

Esther

Esther 1:1-10:3

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2019-06-23

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I. Introduction - the background to this book

For the Jews throughout the empire, it was the best of times and it was the worst of times, depending on which aspect of life you were looking at. Politically it had been a roller coaster ride for citizens during the previous 17 years leading up to chapter 1. I'll just give you a few details. Babylon had fallen to Cyrus 17 years before, and people may have wondered if the world had turned upside down. But Cyrus actually proved to be better (much better) than the previous Babylonian emperor, and Cyrus actually brought a degree of stability and economic growth to the countries of the new empire.

In his history lectures, Rushdoony pointed out that this was the only empire where the king was subject to his own laws, and could not undo his decrees. The king was under law. It made Persia one of the most stable empires ever. When laws are respected by all and when contract law is upheld, the free market has a basis on which it can grow. And this book indicates that the Jewish population prospered financially and most had prospered so well that they were not motivated to leave Babylon to return to Israel. For them, the cost-reward ratio was not worth it.

But there were political anxieties as well. Since Cyrus conquered Babylon 17 years before, there had been a quick succession of three additional emperors. When Darius took the throne three years earlier, the empire fell apart, virtually every province was in revolt, and his first two years were especially bloody, conquering 19 kings, and reestablishing the empire. In verse 1 he wears the title of Ahasuerus, the Old Persian word for emperor, but that is the third year of his reign. By year three the empire had some degree of civility re-established, though he would soon go off to war again, this time against the Greek states.

Though Darius held the political reigns of power quite tightly (much like modern China has done), there was actually more economic freedom under Persian rule than China introduced under Dang Xiaoping in 1979. Though we will shortly see that Darius was a tyrant, there was a far greater degree of local self-government under Persia than there was under Babylon. They had good roads, well-protected and well-administered regions, and a higher degree of justice. Rushdoony comments that although they were not free (because it was a tyranny), they were able to live more safely and to be more

prosperous than under Babylon.

The first migration of Jews to Israel had happened 17 years before, but (as I already mentioned) most Jews enjoyed the wealth and comforts of life in the Persian Babylon, so they stayed put. The year before this chapter, work on the temple had been restarted with the permission of Darius, but people weren't too motivated to get involved. In fact, Haggai had to rebuke them for their lack of kingdom focus. A month later, Haggai rebukes them again for disparaging the temple (as if it could never be as good as Solomon's). A month later Zechariah brings stinging rebukes to the Jews for their apathy and lack of zeal for the kingdom. The next month Haggai explains why God was starting to deplete the wealth and resources through failed crops. It was because God was displeased with their lack of stewardship vision. Haggai also predicted that without repentance, God was soon going to stir up massive trouble for these Jews by way of persecution. In the 11th month of the previous year, Zechariah commanded the Jews to flee from Babylon - a command that Jews ignored for the most part.

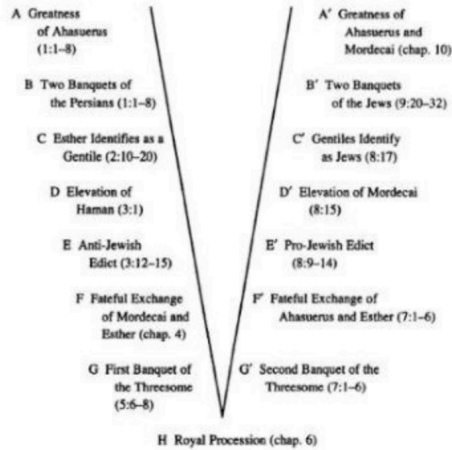
So, true to His Word, God began to orchestrate trouble for the Jews as well as deliverance for the Jews. And this book outlines in a beautiful fashion God's providential orchestration of both sides of that plan. This book shows God's providential disciplines of His people to prepare them to return to Israel, and was just one piece in God's overall plan for producing the lasting Reformation that Nehemiah finally achieved in the last chapter of Nehemiah - the final verse of which corresponds to the last chapter of Esther. So that is the important background for understanding the significance of this book.

II. Structure of the book

As to the structure of the book, if you look in your outlines, you will see two sample outlines that commentaries have given of the book. The first one is a general chiasm with chapter 6 as the center. In the second thematic chart you see more detail. You can see the 22 point thematic structure of the book that forms an absolutely perfect chiasm, with things getting worse as the book progresses to chapter 5 with a sudden reversal of those difficulties in chapter 6, which once again we see is the heart of the chiasm. And actually, that is a simplified outline that only contains 11 parallel points in this literary masterpiece. Other scholars have shown much more granularity in this chiasm.¹ For example, just in the points of the chiasm that compare Haman's decree to destroy all the Jews with Mordecai's decree to save all the Jews,

¹ An example: <https://www.chiasmusxchange.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/The-Book-of-Esther-structure-with-notes-Steve-McGeorge.pdf>

you can add another 11 points on each side that form a perfect parallelism. This is an astounding book in terms of structure. Since this is recording actual history, it once again shows not only God's perfect control over the providence of history, but also His perfect control over the writing of this inspired history. Both have to be perfectly controlled down to the rolling of dice for this to happen. So it is a marvelous book on the sovereignty of God.



(From Jon D. Levenson, *Esther: A Commentary*. Old Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997. Used by permission.)

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 publically 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)

III. Overview of the book

Well, let's dive into the first half of the book that begins building the tension. Verse 1 says,

Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus (this was the Ahasuerus who reigned over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, from India to Ethiopia)...

Notice that the parenthetical phrase implies that there was more than one emperor who used the title Ahasuerus. Many commentators have focused on one clue (the title, Ahasuerus) and have concluded that this is Xerxes, since he had that title. But that ignores numerous other clues that the author has given. It also ignores external evidence. Two ancient Jewish books (the Septuagint and the first book of Esdras) clearly identify the king of the book of Esther as being Darius the Great. That is my view. And the internal evidence clearly points to Darius as well.

For example, of the six early emperors that scholars claim might be this Ahasuerus, only four ruled over Ethiopia, and only three ruled over India - Darius, Xerxes, and Longimanus. But only one candidate, Darius the Great, ruled over 127 provinces. The most anyone ruled over before him was 120, and Xerxes immediately lost quite a number of provinces at the beginning of his reign and never had 127. If you use the 18 inspired clues on his identity, all alternative candidates that have been proposed by scholars fail on three or more of those 18 clues. Astyages and Cyrus each have 8 strikes against them, Cambyses has 7 strikes against him, Xerxes has 5 strikes against him, and Longimanus has 3 strikes against him. I'll try to post online those 18 proofs that this Ahasuerus can only be Darius.²

