

WELCOME

TO CHURCH

GLAD YOU'RE HERE



CRUCIFIXION

DINNER

Friday, April 7



Easter

Offering





MEN'S MUSTER

INSPIRED DESIRES

A SURVEY OF THE
BIBLE

Context · Content · Conviction



FELLOWSHIP BIBLE CHURCH

THE BOOK OF ESTHER

GOD WORKING IN THE SHADOWS



הב

LOAVES & FISHES

**CELEBRATING THE FEAST OF PURIM
ESTHER 9:20-10:3
THE CHOSEN (SEASON 3: EP. 7)**

THE BOOK OF ESTHER

GOD WORKING IN THE SHADOWS



THE BOOK OF ESTHER TELLS THE STORY OF A JEWISH EXILE NAMED MORDECAI, AND HIS BEAUTIFUL COUSIN ESTHER. THROUGH A FASCINATING SET OF CIRCUMSTANCES THEY WERE ABLE TO SAVE THE JEWISH EXILES FROM THE MURDEROUS PLOT OF HAMAN, AN EVENT THAT GAVE RISE TO THE JEWISH FEAST PURIM. THE MOST CURIOUS FEATURE OF THE BOOK IS THE ABSENCE OF GOD'S NAME. DESPITE THIS GLARING OMISSION, MANY CONTEND THAT THE BOOK ILLUSTRATES GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL CONTROL OF EVENTS.

ROBERT CHISHOLM



Esther God Working in the Shadows



DANGER for ISRAEL

DELIVERANCE for ISRAEL

Banquets/Splendor	Danger	Decree	Banquet	REVERSAL	Banquet	Decree	Salvation	Banquets/Splendor									
<p>Persian Festival and Ascension of Esther (1:1-2:23)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The greatness (גְּדֻלָּה) of Ahasuerus; Vashti is deposed (1:1-22). Esther chosen, banquet in her honor; her Jewishness is hidden (2:1-18). Mordecai foils the plot to assassinate Ahasuerus (2:19-23). <p>483 BC</p>	<p>The Jews Endangered by Their Archenemy (3:1-15)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Haman, archenemy of the Jews, plots to destroy Jews on Adar 13 (3:1-7). Haman persuades Ahasuerus to issue an edict to annihilate Jews (3:8-15). <p>479 BC</p>	<p>Mordecai's Strategic Appeal (4:1-17)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Jews in Susa lament over the first royal edict (4:1-3). Mordecai persuades Esther to appeal to Ahasuerus (4:4-17). 	<p>Esther's First Banquet (5:1-8)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Esther averts death and invites Ahasuerus to attend her banquet (5:1-5a). Esther's first banquet; she defers her request (5:5b-8). 	<p>The Fall of Haman and Rise of Mordecai (5:9-6:14)</p> <p>A: Haman boasts; his wife/friends encourage him to hang Mordecai (5:9-14).</p> <p>* Turning Point: "That night the king could not sleep..." (6:1-11).</p> <p>A: Haman laments; wife/advisers predict downfall before Mordecai (6:12-14).</p>	<p>Esther's Second Banquet (7:1-10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Esther's second banquet; she makes her request (7:1-8). Haman invites his own death when he pleads to save his life (7:9-10). 	<p>Mordecai's Strategic Appeal (8:1-17)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mordecai persuades Ahasuerus to issue a second edict (8:1-14). The Jews in Susa rejoice over the second royal edict (8:15-17). 	<p>The Jews Victorious over Their Enemies (9:1-19)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Jews are victorious and destroy their enemies on Adar 13 (9:1-5). Esther persuades Ahasuerus to allow Jews to kill Haman's sons (9:6-19). <p>473 BC</p>	<p>Jewish Festival and Ascension of Mordecai (9:20-10:3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mordecai institutes Purim to celebrate foiling of Haman's plot (9:20-28). Esther authorizes Purim festival; her Jewishness is displayed (9:29-32). The greatness (גְּדֻלָּה) of Mordecai; Mordecai is empowered (10:1-3). 									
1:1	2:23	3:1	3:15	4:1	4:17	5:1	5:8	5:9	6:14	7:1	7:10	8:1	8:17	9:1	9:19	9:20	10:3
Prologue	Complication	Response	Development	Centerpiece	Consequence	Resolution	Climax	Epilogue									

10 YEARS

1 YEAR

The Feast of Purim (Adar 14-15)

The Feast of Ahasuerus



The Feasts of Esther



The Feast of Purim



The author recorded God's preservation of His unbelieving people and the celebration of that event in the Feast of Purim in order to show the post-exilic Covenant Community that God is loyal to His people (even those outside the land), not because of their character but because of His Covenant faithfulness (even when He is working behind the scenes), which would encourage them to finish the projects that God had given them to do, in spite of opposition.

THE STORY OF ESTHER IS AN ENTERTAINING ONE. YET WHILE THE STORY IS RATHER EASY TO READ, IT IS NOT EASY TO INTERPRET, AND THERE IS NO CONSENSUS REGARDING THE POINT OF THE STORY.

LIKEWISE THERE IS DISAGREEMENT OVER HOW TO INTERPRET THE CHARACTER OF ESTHER.



