threw them*, but God *controlled them*.

Mordecai and Queen Esther establish a celebration. Every year the Jews would commemorate the upper hand God gave them over their enemies.

Verse 20 “And Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all the Jews, near and far, who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus...

To establish among them that they should celebrate yearly the 14th and 15th days of the month of Adar, as the days on which the Jews had rest from their enemies, as the month which was turned from sorrow to joy for them, and from mourning to a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and joy, of sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor.” Adar 14-15 became a perpetual holiday for the Jews. To this day, they celebrate the Feast of Purim.

“So the Jews accepted the custom which they had begun, as Mordecai had written to them, because Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to annihilate them, and had cast Pur (that is, the lot), to consume them and destroy them; but when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letter that this wicked plot which Haman had devised against the Jews should return on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. So they called these days Purim, after the name Pur.”

Therefore, because of all the words of this letter, what they had seen concerning this matter, and what had happened to them...

The Jews established and imposed it upon themselves and their descendants and all who should join them, that without fail they should celebrate these two days every year (Two new holidays were added to the calendar.)

“According to the written instructions and according to the prescribed time, that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city, that these days of Purim should not fail to be observed among the Jews, and that the memory of them should not perish among their descendants.” Purim is a time of Jewish rejoicing and merriment.

Along with Hannakuh, Purim is one of the two major Jewish feasts not required in the Law of Moses. The Feast of Purim occurs in Adar or February / March.

In 2008 it's scheduled for March 20-21.

According to the Jewish Talmud, on Purim a person is suppose to drink wine until he can't tell the difference between the phrases "cursed be Haman" and "blessed be Mordecai." Americans refer to Purim as the Jewish Mardi Gras.

Often beauty contests in honor of Esther are held at the Feast of Purim.

Isn't it sad, a holiday with such rich spiritual meaning has been turned into an excuse to party? But before we point fingers... what Jews have done to the Feast of Purim some people today have done to Christmas. For some folks Christmas is nothing more than a reason to exchange gifts - or excuse to drink and party.

We too are guilty of stripping a holy day of its spiritual significance.

Purim was also a big occasion for children. Kids dress up in crazy costumes, and march in parades. On the day the story of Esther is read in the synagogue.

Every time the name "*Haman*" is read everyone boos and hisses, and shakes noisy rattlers called "*groggers*". When "*Mordecai*" is mentioned cheers go up.

Verse 29 "Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this 2nd letter about Purim.

And Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews, to the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, with words of peace and truth, to confirm these days of Purim at their appointed time, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had prescribed for them, and as they had decreed for themselves and their descendants concerning matters of their fasting and lamenting. So the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim, and it was written in the book." Purim is over 2,400 years old.

Here's a poem that sums up the book "Man purposes, God disposes: all things His design fulfil; every human wrath unconscious serves to execute His will.

This the goal of all the ages – highways, by-ways, higher bend, and despite all foes and factions, God is Victor in the end.

So man's festival of Purim, read in Faith's illumined sense,

shall be seen in realms eternal as the Feast of Providence.”
Esther is about God’s providence.

Chapter 10, “King Ahasuerus imposed tribute (or tax) on the land and on the islands of the sea. Now all the acts of his power and his might, and the account of the greatness of Mordecai, to which the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia?”

For Mordecai the Jew was second to King Ahasuerus, and was great among the Jews and well received by the multitude of his brethren, seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his countrymen.”

Throughout history God’s providence has protected and prodded His people.

I love the words of Alexander MacClaren, “This book of Esther does not say much about God, but His presence broods over it all, and is the real spring that moves the movers that are seen. It is all a lesson of how God works out His purposes through men that seem themselves to be working out theirs.”

And what about God’s providence in your life?...

We could spend hours discussing ways God has providentially intervened in our lives, and directed circumstances to fulfill His plans and purposes.

Always remember, God has a purpose and He’ll work it out in due time.