2 Internal clues pointing to the fact that this Ahasuerus was Darius the Great: 1. Esther 1:14 mentions "the seven princes of Persia and Media." Darius began the custom of having seven counselors. Mark against 1-3. 2. Esther 1:14. Notice the order of "Persia and Media" (cf. 1:3,18,19). Before Cyrus the Medes were dominant and the Scripture refers to them as "the Medes and the Persians" (cf. And. 6). Not until Cyrus' first year did the Persians gain ascendancy over the Medes. Mark against 1. 3. Esther 1:1 says this king reigned over Ethiopia. This marks out 1-2 because it wasn't until Cambyses that Ethiopia and Egypt were conquered. 4. Same passage also says that he ruled over India. This rules out 1-3 because India wasn't conquered until Darius Hystaspis (506). 5. Under Darius the Medes there were 120 satrapies (Dan. 6:1), and under this king there are 127 (Est 1:1). Between the two kings the satrapies increased, but it was not until the twelfth year of Darius that all 127 were in place. For sure this is a strike against 1 & 5. Under Xerxes the number of provinces controlled by Persia began to decrease. 6. Esther 10:1 says that this king laid tribute upon the land and upon the Isles of the Sea. Rules out 1-3 since Darius was the first to exact tribute. 7. It also rules out 5-6 since Xerxes actually lost the isles by his 12th year. Esther 10 says that it was in the 13th year that tribute began. 8. Chose the city of Susa or Shushan to build his palace according to Pliny. This rules out anyone before Darius. Mark against 1-3. 9. Though there are character traits that could fit Xerxes, they could equally well fit Darius. For example, Darius was known for his greed. Herodots called Darius a "huckster" "for Darius looked to make a gain in everything. This fits with Haman offering to pay the Monarch 10,000 talents of silver and fits Esther appealing to the loss of revenue to the kingdom should the Israelites be killed. 10. In the reliable historical book, 1 Esdras 3:1-2, we have the following account of Darius: "Now King Darius gave a great banquet for all that were under him and all that were born in his house and all the nobles of Media and Persia and all the satraps and generals and governors that were under him in the 127 satrapies from India to Ethiopia."

Chapter 1 is setting the stage for the kind of dangers that surround a man like Darius. There would be a lot of tension in serving this man, and there would certainly be a lot of tension in being married to this man. I can't take the time to outline the deliberate portrayal of this man as an arbitrary, scary tyrant in this chapter, but it is definitely setting the stage for some tension in the story.³

Verse 9 implies that Queen Vashti imitates her husband in his grandiose drinking parties. And in verses 10-12 we see the king's pride and the queen's pride colliding. He wants to show off the beauty of his wife to those at his

11. The age of Mordecai and Esther rules out anyone later than Darius. Conservatives have recognized the problem and have tried a difficult translation such as the NKJV has – that it was Kish, not Mordecai who was taken captive under Jeconiah. Quotes. Jones says, “Only by a tortured, forced grammatical construction could this sentence ever be applied to his Great Grandfather Kish.” If Mordecai was taken into exile, he would have been 78 in the first chapter of Esther and 87 at the end rather than 125 years old when promoted to the position of prime minister. 12. This chronology solves major problems in Ezra and Nehemiah where both are either made to be incredibly old or where (as most say) there are two different Ezras and two different Nehemiahs 13. He has to be available in the third year for a half year feast. This rules out Astyages who only ruled in Persia for two years, though he did rule in Media. 14. The only good argument for Xerxes comes from Georg Friedrich Grotefend's decipherment of the Persian characters found in the ruins of Persepolis. The name of the son of Darius Hystaspis was deciphered as Khshayarsha, which is old Persian. Grotefend translated this into Greek as Xerxes. When khshayarsha is transposed into Hebrew, it becomes almost letter for letter Akhashverosh, which is rendered Ahasuerus in English. The problem with this is that Ahasuerus is made up of two words “aha” which means “mighty” and Suerus” which means “king. Mighty king. So in translating it into Xerxes it leaves out the aha or the mighty. Jones says that it should have literally been translated as “artaxerxes.” This could be a reference to Darius's grandson, artaxerxes and had nothing to do with Xerxes. 15. There was something special going on in the third year of this king's reign. Xerxes fits this beautifully in that he was gearing up for a campaign against the Greeks and he needed the support of his princes. But it fits the chronology of Darius as well. Darius spent the first two years of his reign putting down rebellions, and a feast in the third year fits perfectly. It would have finally been a celebration of having put down nine attempted overthrows of the kingdom and numerous rebellions in the empire. Once it was consolidated, it was time to celebrate and show forth his power. 16. Likewise waiting till the seventh year for the wedding search fits Xerxes. He had come home wasted in his war with Greece. He lost badly and could have been comforting himself during this time. 17. James Jordan says, “we have seen that Darius is called Artaxerxes in Ezra-Nehemiah. In the apocryphal additions to Esther, and in the Greek Septuagint throughout, Esther's king is called Artaxerxes. 18. Xerxes queen according to secular history absolutely does not fit into the chronology or the description of this book. This has been a lingering mystery to many conservative scholars. Amestris was the daughter of a nobleman, not in any way a Jewess. If she was Amestris, then Esther was a cruel and sadistic woman who personally mutilated and humiliated other women. Furthermore, unless Esther only lived for a few years and Amestris came back into power, it doesn't fit the chronology well.

- 3 For example, Verse 4 shows his pride and vanity in trying to impress his officials with his wealth and his generosity - a 180 day party, where each day's celebrations are astoundingly expensive. Then verse 5 shows his propensity to influence and control the people through similar handouts. Verses 6-7 shows his decadence. The arbitrary laws of the empire are illustrated in verse 8, where a law has to be in place that people only have to drink as much as they want. There is no social pressure to keep up with the king in this 180 day drinking party. But this already draws our attention to the fact that this king does indeed follow the laws and is bound by the laws of the Persians and the Medes. And by the way, the reversal of Daniel's “Medes and Persians” to this book's “Persians and Medes” shows that Cyrus could not have been Ahasuerus because in his day the Medes dominated politics. By the time of Darius the Persian it was the Persians who dominated politics.

party, and she understandably refuses to be showcased like a prized mare. So when summoned, she refuses to come.

In a fit of anger, the king asks his wise men what he should do to her. And they weirdly suggest that she be deposed and a decree be made that she can never come before him again, and since she was a bad example to other women, that he make a decree that wives throughout the empire must honor their husbands. Talk about insecure men! And he must have been somewhat tipsy to even be pleased with that ridiculous decree because it doesn't paint him in a good light - and it advertises his failure throughout the empire. But in verse 19 they specify that this should be a royal decree and it should be recorded in the laws of the Persians and the Medes so that it will not be altered. Why would they do that? Providentially we can understand why - God will use that irreversibly to make Esther Queen. But psychologically Memucan (who probably came up with the idea) may have been covering his tail just in case the king changed his mind and longed for Vashti again. If Vashti gets back as queen, she might use her influence to get him executed. So he slyly gets the king to make this an irreversible decree.

But you can see the king's regrets in chapter 2. Keep in mind that three years have gone by, and only after three years does it say, "After these things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus subsided, he remembered Vashti, what she had done, and what had been decreed against her."

So his servants encourage him to get a replacement - actually, to get a lot of replacements. Verses 2-4 is not a beauty pageant, as some people have imagined, because people didn't apply for the job. It amounts to forcing young girls out of their homes and rounding them up to be concubines, with one of them that he really likes becoming the new queen. Verse 4 says, "Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." This thing pleased the king, and he did so.

The tension is mounting. A king who can arbitrarily round up women for his own personal pleasure is not a king that is bound by a moral conscience. And the vast majority of these women get used one time. And the word "used" is an appropriate term. Yes, he is bound by the laws of the Persians and Medes, but other than those few laws, his word is the law of the land. He is a lecherous tyrant. And I find it offensive that people try to use him as a type of Christ.