DANNY HAYS



IN FACT, THERE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE MUCH OF A SPIRITUAL AWARENESS AT ALL IN ANY OF THE CHARACTERS IN THE BOOK. ONE CAN PERHAPS READ SOME FAITH INTO MORDECAI'S WARNING WORDS TO ESTHER IN 4:12—14, ESPECIALLY IN HIS ENDING COMMENTS, "WHO KNOWS BUT THAT YOU HAVE COME TO ROYAL POSITION FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS?" BUT THIS IS A PRETTY FUZZY INDICATION OF FAITH, ESPECIALLY IN THE CONTEXT OF EZRA AND NEHEMIAH, WHO CLEARLY AND REPEATEDLY LOOK TO GOD FOR HELP AND WHO ALSO REPEATEDLY ACKNOWLEDGE GOD FOR ALL OF THEIR SUCCESSES. THE CHARACTERS IN ESTHER DO NEITHER.



DANNY HAYS



NEITHER MORDECAI NOR ESTHER IS
NECESSARILY A PARAGON OF PRACTICING
YAHWISM. ESTHER IS NO RUTH
AND MORDECAI IS NO BOAZ.

MICHELLE KNIGHT



LIKEWISE THE NAMES OF THE HERO AND THE HEROINE ARE DISTURBING. MORDECAI'S NAME PROBABLY MEANS "MAN OF MARDUK." MARDUK WAS THE PRIMARY GOD OF THE BABYLONIANS, SO THIS IS AN ALARMING NAME FOR AN ISRAELITE HERO. SIMILARLY, THE NAME ESTHER IS PROBABLY DERIVED FROM ISHTAR, THE MESOPOTAMIAN GODDESS OF LOVE. THE MEANING OF THE NAMES, OF COURSE, IS NOT CONCLUSIVE FOR DETERMINING THE MEANING OF THE STORY, BUT NAMES OFTEN DO PLAY A ROLE, AND THESE PARTICULAR NAMES ARE ESPECIALLY DISCONCERTING.



DANNY HAYS

THUS WHILE IT IS TEMPTING TO RAISE UP MORDECAI AND THE BEAUTIFUL YOUNG ESTHER AS HEROES AND MODELS OF FAITH LIKE EZRA AND NEHEMIAH, IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THE AUTHOR OF ESTHER INTENDED THE STORY TO BE UNDERSTOOD THAT WAY.



DANNY HAYS



ESTHER,
SHE AIN'T
THE HERO.

MICHELLE KNIGHT



THE CHARACTERS OF MORDECAI AND ESTHER ARE CERTAINLY BOLD AND BRAVE, BUT THEY DO NOT SEEM TO BE FAITH-DRIVEN, AND THEY PROBABLY SYMBOLIZE THOSE JEWS WHO HAD REMAINED IN EXILE. GOD WORKS BEHIND THE SCENES THROUGH MORDECAI AND ESTHER, NOT BECAUSE OF THEIR GREAT FAITH (WHICH IS ABSENT), BUT BECAUSE OF HIS GREAT GRACE, AND IN SPITE OF THEIR LACK OF FAITH.



DANNY HAYS



THE LAVISH LAP OF LUXURY

FOR A FULL 180 DAYS HE (XERXES) DISPLAYED THE VAST WEALTH OF HIS KINGDOM AND THE SPLENDOR AND GLORY OF HIS MAJESTY. WHEN THESE DAYS WERE OVER, THE KING GAVE A BANQUET, LASTING SEVEN DAYS, IN THE ENCLOSED GARDEN OF THE KING'S PALACE, FOR ALL THE PEOPLE FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST WHO WERE IN THE CITADEL OF SUSA. THE GARDEN HAD HANGINGS OF WHITE AND BLUE LINEN, FASTENED WITH CORDS OF WHITE LINEN AND PURPLE MATERIAL TO SILVER RINGS ON MARBLE PILLARS.

Esther 1:4-8



THE LAVISH LAP OF LUXURY

THERE WERE COUCHES OF GOLD AND SILVER ON A MOSAIC PAVEMENT OF PORPHYRY, MARBLE, MOTHER-OF-PEARL AND OTHER COSTLY STONES. WINE WAS SERVED IN GOBLETS OF GOLD, EACH ONE DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER, AND THE ROYAL WINE WAS ABUNDANT, IN KEEPING WITH THE KING'S LIBERALITY. BY THE KING'S COMMAND EACH GUEST WAS ALLOWED TO DRINK WITH NO RESTRICTIONS, FOR THE KING INSTRUCTED ALL THE WINE STEWARDS TO SERVE EACH MAN WHAT HE WISHED.

Esther 1:4-8



THE LAVISH LAP OF LUXURY

ON THE SEVENTH DAY, WHEN KING XERXES WAS IN HIGH SPIRITS FROM WINE, HE COMMANDED THE SEVEN EUNUCHS WHO SERVED HIM—MEHUMAN, BIZTHA, HARBONA, BIGTHA, ABAGTHA, ZETHAR AND KARKAS—to BRING BEFORE HIM QUEEN VASHTI, **WEARING HER ROYAL CROWN**, IN ORDER TO DISPLAY HER BEAUTY TO THE PEOPLE AND NOBLES, FOR SHE WAS LOVELY TO LOOK AT. BUT WHEN THE ATTENDANTS DELIVERED THE KING'S COMMAND, QUEEN VASHTI REFUSED TO COME. **THEN THE KING BECAME FURIOUS AND BURNED WITH ANGER.**

Esther 1:10-12

NOT A BEAUTY PAGEANT

WHEN THE KING'S ORDER AND EDICT HAD BEEN PROCLAIMED, MANY YOUNG WOMEN WERE BROUGHT TO THE CITADEL OF SUSAN AND PUT UNDER THE CARE OF HEGAI.

