

Esther

Overview

- **In a word:** Providence
- **In a sentence:** Even though God is not mentioned this book shows that history really is a comedy- it will move toward a happy ending because God's hand governs all things and no one can stop him.
- Set 100 years after exile, in Susa (capitol of Persia)

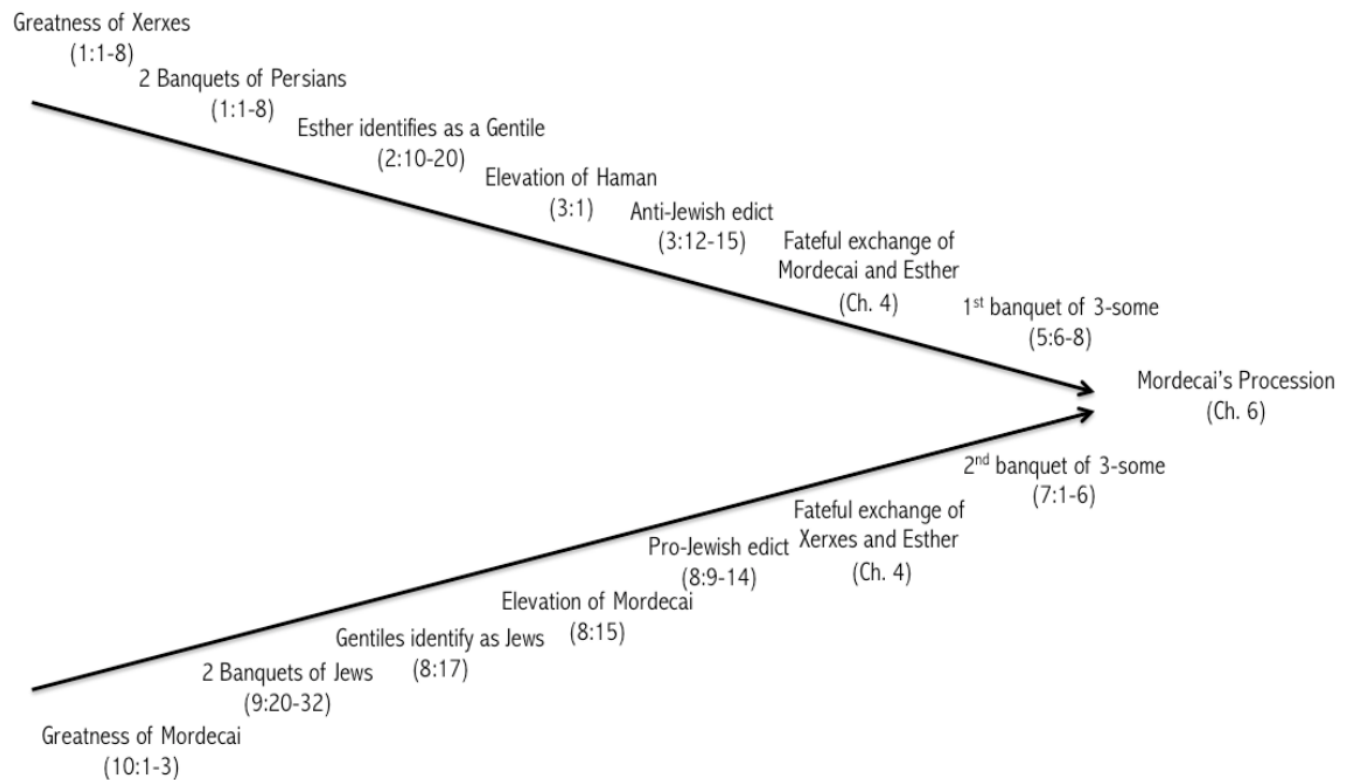
Themes

- Main characters: Mordecai, Esther, Persian king (drunk), Haman
- God is never mentioned by name- look for providence!
- Keep in mind the diagram from last time- as go the Jews so goes the world
- Discussion of Psalm 2, history as divine comedy, and war between the seeds post-fall.
 - This book is amazingly hilarious and wonderfully structured to highlight that God is at work when it seems he is unseen.
 - Almost seems like a book expanding on Psalm 2- God sits in the heavens and laughs at the kings of the earth.
 - After the fall, part of the dominion mandate means destroying those opposed to Yahweh- but the Scriptures make it clear that this is God's realm and he does this through providence and his Messiah.