Verses 5-7 are actually mistranslated. In fact, the NKJV inserts words that are not there, as you can see from the margin. If you take out the period at the end of verse 5 and notice that the margin says the first word of verse 6 is

literally “who,” not “Kish,” and the first word of verse 7 is “he” (referring to the same person that the “who” referred to), then you can see that it is Mordecai who was being described throughout. This is how it literally reads:

In Shushan the citadel there was a certain Jew whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite 6 who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives who had been captured with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. And he had brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle’s daughter, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman was lovely and beautiful. When her father and mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.

In other words, it was Mordecai who was carried away captive to Babylon, and later it was the same person who adopted Hadassah. By the way, Esther is not the name of a god, as some think. It is the Old Persian word for Myrtle, just as Hadassah is the Hebrew word for Myrtle.

But as to the translation, commentaries admit that the marginal rendering that I read is what the grammar almost necessitates. One commentary says of the NKJV translation, “Only by a tortured, forced grammatical construction could this sentence ever be applied to his Great Grandfather Kish.” Another commentary agrees, saying, “... most commentators argue that it is not Mordecai but Kish who was taken into captivity. This is, however, impossible grammatically.” So why do they change it so that it is Kish who is taken captive? Because of their faulty chronology. Their chronology would make Mordecai and Esther impossibly old.

Here’s the problem that the establishment position has: even if Mordecai was a newborn infant when he was carried into exile, and if this king was Xerxes (as they claim), Mordecai would still be a minimum of 113 years old at the beginning of the story and 125 years old when he is promoted to the position of prime minister. And people might think, “So what? Some people did get that old.” But here’s the problem: verse 7 says that Esther was a cousin from his generation. Even if she was 65 years younger than he was (not absolutely impossible, but extremely unlikely - but even if we were to grant that) she would still be a minimum of 55 years old when she won the beauty contest. It is the absurdity of her age that makes this tortured translation necessary on the establishment view. But on our view of chronology, there is no problem with translating it literally. You can see how your presuppositions can distort even good translations. But the literal translation reconciles this book with Ezra and Nehemiah, who both claim that Mordecai was a leader who came with Zerubbabel in the first year of Cyrus. And it enables Esther to be a young gal.

This Mordecai was a prophet who not only wrote the book of Esther, but

who wrote six Psalms in the Psalter - Psalms 113-118, which are the great Hallel Psalms (or Hallelujah Psalm). So we know that Mordecai has been commissioned by God to be a prophet even before chapter 2.

So commentators who portray Mordecai as a self-seeking jerk who will sacrifice this orphan so as to advance his status are absolutely wrong. Those who portray Esther as a self-seeking girl who sacrificed her sexual morals to advance her position are absolutely wrong. She was kidnapped against her will (much like Abraham's wife was) and was kidnapped against Mordecai's will, and Mordecai was worried sick about her, as can be seen by verse 11 - "And every day Mordecai paced in front of the court of the women's quarters, to learn of Esther's welfare and what was happening to her." D.J. Clines in his commentary says, "The narrator effortlessly forecloses any criticism of Mordecai; the three passive verbs, 'were heard,' ... were gathered and was taken, portray an irresistible series of events."⁴ In other words, there was nothing that could be done to resist Darius. And since verse 19 shows that there is another gathering of virgins for the king after she becomes queen, it shows that they were certainly not entering a beauty pageant to be queen. The king is a kidnapper akin to a modern Isis leader.

On the web I will put up numerous proofs that Mordecai wrote the book of Esther sometime after the 36th year of Darius.⁵ And he imposed the Feast of Purim upon every Jew in every generation as an abiding and binding decree. He was treated as a prophet who had authority to bind the consciences of all Jews. And the only thing in this book that foreshadows Jesus is the feast of Purim. It was a prophetically authorized feast. And we will look more at that in a bit.

His being a prophet may explain why he told her not to reveal her identity. She might have thought that being of royal blood (since she was a descendant of King Saul) might have gotten her better treatment, but if she had revealed that fact, it might have precipitated a crisis sooner, since Haman was a descendant of the Agag that was killed under King Saul. Haman was anti-Semite and hated the people who killed his ancestors.

In verses 15-20 it says that after trying out all his concubines, he liked Esther the best, and he made her Queen. He is a pathetic excuse for a man.

But we have a key turn in the plot in verses 21-23. A forgotten service to save the king's life. This may seem unimportant, but it becomes extremely important to the development of the story in the second half. Mordecai is

4 D. J. Clines, the New Century Bible Commentary: Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, p. 288. Emphasis his.

5 See Appendix A

preventing an assassination.

Esth. 2:21 In those days, while Mordecai sat within the king's gate, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, doorkeepers, became furious and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. 22 So the matter became known to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name. 23 And when an inquiry was made into the matter, it was confirmed, and both were hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.

The king forgot about Mordecai's deed of kindness, but God did not forget, and God is going to weave this forgotten event in a way that shows that God made him forget until the opportune time. God is in control of even the memories of kings. He is an amazing God.

Chapter 3 heats up the conflict:

Esth. 3:1 After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above all the princes who were with him. 2 And all the king's servants who were within the king's gate bowed and paid homage to Haman, for so the king had commanded concerning him. But Mordecai would not bow or pay homage.

Was Mordecai just being a jerk? No. Haman the Agagite was not a Persian. He was an Amalekite whom God had commanded Israel to declare perpetual war against in Exodus 17 and Deuteronomy 25. To honor him would have been to disobey God's clear command. The Amalekites were the antichrists of the Old Testament. And many commentators have shown Haman to be a kind of anti-christ in this book.

But Mordecai's conscience issue with bowing to Haman sets up a very tense situation in chapter 3. When servants kept pressuring Mordecai to bow and asked him why he didn't bow, he finally has to explain that he was a Jew. Jews could not bow to an Amalekite. OK - it all comes out in verse 4, and in verse 5, Haman is infuriated. But rather than just killing Mordecai, he determined to kill all Jews throughout the whole empire in verse 6. Why would he have such hatred? We could just ascribe it to his being demon-possessed, but in his mind the answer was likely that the Jews had killed his ancestors, including his great-great-granddaddy, Agag, the Amalekite.

So in chapter 3:7 Haman has his servants cast pur (which is the Persian word for dice) to determine which day and which month Haman would kill all the Jews. And that word pur is the key word of the whole book. The plural of pur in Hebrew is Purim, the name of the Festival that this book is being written to support. While dice might symbolize chance for the unbeliever, it represents God's providence over even such chance events as the casting of a lot. Proverbs 16:33 says that the lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD. In other words, there is no such thing as chance.

Then Haman goes before the King and slanders a conveniently nameless people who pose a threat to the king, promises to pay a huge sum of money into the king's coffers from those people, and gets the king to make a decree just by trusting his word. How many times do presidents make lousy decisions because they blindly trust their advisors? Verses 8-11 say,

8 Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from all other people's, and they do not keep the king's laws. Therefore it is not fitting for the king to let them remain. 9 If it pleases the king, let a decree be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who do the work, to bring it into the king's treasuries." 10 So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. 11 And the king said to Haman, "The money and the people are given to you, to do with them as seems good to you."

A decree is sent throughout the empire to treat the Jews as public enemy #1 and to kill them and plunder their possessions. It is horrific that genocide can be decided so easily. For the king it was as easy as the stroke of a pen. And later it appears that the king didn't even know which people these were. Maybe he thought they were a criminal mafia of something.