ESTHER ALSO WAS TAKEN TO THE KING'S PALACE AND ENTRUSTED TO HEGAI, WHO HAD CHARGE OF THE HAREM. SHE PLEASSED HIM AND WON HIS FAVOR. IMMEDIATELY HE PROVIDED HER WITH HER BEAUTY TREATMENTS AND SPECIAL FOOD. HE ASSIGNED TO HER SEVEN FEMALE ATTENDANTS SELECTED FROM THE KING'S PALACE AND MOVED HER AND HER ATTENDANTS INTO THE BEST PLACE IN THE HAREM.

Esther 2:8-9

ESTHER'S TURN?

WHEN THE TURN CAME FOR ESTHER (THE YOUNG WOMAN MORDECAI HAD ADOPTED, THE DAUGHTER OF HIS UNCLE ABIHAIL) TO GO TO THE KING, SHE ASKED FOR NOTHING OTHER THAN WHAT HEGAI, THE KING'S EUNUCH WHO WAS IN CHARGE OF THE HAREM, SUGGESTED. AND ESTHER WON THE FAVOR OF EVERYONE WHO SAW HER. SHE WAS TAKEN TO KING XERXES IN THE ROYAL RESIDENCE IN THE TENTH MONTH, THE MONTH OF TEBETH, IN THE SEVENTH YEAR OF HIS REIGN.

Esther 2:15-16

ESTHER IS NO DANIEL.



YOU WIN?

NOW THE KING WAS ATTRACTED TO ESTHER MORE THAN TO ANY OF THE OTHER WOMEN, AND SHE WON HIS FAVOR AND APPROVAL MORE THAN ANY OF THE OTHER VIRGINS. SO HE SET A ROYAL CROWN ON HER HEAD AND MADE HER QUEEN INSTEAD OF VASHTI. AND THE KING GAVE A GREAT BANQUET, ESTHER'S BANQUET, FOR ALL HIS NOBLES AND OFFICIALS. HE PROCLAIMED A HOLIDAY THROUGHOUT THE PROVINCES AND DISTRIBUTED GIFTS WITH ROYAL LIBERALITY.

Esther 2:17-18

IT JUST SO HAPPENED

DURING THE TIME MORDECAI WAS SITTING AT THE KING'S GATE, BIGTHANA AND TERESH, TWO OF THE KING'S OFFICERS WHO GUARDED THE DOORWAY, BECAME ANGRY AND CONSPIRED TO ASSASSINATE KING XERXES. BUT MORDECAI FOUND OUT ABOUT THE PLOT AND TOLD QUEEN ESTHER, WHO IN TURN REPORTED IT TO THE KING, GIVING CREDIT TO MORDECAI. AND WHEN THE REPORT WAS INVESTIGATED AND FOUND TO BE TRUE, THE TWO OFFICIALS WERE IMPALED ON POLES.

ALL THIS WAS RECORDED IN THE BOOK OF THE ANNALS IN THE PRESENCE OF THE KING.

Esther 2:21-23

THE PLOT THICKENS

AFTER THESE EVENTS, KING XERXES HONORED HAMAN SON OF HAMMEDATHA, THE AGAGITE, ELEVATING HIM AND GIVING HIM A SEAT OF HONOR HIGHER THAN THAT OF ALL THE OTHER NOBLES. ALL THE ROYAL OFFICIALS AT THE KING'S GATE KNELT DOWN AND PAID HONOR TO HAMAN, FOR THE KING HAD COMMANDED THIS CONCERNING HIM.
BUT MORDECAI WOULD NOT KNEEL DOWN OR PAY HIM HONOR.

Esther 3:1-2

DESTROY, KILL, ANNIHILATE

DISPATCHES WERE SENT BY COURIERS TO ALL THE KING'S PROVINCES WITH THE ORDER TO **DESTROY, KILL AND ANNIHILATE** ALL THE JEWS—YOUNG AND OLD, WOMEN AND CHILDREN—ON A SINGLE DAY, THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF THE TWELFTH MONTH, THE MONTH OF ADAR, AND TO PLUNDER THEIR GOODS.

Esther 3:13

XERXES AND HAMAN

THE KING AND HAMAN SAT DOWN TO DRINK,
BUT THE CITY OF SUSAN WAS BEWILDERED.

Esther 3:15



I NEED YOUR HELP

DO NOT THINK THAT BECAUSE YOU ARE IN THE KING'S HOUSE YOU ALONE OF ALL THE JEWS WILL ESCAPE. FOR IF YOU REMAIN SILENT AT THIS TIME, RELIEF AND DELIVERANCE FOR THE JEWS WILL ARISE FROM ANOTHER PLACE, BUT YOU AND YOUR FATHER'S FAMILY WILL PERISH.

