

A MYRTLE TREE

Esther 2



SYNOPSIS

This week, we continue in our Book of Esther series as we focus on the circumstances that ultimately lead to Esther becoming the Queen of Persia. As mentioned last week, Xerxes was wining and dining nobles and high military leaders in order to align them to fight against Greece. However, just as his father failed, he fails as well, and he spends the rest of his life in sensual overindulgence - so much so that he begins to lose a grip on the kingdom. His officials come up with a plan to have a beauty pageant in which Esther is taken. The author specifically uses a passive voice here, indicating that just as the Jews were *taken* into exile, Esther is *taken*. In reality, what is happening here is more similar to sex trafficking than it is to a beauty pageant, as Esther would never be able to have a life of her own. After winning, she won't be able to return home, but will have to spend the rest of her days in the king's harem. This leads us to two points to reflect on: God is sovereign even in our worst circumstances, and God is sovereign even in our worst moments.

In our worst circumstances, God is sovereign. Two things to keep in mind as we read Esther 2. First of all, the name of God is not mentioned. Second, the passive voice is used over and over again. This tells us that everything is out of Esther's control, and even though God is silent and unmentioned, we can still see hints throughout the story that God is sovereign.

In our worst moments, God is sovereign. For Mordecai and Esther, they don't "compare" - they go along with everything that is happening, with what would have been an incredibly defiling moment for a Jew. In fact, Mordecai tells her to hide her identity. Yet despite their "worst moments," God is sovereignly working out His purposes and plans.

God is sovereign and at work, and this book is an encouragement to the Jews in exile - especially when Esther's Jewish name is given: Hadassah (a myrtle tree, life, righteous). Even in the worst circumstances and worst moments, there will be life and movement according to God's sovereign purposes.



OUTLINE

1 GOD IS SOVEREIGN IN OUR WORST CIRCUMSTANCES

Throughout Esther 2, the passive voice is used, indicating that Esther had no control in many of the things leading up to this "beauty pageant." And yet, we see God's sovereignty that leads to her becoming the Queen, and eventually in a place where she can be in a position to help her people.

2 GOD IS SOVEREIGN IN OUR WORST MOMENTS

Esther and Mordecai go along with everything that is happening. They are not like Daniel and his companions who make a "stand" for their Jewish identity. And yet, even in our worst moments, God is still sovereign. Despite our failings, weaknesses, sin, God is still working out His purposes.

3 HADASSAH (A MYRTLE TREE, LIFE, RIGHTEOUS)

The name Hadassah draws the audience in, that even in the worst circumstances and in the worst moments, there is still life. Only God knows the end of our story. Israel will eventually return from exile, and the myrtle tree is an evergreen tree that has a very strong root system that will continue its life even in the worst of conditions, and represents that God's people will continue in life and fertility.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1

Can you relate to the statement: God is sovereign in our worst circumstances? Does a particular circumstance come to mind?

2

Can you relate to the statement: God is sovereign in our worst moments? Does a particular moment come to mind?

3

Have you disqualified yourself or been too tough on yourself because of your failings and weaknesses? How does this message encourage you?

4

Think about the name Hadassah. How do you think it would encourage the readers in exile? How does it encourage you as you think of your own story?

5

Who is one person that you can encourage who is going through a difficult circumstance or moment in their life?



BIG IDEA

God is sovereign even in our worst circumstances and even in our worst moments. At times, we may sideline ourselves because we feel like everything is out of our control. Other times, we may sideline ourselves because we feel like we've blown it. And yet, God reminds us that He is still working out His divine purposes. Even in the midst of exile, judgment, punishment, weakness, failings...etc, God is working His purposes in and through us. May we take comfort in knowing that only God knows the end of our story.