Well, here's the thing - persecution can come upon God's people today just as easily. If the Senate and President do not overturn the 2019 Equality Act that was passed by Congress this past May, it is almost guaranteed that Christians will come under persecution - obviously not to the same extent, but in the same serendipitous way - by a stroke of the pen.⁶

In chapter 4 many Jews are in fasting, sackcloth, and ashes - signs of deep humility before God. When Esther wants Mordecai to put off his ashes and sackcloth, he refuses, and when the eunuch asks why, Mordecai tells him to tell Esther of the diabolical plan of Haman. He even gives a copy of the decree. He wants Esther to reveal her identity and intercede before the king. She responds in verse 11 (obviously through the messenger, Hathach):

"All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, he has but one law: put all to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days." Some marriage that was! Mordecai lets her know that silence will not spare

6 For an analysis of the dangers of this bill, see Alliance Defending Freedom article here <https://adflegal.org/detailspages/blog-details/allianceedge/2019/06/17/think-churches-and-religious-schools-will-be-safe-from-the-equality-act-think-again?fbclid=IwAR0qh47XCzH-AonPnA4sGOda6ORqrU8pZkKVzYoMVOQVSZO8gMecAOzDpUY> For the actual wording of the bill, go to the archives of Congress here <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/5/all-actions?overview=closed&q=%7B%22roll-call-vote%22%3A%22all%22%7D&fbclid=IwAR1jKbPVkdi8AM2aBdjLK33sNgkJLV5e9CflnuUWrD-oK8fv3uMrmhILTxo>

her from death from this decree. Verses 13-14:

13 And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: “Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king’s palace any more than all the other Jews. 14 For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

Then come the famous words of Esther in verse 16:

“Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!”

This is interposition. This is breaking civil law for God’s kingdom’s sake. And there were huge risks, so she wants prayer. It is obvious that the fasting is for the purpose of petitioning God’s mercies, but the author deliberately leaves God and God’s name out of the narrative for a purpose - to show God hidden, yet ever present through His providence. Notice Mordecai’s submission to her command in verse 17:

So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded him.

Though Esther submits to Mordecai’s prophecies, he submits to her lawful commands. They each wear different hats. Esther has the hat of a member of Christ’s kingdom who is subject to God’s Words coming from Mordecai the prophet, but she also wears the hat of a Queen, who does have a degree of authority. Mordecai wore the hat of a father, of a prophet, of a person who is subject to the authority of God’s Word, and as a citizen in submission to Queen Esther. It is important that we understand jurisdictional authorities and where those lines of authority lie. Pastor Bryan Evans once told me that he had a member of his church that was his boss at Samaritan Ministries. In order to keep lines of authority clear in their minds, they would say, “I am now wearing the Samaritan Ministries hat” or “I am now wearing my elder’s hat.” This kept clear what the lines of authority for that particular conversation were. Bryan had authority over this man and was also under the authority of the same person. Knowing all lines of authority are critical. And those authority lines do change over time.

Anyway, in chapter 5 Queen Esther invites Haman and the king to a special banquet. But she says nothing at that banquet. And whether she loses nerve to say anything that night, or whether she planned it, we are not told, but she said that she wanted to invite them both to another banquet the next day to reveal her request. Whether it was her timing or not, the timing was perfect in God’s great plan. Look at verses 9-14.

Esth. 5:9 So Haman went out that day joyful and with a glad heart; but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king’s gate, and that he did not stand or tremble before him, he was filled with indignation against Mordecai. 10 Nevertheless Haman restrained himself and went home, and he sent and called for his friends and his wife Zeresh. 11 Then Haman told

them of his great riches, the multitude of his children, everything in which the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the officials and servants of the king. 12 Moreover Haman said, “Besides, Queen Esther invited no one but me to come in with the king to the banquet that she prepared; and tomorrow I am again invited by her, along with the king. 13 Yet all this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate.” 14 Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, “Let a gallows be made, fifty cubits high, and in the morning suggest to the king that Mordecai be hanged on it; then go merrily with the king to the banquet.” And the thing pleased Haman; so he had the gallows made.

And chapter 6, which is the heart of the book, shows that the pivot of the story rests on the sleeplessness of two men - the king and Haman. Because the king can’t sleep, he has a servant read the official records of his reign - and they just happen to pick the right ones. Likewise, Haman is so anxious to get Mordecai hung that he can’t sleep, so he travels to the palace. God is in this insomnia to make a providential meeting at just the right time. If these two men had not been sleepless on that particular night, none of the reversal in this book could have happened. One commentary shows the brilliance of making two sleepless men to be the pivot point, saying,

By making the pivot point ... [of the story] an insignificant event rather than the point of highest dramatic tension, the author is taking the focus away from human action. Had the pivot point of the peripety been at the scene where Esther approaches the king uninvited or where Esther confronts Haman, the king and/or Esther would have been spotlighted as the actual cause of the reversal. By separating the pivot point of the peripety in Esther from the point of highest dramatic tension, the characters of the story are not spotlighted as the cause of the reversal. This reinforces the message that no one in the story, not even the most powerful person in the empire, is in control of what is about to happen. An unseen power is controlling the reversal of destiny. The Greek translation makes this implicit truth explicit with the statement, ‘The Lord took sleep from the king that night’ (LXX of 6:1, per. Trans.)⁷

So, the author is showing that even when God appears silent in this book, God is at the center of this story. The author of this book sees God’s hands in everything. His silent providence plays the crucial role, not men or kingdoms. I have to read the whole of chapter 6 because this reversal is such sweet justice on God’s part.

Esth. 6:1 That night the king could not sleep. So one was commanded to bring the book of the records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. 2 And it was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s eunuchs, the doorkeepers who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. 3 Then the king said, “What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?” And the king’s servants who attended him said, “Nothing has been done for him.”

Esth. 6:4 So the king said, “Who is in the court?” Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king’s palace to suggest that the king hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.

⁷ Karen Jobes, as quoted in Mark Mangano, *Esther & Daniel*, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press Pub., 2001), 88.

Esth. 6:5 The king's servants said to him, "Haman is there, standing in the court." And the king said, "Let him come in."

Esth. 6:6 So Haman came in, and the king asked him, "What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?"

Now Haman thought in his heart, "Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?" 7 And Haman answered the king, "For the man whom the king delights to honor, 8 let a royal robe be brought which the king has worn, and a horse on which the king has ridden, which has a royal crest placed on its head. 9 Then let this robe and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that he may array the man whom the king delights to honor. Then parade him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him: "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!"

Esth. 6:10 Then the king said to Haman, "Hurry, take the robe and the horse, as you have suggested, and do so for Mordecai the Jew who sits within the king's gate! Leave nothing undone of all that you have spoken."

Esth. 6:11 So Haman took the robe and the horse, arrayed Mordecai and led him on horseback through the city square, and proclaimed before him, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!"

Esth. 6:12 Afterward Mordecai went back to the king's gate. But Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered. 13 When Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him, his wise men and his wife Zeresh said to him, "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish descent, you will not prevail against him but will surely fall before him."

Esth. 6:14 While they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs came, and hastened to bring Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared.