AND WHO KNOWS BUT THAT YOU HAVE COME TO YOUR ROYAL POSITION

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS?

Esther 4:13-14



TURING POINT

THAT NIGHT THE KING COULD NOT SLEEP; SO HE ORDERED THE BOOK OF THE CHRONICLES, THE RECORD OF HIS REIGN, TO BE BROUGHT IN AND READ TO HIM. IT WAS FOUND RECORDED THERE THAT MORDECAI HAD EXPOSED BIGTHANA AND TERESH, TWO OF THE KING'S OFFICERS WHO GUARDED THE DOORWAY, WHO HAD CONSPIRED TO ASSASSINATE KING XERXES.

Esther 6:1-2



Esther God Working in the Shadows



DANGER for ISRAEL

DELIVERANCE for ISRAEL

Banquets/Splendor	Danger	Decree	Banquet	REVERSAL	Banquet	Decree	Salvation	Banquets/Splendor									
<p>Persian Festival and Ascension of Esther (1:1-2:23)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The greatness (גְּדֻלָּה) of Ahasuerus; Vashti is deposed (1:1-22). Esther chosen, banquet in her honor; her Jewishness is hidden (2:1-18). Mordecai foils the plot to assassinate Ahasuerus (2:19-23). <p>483 BC</p>	<p>The Jews Endangered by Their Archenemy (3:1-15)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Haman, archenemy of the Jews, plots to destroy Jews on Adar 13 (3:1-7). Haman persuades Ahasuerus to issue an edict to annihilate Jews (3:8-15). <p>479 BC</p>	<p>Mordecai's Strategic Appeal (4:1-17)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Jews in Susa lament over the first royal edict (4:1-3). Mordecai persuades Esther to appeal to Ahasuerus (4:4-17). 	<p>Esther's First Banquet (5:1-8)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Esther averts death and invites Ahasuerus to attend her banquet (5:1-5a). Esther's first banquet; she defers her request (5:5b-8). 	<p>The Fall of Haman and Rise of Mordecai (5:9-6:14)</p> <p>A: Haman boasts; his wife/friends encourage him to hang Mordecai (5:9-14).</p> <p>* Turning Point: "That night the king could not sleep..." (6:1-11).</p> <p>Haman laments; wife/advisers predict downfall before Mordecai (6:12-14).</p>	<p>Esther's Second Banquet (7:1-10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Esther's second banquet; she makes her request (7:1-8). Haman invites his own death when he pleads to save his life (7:9-10). 	<p>Mordecai's Strategic Appeal (8:1-17)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mordecai persuades Ahasuerus to issue a second edict (8:1-14). The Jews in Susa rejoice over the second royal edict (8:15-17). 	<p>The Jews Victorious over Their Enemies (9:1-19)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Jews are victorious and destroy their enemies on Adar 13 (9:1-5). Esther persuades Ahasuerus to allow Jews to kill Haman's sons (9:6-19). <p>473 BC</p>	<p>Jewish Festival and Ascension of Mordecai (9:20-10:3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mordecai institutes Purim to celebrate foiling of Haman's plot (9:20-28). Esther authorizes Purim festival; her Jewishness is displayed (9:29-32). The greatness (גְּדֻלָּה) of Mordecai; Mordecai is empowered (10:1-3). <p>The Feast of Purim (Adar 14-15)</p>									
1:1	2:23	3:1	3:15	4:1	4:17	5:1	5:8	5:9	6:14	7:1	7:10	8:1	8:17	9:1	9:19	9:20	10:3
Prologue	Complication	Response	Development	Centerpiece	Consequence	Resolution	Climax	Epilogue									

The Feast of Ahasuerus



The Feasts of Esther



The Feast of Purim



The author recorded God's preservation of His unbelieving people and the celebration of that event in the Feast of Purim in order to show the post-exilic Covenant Community that God is loyal to His people (even those outside the land), not because of their character but because of His Covenant faithfulness (even when He is working behind the scenes), which would encourage them to finish the projects that God had given them to do, in spite of opposition.

