

People of Promise
Esther
605 words

A Providential Promise

Esther:
Who Knew?

Esther 4:12-14

For a people who have been the apple of God's eye for centuries, the Jewish people have lived a precarious existence. More than once, attempts have been made to snuff out the light of their existence. But always, God's providential acts have brought salvation. While the world is puzzled by Jewish instincts for survival, the Jews themselves know it is God's loving providence that causes them to endure.

When the entire nation consisted of only 70 people (Gen. 46:27), they went to Egypt to survive a famine in Canaan. They were enslaved by the Egyptians, but isolated in a corner of the land (Gen. 46:34). Providentially, they remained racially pure and socially intact until Moses led them to freedom. Years later, the pagan king of Judea tried to destroy the Jewish Messiah by killing all the Jewish baby boys in Bethlehem. Providentially, an angel warned Jesus' father in a dream to flee before the killing started. And centuries after that, Germany's dictator tried to exterminate the entire Jewish race in the 1940s. Providentially, America and other nations liberated Europe, saving the Jews and other minorities from total annihilation. The promise of God's providence is written across the pages of history as well as the pages of Scripture. And nowhere is it written more boldly than in the experience of a young Jewish woman named Esther.

In 586 B.C., the Babylonians carried the elite of Jerusalem and Judah into captivity. In time, Babylon was conquered by Persia, and the Jews fell under the control of King Xerxes. When the king deposed his wife, the queen, he decreed that a contest be held to select a new queen. Esther was chosen as a contestant, and was given every luxury and advantage in preparation for the contest--seven maids, a year's beauty treatments, and rooms in the palace. How would a spiritually-minded young Jewish woman have felt about being elevated to the heights of Persian paganism as the object of the king's desires?

Esther must have wondered why God was allowing these things to happen, until . . . until she won the competition and was made the new queen . . . until she discovered a plot by a Persian official to kill all the Jews in Persia . . . until she was able to reveal the plot to the king who stopped the massacre. Once again God's promise of providence was at work. The apple of God's eye was preserved by the apple of a pagan king's eye--all because a young Jewish woman was faithful to follow a confusing, sometimes humiliating, path that God set before her. It was the words of Esther's uncle Mordecai that gave her courage to stay on the path and save her people: "Who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14)

The next time you wonder why God is allowing life to take twists and turns that seem out of character, maybe even out of control, think of Esther:

- Are the details of the moment blurring your vision of the big picture of God's trustworthiness?

- Do you still believe God causes all things to work together for good?

- Have you considered what could be riding on the outcome of your faith?

The reminder of God's providence was spoken to Esther by her uncle, not by God. But Esther knew it reflected centuries of belief in what God had always promised Israel--that he would watch over her like a mother over a child (Isa. 66:13). Esther had her day, and you will have yours--if you will only believe.