Sweet justice! What God is doing is absolutely amazing. At this second banquet in chapter 7 Esther tells the king that her life is in jeopardy and the lives of all her people are in jeopardy. And she adds:

Had we been sold as male and female slaves, I would have held my tongue, although the enemy could never compensate for the king's loss

Just to show you how clueless this king was about the nature of Haman's decreed genocide, look at verse 5:

Esth. 7:5 So King Ahasuerus answered and said to Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who would dare presume in his heart to do such a thing?"

He is absolutely clueless that his own decree had endangered the queen. But the connection probably hits him full force in verse 6:

Esth. 7:6 And Esther said, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!" So Haman was terrified before the king and queen.

Esth. 7:7 Then the king arose in his wrath from the banquet of wine and went into the palace garden; but Haman stood before Queen Esther, pleading for his life, for he saw that evil was determined against him by the king. 8 When the king returned from the palace garden to the place of the banquet of wine, Haman had fallen across the couch where Esther was. Then the king said, "Will he also assault the queen while I am in the house?"

As the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. 9 Now Harbonah, one of the eunuchs, said to the king, "Look! The gallows, fifty cubits high, which Haman made

for Mordecai, who spoke good on the king's behalf, is standing at the house of Haman." Then the king said, "Hang him on it!"

Esth. 7:10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's wrath subsided.

Again, the ironies of God's providences are incredible. God is in sovereign control. In chapter 8, the king gives Esther the property of Haman. Mordecai gets elevated to Haman's spot and the ring that had been given to Haman is now given to Mordecai.

Esther falls at the king's feet and asks him to revoke the decree by which all of her people will be wiped out. He says that he can't revoke it because the laws of the Persians and Medes cannot be revoked. But he tells her and Mordecai to write a counter-decree, which they do. The counter-decree gives Jews permission to defend themselves and to kill and annihilate any forces that seek to annihilate them and gives them permission to plunder their possessions. That decree was sent to the farthest corners of the empire by messengers on swift horses. This danger to the Jews was empire-wide.

When we get to the book of Ezekiel, I will likely give my 25 proofs that this attempted empire-wide genocide of the Jews was Ezekiel's battle of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38-39.⁸ I'll just briefly summarize a few of the points.

8 In 1996, James Jordan argued that Ezekiel 38-39 was fulfilled in the book of Esther. He also argued that king Ahasuerus was Darius. I found his argument convincing and did further research of my own. The following points are a summary of the main arguments showing the connections of Esther with the battle of Gog and Magog. For further details, see the sermon series on Esther.

1. An Agagite (see Esther 3:1,10; 8:3,5; 9:24) is any leader of Amalek (Numb 24:7; 1 Sam. 15:8; see Jewish Encyclopedia). Therefore, Haman represents the ancient spiritual struggle between Amalek and Israel (Ex. 17:8-16; Deut. 25:17-19).

2. The Amalekites were descendants of Magog, the son of Japheth (deduction of Gen. 10:2; Numb. 24:20; 24:7 in LXX; Ezek. 38:17; Ex. 17:16; Josephus) So there is also a Magog connection.

3. Gog is simply another spelling of the name Agag. The difference in spelling can be explained by the differences in Persian and Hebrew pronunciation. However, even in the Greek Septuagint translation of the bible, the connection of the two names can be seen in Numbers 24:7 where Agag is spelled Gog (compare the Hebrew with the LXX) So there is a Gog connection to the story of Esther as well. Saying that Haman was an Agagite is (using different national pronunciation) the same thing as saying that he is a Gogite.

4. Gog and Magog cannot be a new people who are unmentioned before the time of Ezekiel. Though this is the first time that a nation is mentioned by this name, Ezekiel says, "Are you not the one I spoke of in former days by my servants the prophets of Israel? At that time they prophesied for years that I would bring you against them." (Ezek. 38:17). If Gog and Magog are Amalek, then this makes sense. Many prophets spoke of Amalek including Moses (Ex. 17:16, etc), Balaam (Numb. 24:20), Samuel (1 Sam. 15:1-3,17-23), Deborah (Judges 5:14), Gideon (Judges 6-7), an unnamed prophet (Judges 10:11-14), David (1 Sam. 30) and Asaph (Psalm 83). They prophesied of multigenerational warfare in Exodus 17:16; Numb. 14:43; 24:20; Deut. 25:17-19; 1 Sam. 14:48; 15:18; etc.

5. Haman's name appears in Ezekiel's prophecy as Hamon (39:11,15,16). Again, this slight change in pronunciation (which is common with other names) can be explained by the language differences. The phrase, "the valley of Hamon of Gog" (Ezek. 39:11) would then be equivalent to Haman of Agag (or "Haman the Agagite" – Esther 3:1,10; 8:3,5; 9:24).

6. The battle of Ezekiel occurs when Jerusalem and the other towns still have no walls (Ezek. 38:11). This rules out an interpretation in the days of the Maccabees or later since Jerusalem has had walls ever

Both passages show a demonic attempt to exterminate God's people. Genesis and Numbers both point out that the Amalekites were descendants of Magog, the son of Japeth. The name "Haman" is mentioned in Ezekiel as being an Agagite. Ezekiel says that the battle would occur before the walls of Jerusalem were finished and while the Jews were still vulnerable. Again, chronology is so important. It has to occur right during this period. Ezekiel's list of nations involved are precisely the nations that Darius ruled over. The conflict is led by a prince, but not by the king. Ezekiel says that Israel has

since Nehemiah built them. However, at this point in Esther's story, no walls have been built. Nehemiah has not yet started that work.

7. The battle engages the same nations as are in the empire under Darius, year 12 (510 BC). (See map.) Since king Darius did not conquer India until year 16 (506 BC), it is very significant that India is not mentioned as one of the nations attacking Israel in Ezekiel's description. (See my paper defending the theory that Darius is king Ahasuerus. Also see map which outlines the border countries mentioned by Ezekiel. cf. Ezek. 38:5,6,8,12,23,13; 39:1,6,7,21,27,28) In Ezekiel's description, Persia is the far eastern border, Togarmah the central northern border, moving east to Tubal, Gomer and Meshech. The Western frontier moves south from Meshech, to the coastlands (Greece to Tyre) to Libya. The southern frontier moves east from Libya to Ethiopia to Dedan and back to Persia on the far east. Ezekiel covers everything in between by mentioning "all the nations" (39:21) of the empire. Esther 3:12-14 indicates that this decree went out to every nation and province in the empire and chapter 9 indicates the conflict happened in every province. All of this perfectly fits the twelfth year of king Darius.

8. This empire-wide conflict is led by a mere prince rather than by the emperor, and yet this prince is called the "chief prince" implying that he was one of several princes in the empire (cf. Ezek. 38:2,3; 39:1 NIV with Esther 3:1)

9. The seven months wait in Ezekiel 39:12-16 is equivalent to the time from Purim till the feast of Tabernacles when cleansing waters are made with the ashes of the heifer.

10. Israel has just recently come back into the land (Ezek. 38:8 makes Ezek. 38-39 sequential with Ezek. 34-37). On our chronology of Esther, Mordecai had already returned to Israel under Zeruabbabel (Esther 2:2; Neh. 7:7), but like Nehemiah, was called back to serve in Persia. Likewise, on our chronology, Ezra left for Israel again with a large group of Jews just months after Esther was coronated.