I NEED YOUR HELP

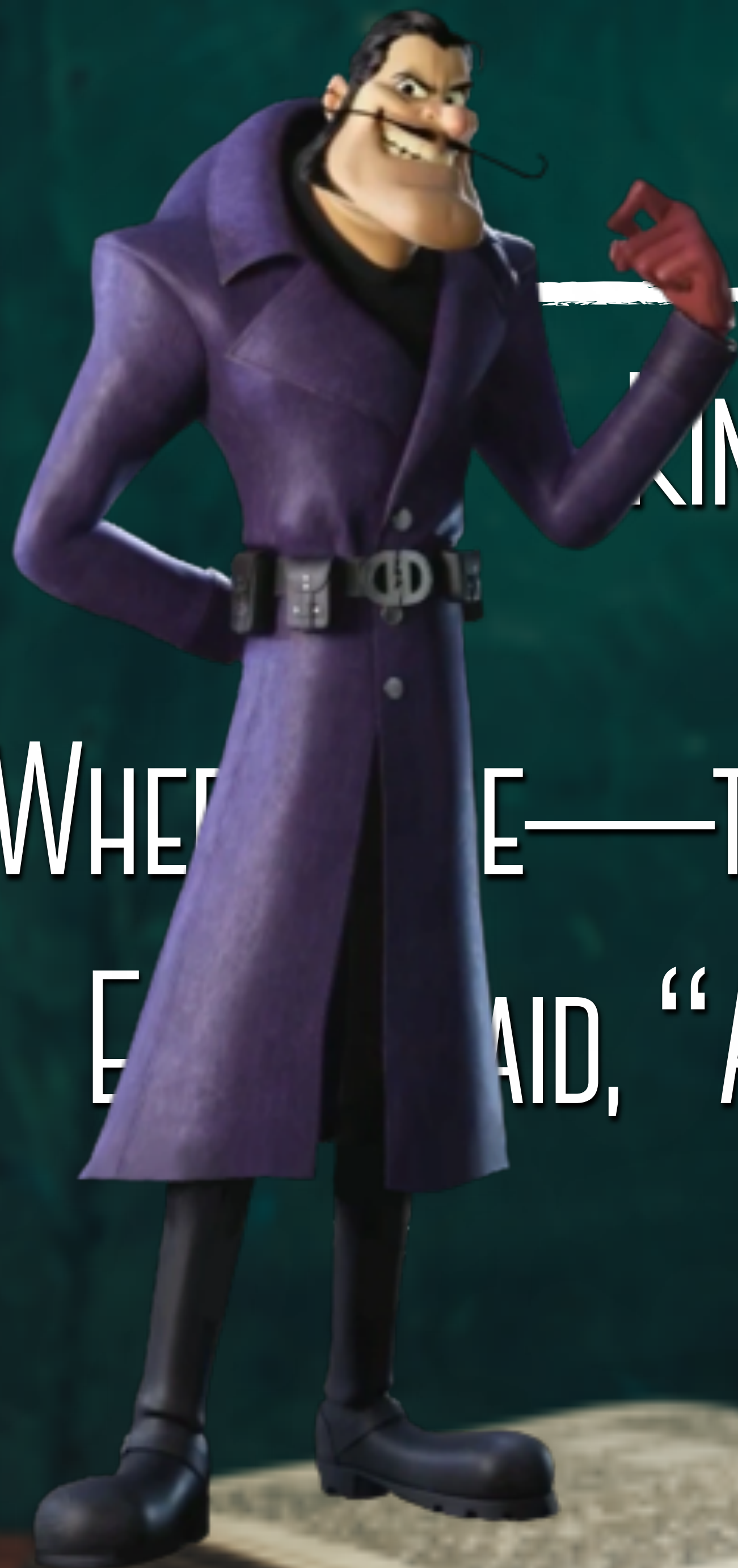
THEN QUEEN ESTHER ANSWERED, “IF I HAVE FOUND FAVOR WITH YOU, YOUR MAJESTY, AND IF IT PLEASES YOU, GRANT ME MY LIFE—THIS IS MY PETITION. AND SPARE MY PEOPLE—THIS IS MY REQUEST. FOR I AND MY PEOPLE HAVE BEEN SOLD TO BE **DESTROYED, KILLED AND ANNIHILATED.**

Esther 7:3-4

DASTARDLY

KING XERXES ASKED QUEEN ESTHER
“WHO IS HE?”

WHEN SHE SAID—THE MAN WHO HAS DARED TO DO
ESTHER SAID, “AN ADVERSARY AND ENEMY! TH



Vile Haman

DASTARDLY

JUST AS THE KING RETURNED FROM THE PALACE GARDEN TO THE BANQUET HALL, HAMAN WAS FALLING ON THE COUCH WHERE ESTHER WAS RECLINING.

THE KING EXCLAIMED, "WILL HE EVEN MOLEST THE QUEEN WHILE SHE IS WITH ME IN THE HOUSE?"

Esther 7:8

PROTECT YOURSELF

THE KING'S EDICT GRANTED THE JEWS IN EVERY CITY THE RIGHT TO ASSEMBLE AND PROTECT THEMSELVES; TO **DESTROY, KILL AND ANNIHILATE** THE ARMED MEN OF ANY NATIONALITY OR PROVINCE WHO MIGHT ATTACK THEM AND THEIR WOMEN AND CHILDREN, AND TO PLUNDER THE PROPERTY OF THEIR ENEMIES.

Esther 8:11



THE TABLES ARE TURNED

ON THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF THE TWELFTH MONTH, THE MONTH OF ADAR, THE EDICT COMMANDED BY THE KING WAS TO BE CARRIED OUT. ON THIS DAY THE ENEMIES OF THE JEWS HAD HOPED TO OVERPOWER THEM, BUT NOW THE TABLES WERE TURNED AND THE JEWS GOT THE UPPER HAND OVER THOSE WHO HATED THEM.

Esther 9:1

CONTEXT: WHO, WHEN, WHERE, AND WHY?



WHO COMPOSED ESTHER?

THE TEXT OF ESTHER DOES NOT GIVE US ANY CLUES AS TO WHO WROTE DOWN THE STORY. WHOEVER IT WAS, THEY WERE CERTAINLY AWARE OF THE PRECISE HISTORICAL DETAILS OF THE PERSIAN PALACE AND THE INTRICACIES OF THE RELATIONSHIPS THERE. (THE WRITER WAS A PART OF THE POST-EXILIC COMMUNITY.)



