



GROUP DISCUSSION

Introduction:

In our story so far, God creates the world in Genesis but man rebels and God starts the process of reconciling the world to himself through the family of Abraham. This family eventually settles in what is modern-day Israel with a covenant from God instructing them on how to live as a light to the other nations of the world that will show the goodness of the Hebrew God. They failed to live up to the covenant and just as God had promised other countries came in and conquered them and even deported some of the people to foreign lands. The book of Ester tells the story of the Jewish people living in exile under Babylonian reign in the fourth century BCE.

An interesting fact you will not see God directly act in the book of Ester, instead you will see God's activity in the background of our story.

Question:

What were some of your favorite villains as a child?

What was it about them that you loved to hate?

The story of Ester is a great one because you have an interesting cast of characters.

Mordecai and Ester are the main characters, you have an eccentric king named Xerxes and finally the villain of the story Haman an official in the king's court.

Read: Esther 1:1-12

After this, in his drunken state, the king ends up deposing queen Vashti. The king then sets his attendants to the task of finding a new beautiful queen to replace Vashti.

Read: Esther 2:5-11 & 17-18

Next we read some of God's activity in the background.

Read: Esther 2:21-23

Now we get the entrance of our villain in the story.

Read: Esther 3:1-6

Question: What do you think it was about the situation that so infuriated Haman that he wanted to commit genocide?

Haman goes on to convince the king that there is a group of people who are not loyal and prepares an edict to kill the Jews. Everyone in the kingdom hears of this edict and we read.

Read: Esther 4:1-3

Mordecai then arranges to send word to Esther, so she is aware of what is going on.

Read: Esther 4:8-14

Question: Why is it difficult for Esther to respond in this situation? What are some of the tensions she faces?

Ester moves forward and requests that the king come to a banquet with Haman. Before they can have the banquet Haman runs into Mordecai again and plots to have him killed. Also, the king ends up spending a night without sleep and requests someone to read him the royal chronicles. I assume that is a good cure for insomnia. During the reading the king is reminded how Mordecai saved his life and finds out he was never rewarded for his loyalty.

Read: Esther 6:6-10

Question: What would Haman's mental state have been like after having to watch Mordecai receive the honor he thought he should get?

Read: Esther 7:1-6

Haman is then killed and put up on the pole he had set up for Mordecai. The rest of the story tells how Esther and Mordecai work to save the Jewish people from the original decree and eventually Mordecai is elevated to a place of prominence and power as second in command of the empire.

Questions:

Where do you see God working in this story?

Why is it easy to write off coincidence what God may be providentially doing in our lives?