11. Occurs in a time when Israel is divided up into tribes (37:19) This rules out any interpretation after the Middle Ages since Israel is so intermixed that there are no tribal divisions discernable.

12. The enemy lives in a time when they use horses (38:15), swords (38:4) arrows, bows, war clubs (39:9), and wood instruments (39:10). Again, this would tend to rule out any fulfillment future to us.

13. In Esther the fighting occurs in every province. In Ezekiel we see a focus on Palestine, but Ezekiel indicates that "all the nations will see the punishment" (Ezek. 39:21) and God will "send fire on Magog and on those who live in safety in the coastlands" (Ezek. 39:6). So both passages portray the fighting as occurring universally, and not just in Palestine.

14. The motive in both passages involves anti-Semitic hatred (see hatred of Haman in Esther 3:6,8-9 and his designation as "the enemy of the Jews" [3:10;9:1,10]. Also notice the phrase "those who hated them" [9:1]; cf. Ezek. 38:16).

15. Another motive in both passages is the desire to plunder the Jews (Ezek. 38:12,13; 39:10; Esther 3:13)

16. Both passages show that the Jews were authorized to plunder those who fought against them (Esther 8:11; Ezek. 39:10). Yet both passages imply that the enemy was under the ban, and that the plunder was therefore to be devoted to the Lord. Notice the sacrificial language in Ezekiel 39:17-20. According to Ezekiel, these Amalekites and all that they had were being sacrificed upon the table of the Lord. This may explain why the Jews in Esther "did not lay a hand upon the plunder" of Haman's ten sons (Esther 9:10), or the Jewish enemies in Shushan (9:15) or the Jewish enemies in the provinces (Esther 9:16). James Jordan's hypothesis is that the money was devoted to the temple. (In this connection, notice the preoccupation with the restored temple in the chapters after Ezekiel 39.)

17. In both passages Gentiles are called to arms against Israel by the prince (Ezek. 38:8 in NIV [Heb =

just recently come back into the land when this happens. It occurs in a time when Israel is divided up into tribes and uses horses, swords, arrows, bows, war clubs, and other wooden instruments. In Esther the fighting is said to occur in every province just as it does in Ezekiel, with a special focus of attention on the devastation to Israel. Both passages speak of plunder, but both imply that the plunder was under the ban and devoted to the Lord and could not be taken by the people. In both passages Israel is humbled and drawn into a closer walk with God. In both passages Israel gains an influence among the nations as a result. Anyway, there are 25 proofs that the two passages are referring to the same attempted genocide of the Jews which results in the massacre of 100% of the Amalekites and any who supported them. The entire army of Gog and Magog was wiped out.

But it is no wonder that Jerusalem had such a setback in Nehemiah. No wonder the partially built walls were torn down again and its gates burned. This was no minor conflict. This was a planned massacre with a counter-offensive. Both sides knew that they had to fight to the death. One side or the other was going to win. Both sides had legal grounds for fighting. Both sides were hugely motivated to win.

Chapter 9 records the set date for the massacre planned by Haman.

Esth. 9:1 Now in the twelfth month, that is, the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day, the

dqp]; Esther 3:13-14)

18. The planned destruction of the Jews is reversed in both passages and comes upon the enemy.

19. There are an enormous number of dead in both passages (Ezek. 39:12-16; Esther 9:12-16).

20. In both passages, God disarms many of the enemies before they can even use their weapons (Ezek. 39:3; Esther 9:2). This may account for the enormous numbers of weapons being burned in Ezekiel 39:9-10. Perhaps those who changed sides and favored Israel might have been required to symbolically turn over their weapons.

21. In both passages there are Gentiles who fight on behalf of Israel against their own nationality (Ezek. 38:21; Esther 9:3; 8:17).

22. In both passages the fear of the Lord falls upon the Gentiles and there is a conversion of Gentiles to the true faith (Ezek. 38:23; 39:7; Esther 8:17).

23. In both passages Israel is humbled and drawn into a closer walk with God (Ezek. 39:22,21-29; Esther 4:1,3,15-16).

24. In both passages, Israel (the Jews) gain respect and influence among the nations (Ezek. 39:21; , 23,27; Esther 8:17; 9:3-4; 10:1-3).

Since points 6,11 and 12 rule out a future interpretation, and since Gog and Magog represent a nation that has been mentioned repeatedly in the Bible prior to Ezekiel (point 4), and since the near annihilation of the Jews in the book of Esther is an event of huge significance, and since Ezekiel's prophecy seems to fit the descriptions in Esther to the smallest details, we should assume that Esther is the fulfillment unless there is strong evidence to the contrary. It is this author's firm conviction that Ezekiel's battle of Gog and Magog is fulfilled. The battle of Gog and Magog in Revelation 20 has so many differences with Ezekiel's descriptions that most commentators agree it is an entirely different battle. Revelation uses the extinct people of Magog as a symbol of an entirely different revolt in the same way that it uses the extinct people of Sodom as a symbol of apostate Jerusalem in Revelation 11:8. In other words, Revelation is using well known, fulfilled history to teach new moral lessons in God's governance of the nations.

time came for the king's command and his decree to be executed. On the day that the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, the opposite occurred, in that the Jews themselves overpowered those who hated them. 2 The Jews gathered together in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm. And no one could withstand them, because fear of them fell upon all people. 3 And all the officials of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, and all those doing the king's work, helped the Jews, because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them. 4 For Mordecai was great in the king's palace, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces; for this man Mordecai became increasingly prominent. 5 Thus the Jews defeated all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, with slaughter and destruction, and did what they pleased with those who hated them.

This chapter then goes on to say that Haman's ten sons are hanged - again, in fulfillment of Exodus 17 and Deuteronomy 25, where God declared all Amalekites worthy of death and condemned to death by God. Those two passages portray them as the antichrists who sought to seize God's throne and annihilate God's people. But in verses 18-19 there is feasting and celebration by the Jews.

In verses 20-28 Mordecai prophetically writes a decree that all Jews are to celebrate Purim for two days according to the precise instructions and precepts given by Mordecai. In verse 32, it was written in "the book." Which book is being referred to? While most commentaries assume it is a book of the chronicles of the kings of Persia and Media, some have pointed out that this word is written in a different form than the chronicles of Persia.⁹ As Omanson and Noss point out,

Since the vowel in the Hebrew text is the equivalent of a definite article, the translation should indicate a definite book, that is, "the book."¹⁰

If it is "the book" that has these things written in it, they are being written into the canon just as previous books had been written into the canon. Or if (as some have translated it), it should be rendered "this book,"¹¹ then it is this book of Esther. The Targum (which was the ancient Jewish commentary on this verse) gives the second interpretation when it says, "And by the word of Esther all these things relative to Purim were confirmed; and the roll was transcribed in this book."

Therefore, because it was an inspired thanksgiving day, Jews faithfully kept that feast from that time forward. There are some Christians who think that this was an unauthorized festival. But that is not the case. Even Jesus, a

9 Note the patach under the Beth as opposed to a segol.

10 Roger L. Omanson and Philip A. Noss, *A Handbook on the Book of Esther: The Hebrew and Greek Texts*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1997), 254.