WHEN DID THIS HAPPEN?

THE EVENTS COVERED IN ESTHER TAKE PLACE NEAR THE BEGINNING OF THE REIGN OF THE PERSIAN KING, XERXES (485-564).

THE HEBREW TEXT CALLS HIM BY HIS OTHER NAME AHASUERUS.

THE STORY BEGINS WITH XERXES DEPOSING VASHTI IN 483 BC AND ENDS SOME TEN OR ELEVEN YEARS LATER IN 473 BC.



THE STORY OF ESTHER'S LIFE FITS BETWEEN CHAPTERS 6 AND 7 OF EZRA, BETWEEN THE FIRST RETURN UNDER ZURUBABBAL AND THE SECOND RETURN LED BY EZRA. IT PROVIDES THE ONLY BIBLICAL PORTRAIT OF THE VAST MAJORITY OF JEWS, WHO CHOSE TO REMAIN IN PERSIA, RATHER THAN RETURN TO PALESTINE AFTER THE EXILE. GOD'S HAND OF PROVIDENCE AND PROTECTION ON BEHALF OF HIS PEOPLE IS EVIDENT THROUGHOUT THE BOOK, THOUGH HIS NAME DOES NOT APPEAR ONCE!



BRUCE WILKINSON

Ezra 1-6	Gap	Esther	Gap	Ezra 7-10	Gap	Nehemiah
Zerubbabbal		Queen in Persia		Ezra		Nehemiah
538-515	32 Years	483-473	15 Years	458	14 Years	444-430
Temple		Feast of Purim		People		Walls
Haggai Zechariah						Malachi
First Return (50,000)				Second Return (2,000)		Third Return



THE POST-EXILIC PERIOD

THE UNSTOPPABLE STORY OF GOD'S PLAN WITH GOD'S PEOPLE

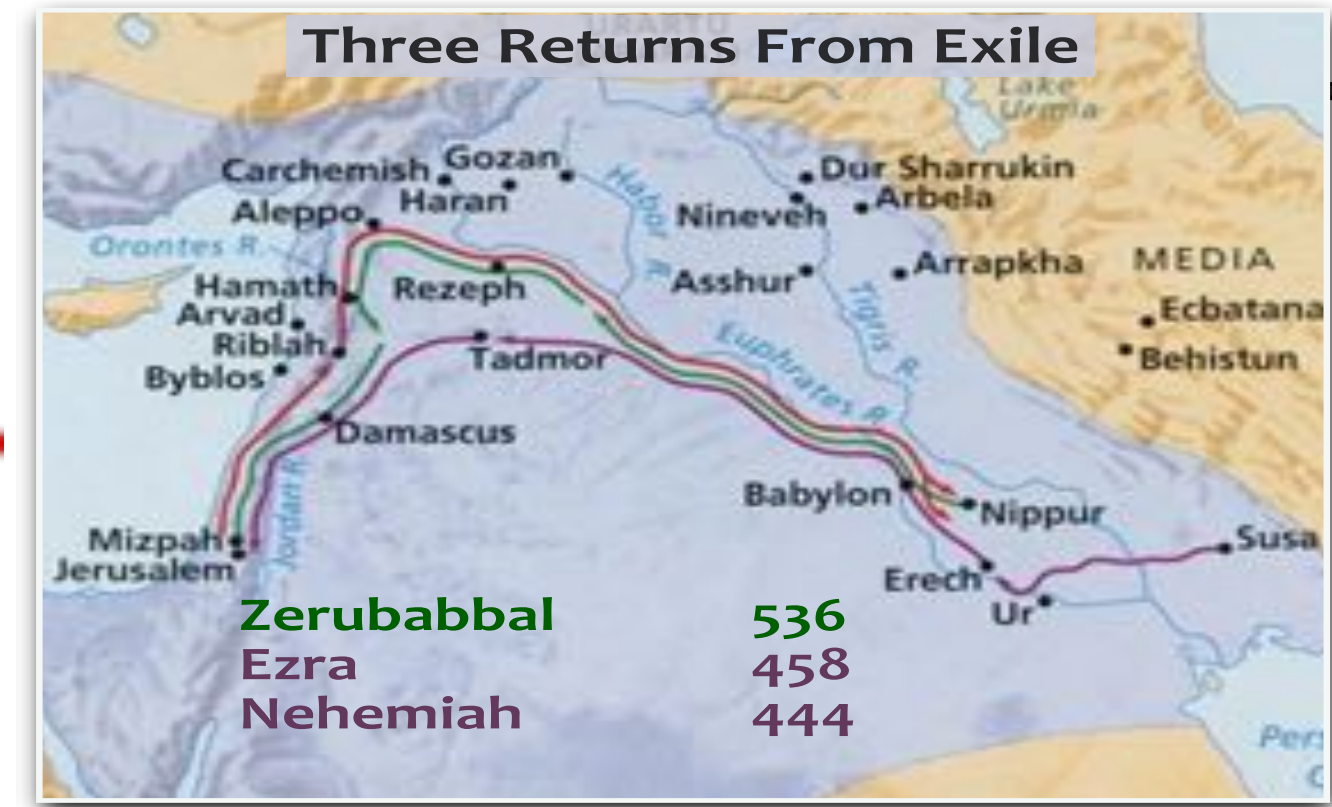
THE EVENTS IN THE BOOKS OF EZRA AND NEHEMIAH OCCURRED OVER A 94 YEAR SPAN FROM 538-444 BC WITH THREE SUCCESSIVE RETURNS FROM EXILE. ZERUBBABEL RETURNED FIRST TO REBUILD THE TEMPLE (EZRA 1-6).