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Structure

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Thematic reversal

- A. The king gives Haman his ring (3:10)
- B. Haman summons the king's scribe (3:12)
- C. Letters written, sealed with ring (3:12)
- D. The Jews, even women and children, to be killed on one day (3:13)
- E. Haman's decree publically displayed as law (3:14)
- F. Couriers go out in haste (3:15)
- G. The city of Susa is bewildered (3:15)
- H. Mordecai wears sackcloth and ashes (4:1)
- I. Mordecai goes through city crying in sorrow (4:1)
- J. Zeresh advises Mordecai's death (5:14)
- K. King's insomnia leads to Mordecai's honor (6:1-3)
- K. Haman's insomnia leads to his dishonor (6:4-9)
- J. Zeresh predicts Haman's ruin (6:13)
- I. Mordecai led through the city in honor (6:11)
- H. Mordecai wears royal robes (8:15)
- G. The city of Susa rejoices (8:15)
- F. Couriers go out in haste (8:14)
- E. Mordecai's decree publicly displayed as law (8:13)
- D. The enemies, even women and children, to be killed on one day (8:11)
- C. Letters written, sealed with the same ring (8:10)
- B. Mordecai summons the king's scribes (8:9)
- A. The king gives Mordecai the same ring (8:2)

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Exegetical Notes

- 1-2 The greatness of Ahasuerus
 - 1:4 point of feast
 - 1:6-7 these echo prophetic descriptions of colors around Yahweh- basically the king is making himself appear Godlike
 - 1:8 but for all his pomp- he's a drunk. And this is meant to be funny.
- 1:10-12- At the end of the party the super drunk king calls in Vashti and the implications of "wearing the royal crown" seem to potentially mean "only wearing the royal crown"- he wanted to show her off, but she refuses.
- 1:10-12 I also think in this whole section there is a play going on between gender roles and reversals and how God's design brings good things while those who reject his design are thrown into tragi-comic confusion.
- 1:12 throughout the king is portrayed as one key thing- **Not in control, of himself, of his queen, of his kingdom.** He is like the helpless father in modern TV shows.
- 1:13-22- King makes a crazy drunken decree deposing Vashti and making all Persian men "master of their home" (ironic? Genesis overtones?)- I think part of the Hebrew mocking thing here is that they knew how marriages were supposed to work and the fact that the king had to make a decree about this shows how clueless these people were in their pride.
- 2:1-2 so he holds a beauty pageant to choose the next queen-- he just wants the hottest he can find. He again is not in control of himself. **His passions lead him right into God's plan. (this is a recurring theme in how God works)**
- 2:5-14- Then we meet Esther and Mordecai and Esther is given such favor that she is made Queen- but no one knows she is a Jew. Keep in mind the background overtones in the Jewish mind- Abraham was promised that he would produce rulers that would bring blessing on the whole world. The Jews are the path through which blessing will go to the whole world.
- 2:19-23- Mordecai "just happens" to hear royal guards plot and saves the king.
- 3:1- Haman introduced- he is an Agagite (1 Sam 15)
 - Significance of this is, I think, that basically the author is showing that even in times of exile when foreign powers seem to rule the world it is actually still Yahweh in control and he is exalting the Jews to rulership and completing story-arcs from back in Saul's time- the plan isn't halted, the same story continues.
 - Also the same seed-line war that happened throughout Israel's history continues. The children of Satan and want to destroy the children of Yahweh and his Messiah.
- 3:2-6- Mordecai refuses to kneel- which Haman hates, and so Haman gets king to enact super odd decree to kill all Jews.
- 3:7-8- Haman then chooses the day of their killing by rolling the dice. Again note God's hand despite his not being mentioned.
- 3:7- the day of killing is 11 months later.
- 4:1- now we turn to Esther and Mordecai
- 4:12-17- they plan to reveal her Jewish identity and ask for the king's help, but she can't just walk up to the king. Notice how it's almost as if Mordecai is ruling through Esther who rules

over her husband.