11 "written ... Book, this book of Esther." James Comper Gray, *Biblical Encyclopedia and Museum*, vol. 5 (Hartford, CT: The S. S. Scranton Co., 1900), 142. See also Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, New Edition, vol. 2 (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife Corporation, 2014), 827.

faithful follower of the Old Testament, kept the feast of Purim in John chapter 5. Gordon Franz, Lambert Dolphin, and E. W. Faulstich have all shown¹² that chronologically, Purim is the only feast that could have been referred to in John 5. There are numerous proofs of this, but the most obvious is that the text says that the feast landed on the Sabbath, and in the years 25-35 AD, Purim was the only feast to land on a Sabbath. And significantly, it land on the Sabbath in 28 AD, the year of that chapter. So it is very significant that Jesus keeps the feast of Purim as a faithful Jew.

IV. Christ in Esther - the Festival of Purim

So that brings us to the Christ of Esther. Luke 24 says that all the Old Testament writings point to Jesus in some way. Likewise, Acts 3:21-26 says that the Old Testament prophets spoke of the New Covenant “times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.” Then later Peter says, Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, “And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

This Postmillennial vision of all families of the earth being blessed in Christ must therefore be foreshadowed in some way by the book of Esther. Where is Christ found?

Strangely, some writers have ignored the Feast of Purim and have said that Ahasuerus was a type of Christ loving his bride (represented by Esther). That is patently ridiculous. Others, who have seen the absurd ways in which the evil of Ahasuerus arbitrarily becomes the good of Christ, have said that Esther represents Christ interceding for the church. But this leads to so many contradictory and absurd conclusions that many people have become skeptical that Esther teaches anything about Jesus.

But the solution is really easy. Esther has only one type of Jesus, and it is found in the feast of Purim. Obviously the whole book is vindicating the

12 To analyze the dates for yourself, get the DOS program by Faulstich, E. W. 1986 Computer Calendar: IBM Software. Spencer, IA: Chronology Books. Gordon Franz said, “The only feast of the Jews which falls between Zimmuth Pesah and the Jewish Passover is the feast of Purim, connected with the events recorded in the book of Esther. In the year AD 28, the feast of Purim fell on Shabbat (cf. John 5:9, 15, 18). The only feast day to fall on a Sabbath between AD 25 and AD 35 was Purim of AD 28.” In the remainder of his lengthy article he gives numerous other proofs that this had to be Purim. The anarthous “a feast” indicates that it had to be a minor feast. Gordon Franz, “Jesus at the Pool of Bethesda,” in Lexham Geographic Commentary on the Gospels, ed. Barry J. Beitzel and Kristopher A. Lyle, Lexham Geographic Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), Jn 5:1–9. Also see <http://www.ldolphin.org/jpurim.html> For Lambert Dolphin’s books, go to his website at <http://www.ldolphin.org/LTDPUB.html>

feast of Purim, so the book as a whole gives us teaching relative to Christ's kingdom, but it is all through the lens of the feast. Colossians says of the Old Testament feast days that they "are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ" (Colossians 2:17). Since the writings of Mordecai that are mentioned seven times in chapter 9 (9:20,23,26,27,29,30,32) were inspired and since he "wrote with full authority" (9:29) the Feast of Purim had the full authority of God's revelation. And people say, "But it wasn't in the Pentateuch. That's actually not the case. Just as God was hidden yet fully present in Esther, the four essential commands of Purim are hidden yet present in the Pentateuch. In fact, the Pentateuch prophesied exactly this destruction of Amalek and gave a command to not forget. This feast of Purim was the means by which that command was fulfilled.¹³ So this was not something new that was unanticipated in the Pentateuch. Just as the law prophetically anticipated the First Day Sabbath of the New Covenant, it anticipated Purim. So let me outline the meaning of the Biblical feast of Purim.

A. Purim is symbolic by its place in redemptive history

Most Jews still in exile, and much ungodliness among those who have returned

First of all, there are a number of ways in which its place in redemptive history foreshadows Christ's New Covenant kingdom. It came during a time of exile and unbelief. As I have gone through Ezra and Nehemiah, I have carefully tied Esther and the Post-exilic prophets together, each of whom rebuked Israel's compromises and refusal to obey the clear command to flee Babylon. And just as Israel of today is mostly in exile and in unbelief and just as most Jews who have returned to the land are ungodly, during the period leading up to this feast of Purim, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi blasted both the exiled Jews and the Jews who had already returned to Israel for unbelief, for robbing God, for not building the temple, for oppressing fellow Jews, for giving polluted offerings, for drunkenness, corrupt priests,

¹³ God prophesied this conflict between Amalek and Israel and that Israel would emerge in celebration as a kind of new Exodus (Ex. 17:14-16; Numb. 24:7-9,20-24; Deut. 25:17-19). Once Amalek was destroyed, the abiding command was "You shall not forget" (Deut. 25:19c). The means of not forgetting their deliverance from Egypt was Passover (cf. Ex. 13:3; Deut. 16:3), so it might reasonably be implied that a similar feasting would happen when Amalek was destroyed so as not to forget. But the very fact that we have an inspired festival implies that it is consistent with God's law. Certainly the four commands of Purim are consistent with the law: 1) Hear the reading of a scroll, 2) exchange gifts of food with friends and family, 3) give gifts of charity to the poor, 4) feast and celebrate. Various essays have been written on other aspects of Purim that may or may not be in the law. Here is an example of one that has truth mixed with error: https://www.randomgroovybiblefacts.com/purim_in_the_torah.html

divorce, intermarriage with pagans, etc. It almost sounds like the modern state of Israel - under God's judgment, even though we know that there were true believers in Israel.

Israel's "Fall" Has Brought "Riches" To Gentiles During The Reigns of Nebuchadnezzar, Amel-Marduk, Neriglissar, Labashi-Marduk, Nabonidas, Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius I, and Xerxes. (cf. Romans 11)

Second, Romans 11 points out that Israel's fall and being cast away as a nation brought riches to the Gentiles. And that certainly happened in the type - in the years leading up to this point. Israel's exile in Babylon brought many Gentiles to a true faith, including Nebuchadnezzar and Darius the Mede (the very first Darius). So it is a beautiful foreshadowing of the times of the Gentiles.

"He will turn away ungodliness from Israel" (Rom. 11:26 next major point below)

Third, Romans 11 says that at some point God will turn away ungodliness from Israel itself. He did that in the type as well. He did it through the reforms of Ezra, Nehemiah, and the post-exilic prophets. And he did it in Babylon through this very scary attempted genocide. Romans 11 predicts that God will do that by saving the nation of Israel in the future. He will turn away ungodliness from Israel. Some entity called "Israel" will be ungodly, but God will put off its ungodliness.

"how much more [will] their fullness" bring "riches for the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:12; cf. Esther 8:17; 9:3; 10:2-3; Ezra 7)

Fourth, Romans 11 says, if their being cast away brought riches to the world, how much more will their acceptance bring riches to the Gentiles. The books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi all speak of a revival in their own day. That happened in Esther 8:17, which says, And in every province and city, wherever the king's command and decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a holiday. Then many of the people of the land became Jews, because fear of the Jews fell upon them.

Note that this is not purely ethnic. Since many Gentiles became Jews, the word Jew is used to denote the true faith, not merely ethnicity. So we are not talking about ethnicity having a special place. Nor are we talking about God having two peoples. He has only one people, the church. But this foreshadows unbelieving nations (all nations) being added to the church. Note the spiritual joy of the Jews and the conversion of many Gentiles. That

too foreshadows a time in our future.