EZRA RETURNED WITH A LARGE REMNANT AND LED A REVIVAL (EZRA 7-10). FINALLY, NEHEMIAH RETURNED TO REBUILD THE WALLS (NEHEMIAH 1-7) FOLLOWED BY ANOTHER REVIVAL UNDER EZRA (NEHEMIAH 7-13).

THE STORY OF ESTHER OCCURRED OVER A TEN YEAR PERIOD FROM THE 3RD YEAR OF THE REIGN OF XERXES IN 483 B.C. (ESTHER 1:3) UNTIL THE 12TH YEAR OF HIS REIGN IN 473 B.C. (ESTHER 3:7). CHRONOLOGICALLY THE EVENTS IN ESTHER FIT IN BETWEEN EZRA 6 AND 7 AFTER MANY OF THE JEWISH EXILES HAD RETURNED TO JERUSALEM.

DURING THIS TIME PERIOD HAGGAI AND ZECHARIAH PREACH MESSAGES THAT SUPPORT ZERUBABBAL IN HIS MISSION TO REBUILD THE TEMPLE AND REESTABLISH WORSHIP. AFTER NEHEMIAH FINISHED THE MISSION TO REBUILD THE WALLS PROVIDING SECURITY FOR THE PEOPLE IN 444 BC MALACHI PROPHESED REBUKING THE NATION FOR ITS RITUALISM AND SOCIAL INJUSTICE.

EVENT	DATE	REFERENCE	MAP
CYRUS' DECREE TO RETURN	538 B.C.	EZRA 1:1-4	
FIRST RETURN UNDER ZERUBBABEL (49,897 RETURNEES LEAVE BABYLON FOR ISRAEL)	538 B.C.	EZRA 2	
TEMPLE RECONSTRUCTION STARTED	536 B.C.	EZRA 3-4	
HAGGAI & ZECHARIAH PREACH	520-518 B.C.	EZRA 5:1-2	
TEMPLE COMPLETED	515 B.C.	EZRA 5-6	
ESTHER IS QUEEN	479 B.C.	ESTHER 1-10	
SECOND RETURN UNDER EZRA (5,000 RETURNEES)	458 B.C.	EZRA 7-10	
THIRD RETURN UNDER NEHEMIAH (49,942 ARRIVE TO RESIDE IN JERUSALEM)	444 B.C.	NEHEMIAH 1-2	
REBUILDING THE WALLS IN 52 DAYS	444 B.C.	NEHEMIAH 3-7	
MALACHI PREACHES	450 B.C.	MALACHI	



CHRONOLOGY



WHERE WERE THEY?

THE CHARACTERS IN THE STORY WERE
LIVING IN THE CITY OF SUSAN, ONE OF THE
THE SIX CITADELS OF THE PERSIAN EMPIRE.







WHERE WERE THE READERS?

THE ORIGINAL AUDIENCE MAY HAVE BEEN LIVING BACK IN THE LAND OF ISRAEL, STILL UNDER THE RULE OF THE PERSIANS OR THEY MAY HAVE STILL BEEN LIVING IN THE PERSIAN EMPIRE.



CONTENT: HOW AND WHAT




HOW IS ESTHER ORGANIZED?

- A The splendor of the Persian king + Two banquets (1:1-8)
- B Esther becomes Queen + Mordecai saves the king (1:9-2:20 + 2:21-23)
- C Haman elevated to power (3:1-6)
- D Haman's decree to destroy the Jewish people (3:7-15)
- E Esther and Mordecai's plan to reverse the decree (4:1-17)
- F Esther's 1st banquet + Haman plans Mordecai's execution (5:1-8 + 5:9-14)
- PIVOT: Haman humiliated & Mordecai exalted (6:1-14)**
- F' Esther's 2nd banquet + Haman executed instead of Mordecai (7:1-10)
- E' Esther and Mordecai plan to reverse the decree (8:1-8)
- D' Mordecai's counter-decree to save the Jewish people [8:9-14]
- C' Mordecai elevated to power (8:15-17)
- B' Queen Esther and Mordecai save the Jewish people (9:1-19)
- A' Two feasts + The splendor of Mordecai (9:20-32 + 10:1-3)

WHAT IS THE MESSAGE?

THE AUTHOR RECORDED GOD'S PRESERVATION OF HIS UNBELIEVING PEOPLE AND THE CELEBRATION OF THAT EVENT IN THE FEAST OF PURIM IN ORDER TO SHOW THE POST-EXILIC COVENANT COMMUNITY THAT GOD IS LOYAL TO HIS PEOPLE (EVEN THOSE OUTSIDE THE LAND), NOT BECAUSE OF THEIR CHARACTER BUT BECAUSE OF HIS COVENANT FAITHFULNESS (EVEN WHEN HE IS WORKING BEHIND THE SCENES), WHICH WOULD ENCOURAGE THEM TO FINISH THE PROJECTS THAT GOD HAD GIVEN THEM TO DO, IN SPITE OF OPPOSITION.