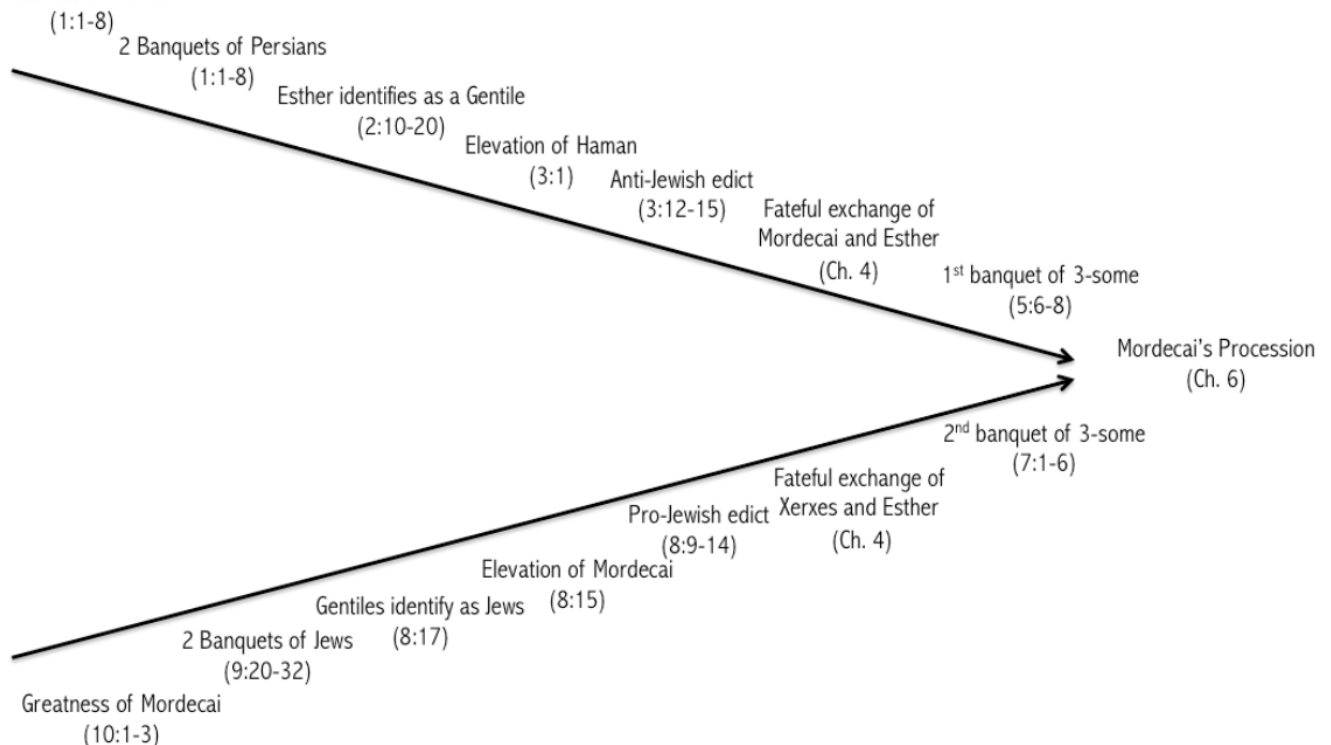
- 4:12-17- Mordecai knows the Jews will be saved (knows the prophets) but says, who knows maybe this is why you have been chosen as queen?? (is her statement the hinge of the book?)
- 5- this chapter begins the ironic reversal of everything Haman plans
- 5- Esther hosts Haman and King the next day for a drinking party
- 5:9-14- Haman wants Mordecai impaled on a stake in the morning- we should hear echoes here of the Proverbs that say the wicked set a trap for themselves.
- 6:1-2- it so happens the king can't sleep- so reads the royal chronicles
- 6:2- hears about Mordecai and wants to honor him
- 6:3-4 the sleeplessness of the king leads to Mordecai being honored and the sleeplessness of Haman leads to his downfall. Haman comes in to ask to execute Mordecai but now Haman has to lead Mordecai around the city being praised. This moment is the pivot of Mordecai's rise and Haman's fall.
- 6:13 notice the reversal- she was the one who advised him to make the gallows
- 6:14 this moves along like a movie
- 7:6 she plays on the king's drunkenness and self-love and then there are also overtones of a Hebrew woman being stronger than "the king of kings" and his second in command.
- 7:7 same exact sequence as when he got rid of Vashti- but now against Haman.
- 7:8 Note: "falling" in an echo of what the wife says!!! The king misinterprets what is happening and has him hanged on his own gallows!
- 8- However, all this doesn't reverse the decree so they have to undo so then Mordecai gets to issue a decree to defend themselves
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- 9-10- Jews win and destroy hamans family- then they get another day to go after their enemies and this leads to joy
- Greatness of Xerxes



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