GOD IS FAITHFUL AND ABLE, NO MATTER HOW POWERLESS (ESTHER), NOMINALLY RELIGIOUS (MORDECAI), OR PERSECUTED (JEWS IN GENERAL IN PERSIA) HIS INSTRUMENTS ARE. HE IS FAITHFUL TO HIS COVENANT AND ABLE TO OVERCOME ANY OBSTACLES.

MICHELLE KNIGHT



CONVICTION: SO WHAT?



WHERE DOES THIS FIT?

- A CONTINUATION OF THE STORY OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS DURING HIS PEOPLE'S FAILURE.
- A NARRATIVE THAT ACKNOWLEDGES THE REALITY OF OPPOSITION TO GOD'S WORK AND PLAN FOR OUR LIVES.
- AN EXAMPLE OF THE OFTEN HIDDEN WORK OF GOD IN OUR LIVES TO FURTHER HIS PLAN.



THUS **THE INDESTRUCTIBILITY OF THE JEWS**, ALLUDED TO BY HAMAN'S WIFE AND CHRONICLED IN THE BOOK OF ESTHER, IS LINKED TO ALL OF THE PROMISES MADE TO THE JEWS, PARTICULARLY TO THE PROMISE OF BRINGING THE MESSIAH INTO THE WORLD, WHICH ULTIMATELY LEADS TO THE CALLING OUT OF A PEOPLE FOR HIS NAME FROM BOTH JEWS AND GENTILES.

FORREST S. WEILAND



ESTHER IS TREMENDOUSLY IMPORTANT FOR READERS IN EVERY IMAGINABLE CONTEXT. FOR THOSE WHO FEEL THEMSELVES REMOVED FROM NARRATIVES OF GOD'S MIRACULOUS INTERVENTIONS THAT ARE SO DIFFERENT FROM THEIR OWN EXPERIENCES, ESTHER'S STORY DESCRIBES LIFE "UNDER THE SUN", COMPLETE WITH AMBIGUITIES AND THE MESSINESS CREATED BY SIN.

ELAINE A. PHILLIPS



AND ALSO ATTESTS TO THE REVERSAL'S THAT ARE PART OF LIFE'S EXPERIENCE, PERHAPS, IN ITS OWN WAY, PREPARING FOR THE GREAT REVERSAL FROM DEATH TO LIFE ETERNAL THROUGH THE UNLIKELY MEANS OF THE CRUCIFIED MESSIAH.

ELAINE A. PHILLIPS



WHAT SHOULD WE BELIEVE?

- GOD IS FAITHFUL IN SPITE OF OUR UNFAITHFULNESS.
- ULTIMATELY GOD WILL DELIVER HIS PEOPLE FROM ALL THREATS AND HARM.
- THE OPPOSITION OF THE WORLD IS TERRIFYING AND REQUIRES COURAGE AND WISDOM.
- THE VICTORY OF GOD'S PEOPLE IS GUARANTEED.
- GOD IS WORKING, EVEN WHEN WE DON'T SEE IT.



THE AUTHOR IS BEING INTENTIONALLY VAGUE ABOUT GOD'S PRESENCE IN ADVANCE. TIME, AND AGAIN, THE AUTHOR SEEMS TO COME CLOSE TO MENTIONING GOD, ONLY TO SWERVE WAY ABRUPTLY. THIS IS TRUE, AND ALMOST EVERY CASE OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN THE BOOK.

DAVID M. HOWARD



BY DOING THIS, THE AUTHOR SEEMS TO BE AFFIRMING, ON THE ONE HAND, THAT GOD, INDEED, IS INVOLVED WITH HIS PEOPLE (PROVIDENCE), AND, ON THE OTHER HAND, THAT, PERCEIVING THIS INVOLVEMENT IS SOMETIMES DIFFICULT (HIDDENNESS). WHILE, THE AUTHOR AND HIS READERS KNOW THAT GOD IS ALWAYS PRESENT AND IN CONTROL, THE EXPERIENCES OF LIFE SHOW THAT THE SPECIFIC MANIFESTATIONS OF HIS PRESENCE ARE NOT ALWAYS SO CLEAR.

DAVID M. HOWARD



HOW SHOULD WE BEHAVE?

- **LIVE DISTINCTIVE LIVES** OF CHRISTIAN WITNESS IN A HOSTILE WORLD.
- **COURAGEOUSLY TRUST GOD** NO MATTER WHERE YOU FIND YOURSELF.
- **CELEBRATE** WHEN GOD DELIVERS YOU.



NEXT STEPS:

- HONESTLY EVALUATE YOUR LIFE TO SEE IF YOU HAVE CAPITULATED TO THE CULTURE.
- LOOK CLOSELY TO SEE WHERE YOU NEED DELIVERANCE.
- TRUST GOD TO DELIVER YOU IN KEEPING WITH ADVANCING HIS PURPOSES.