B. The place that Purim has in the order of feasts.

But even the order and arrangement of each of the feasts was prophetic. This was the last feast in the Hebrew calendar, occurring in the last month of their year. It's an eschatological feast. In our Revelation studies we saw that the order of the feasts showcases a historical order of God's plan for the New Covenant.

The feast of dedication points to Christ's incarnation.

The Feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits point to Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.

The Feast of Pentecost points to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit by Christ at Pentecost.

The Feast of Trumpets points to the war against Jerusalem in AD 66 and the beginning of the times of the Gentiles.

Yom Kippur points to the destruction of the Temple in AD 70.

Tabernacles points to the exile of the Jews around the world (thus living in temporary booths), and also speaks of the ingathering of multitudes from among the Gentiles. The Festival of Tabernacles sacrificed 70 bulls for the 70 nations of the world and is consistently presented as the Feast for the times we live in - the times of the Gentiles.

But that makes Purim (the last feast) prophesy something that is still future to us. No longer will Israel be in Tabernacles (in other words, in exile). Some people think it is the last event in history, while others (like myself) believe that it points to the salvation of Israel as a nation which will result in a spectacular change in world history - almost like life from the dead. There will be reformation of Israel and of the nations. It is during the time that Purim foreshadows that the Great Commission will be completely fulfilled, all nations will be discipled, nations will obey all things that Christ commanded, the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth, and there will be rejoicing and peace.

And so the book of Esther indicates not only that many Gentiles became believers, but in chapter 9:3 it says, "And all the officials of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, and all those doing the king's work, helped the Jews, because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them." We don't know if God will use a Jew in power somewhere to help the Jews. All we know is that

somehow, sometime the nation of Israel (whatever their real genetic ethnicity might be) will be saved, will prosper and will bring even greater benefit to the Gentiles. Isaiah 19 predicts that Israel, Egypt, and Assyria will all be saved nations. And that is the imagery of the last chapter, chapter 10.

Esth. 10:1 And King Ahasuerus imposed tribute on the land and on the islands of the sea. 2 Now all the acts of his power and his might, and the account of the greatness of Mordecai, to which the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia? 3 For Mordecai the Jew was second to King Ahasuerus, and was great among the Jews and well received by the multitude of his brethren, seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his countrymen.

We are talking about the greatest revival ever in the Old Testament being a faint, feeble type of an even greater Reformation in the future. 1 Corinthians 15 says that Christ must reign until every enemy is put under His feet; thrones, and dominions, nations and people groups. This is what the church has been longing and praying for for centuries. How will it be brought about? Well, I think this book gives us hints.

C. Hints at the means by which this will happen

Perhaps the Lord will use grave danger to wake the church up (Esther 1-9)

Perhaps it will come about in response to great persecution and danger.

Perhaps the Lord will stir up the church to prayer and fasting (4:3,16-17)

Perhaps the Lord will stir up the church to prayer and fasting just like he did in Esther 4. Historically God has moved only after He has stirred up the church to prayer and fasting. That is where this book begins. The Jews were unfaithful and it looked like they were going to be wiped out, but through prayer and fasting God brought victory.

Perhaps it will happen when the church looks different from the world (3:8)

Thirdly, perhaps reformation will happen when the world recognizes that the church is truly different. In chapter 3:8 Haman complains, “There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from all other peoples...” This speaks of antithesis, where God’s laws make us different from all other peoples. Peter says we are to be a peculiar people. We are to stand out, not blend in. The only way that can happen is if we are a people who adhere to

God's laws. Unfortunately, the church is antinomian. We don't have that much distinction from the world. Pray that such antithesis would happen.

Perhaps it will happen when leaders stop defending their own turf and begin to have a passion for the welfare of the kingdom as a whole (4:1-17; 8:9-17; 9:20-10:3)

Fourth, perhaps it will happen when church leaders stop building their own kingdoms, defending their own turf, seeking their own comfort, and like Mordecai and Esther begin to be passionate about the kingdom as a whole. Chapters 4,8, and 9 all model a passion for the kingdom on the part of Esther and Mordecai. They were willing to lay down their lives for God's kingdom.

Perhaps it will happen when believers uphold family values (2:5-7, 11, 19-23)

Fifth, perhaps it will happen when believers begin to uphold Biblical family values. Do you instill the kind of obedience in your children that Mordecai did in Esther? Chapter 2:20 says, "Esther obeyed the command of Mordecai as when she was brought up by him." When she was a child in his home she valued his authority. On Mordecai's part, he showed such concern for Esther that "he paced in front of the court of the women's quarters, to learn of Esther's welfare and what was happening to her." He took the time to care. But there must be a return to Biblical values for the family if we are to see full reformation happening in society.

Perhaps it will happen when the church is filled with faith (8:16-17; 9:18-32)

Another thing that we need is people who have faith to believe in the face of attack. Already in chapter 8:16 the Jews rejoiced in victory even though the genocide bill could not be revoked. The irrevocable nature of the decree did not make them lose faith. One of the things that has hindered revival in America is the virus of Last Days Madness that makes people give up hope. People are so convinced that the church will fail that they have no faith to believe God for great things. But think about their condition: things could not have looked darker for these Jews. If anyone had a reason for pessimism it would have been them, and yet they were united in faith that God would give the victory - that God would be true to His word.

Can you believe Christ when He says, I will build My church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it? Can you believe that it will be hell that is cowering behind gates and the church will be battering down those gates? Fill your mind with such Scriptures to give faith, and fill the minds of your

friends with such Scriptures so that they can replace discouragement with hope.

Perhaps it will happen when the church becomes a church of action (9:1-17)

Seventh, perhaps it will happen when the church becomes a church of action and not just talk. When the going gets tough, the tough get going. And we need less soft Christians and more Christians who are willing to fight; sweat; risk getting hurt, and get out in the action like these Jews did in chapter 9.

Perhaps it will happen when the church has integrity (8:11 with 9:10,15) and steadfastness even when it hurts (3:1-6; 5:9; 8:9-9:17 with Exodus 17:8-16; Deut. 25:17-19; 1 Sam. 15; 1 Chron. 5:42-43)

Eighth, we need to be a church with integrity that stands fast even when it hurts. It took enormous courage and integrity for Mordecai to obey God's command to never honor an Amalekite. It could have meant his job, or even his life. But he had integrity and steadfastness. It took integrity for Nehemiah during the following years to boldly resist leaders and others who had intermarried with pagans. It took integrity for Nehemiah to not back down on the Sabbath or any other law that was being challenged in his culture. And we need men and women who will stand up against the false philosophies of today and will not give in.

Perhaps it will happen when leaders challenge us to die for Christ (4:1-17; 9:18-10:3)

Ninth, perhaps reformation will happen when we have leaders like Mordecai who will challenge us to be willing to die for Christ. We will all die at one time or another, but it would be an awful thing to die without having accomplished anything for eternity. Mordecai challenged Esther to talk to the king even if it meant her death. He challenged the Jews to defend themselves with boldness. And we've already seen that he modeled such courage himself.

Perhaps it will happen when believers see themselves as expendable for God (4:10-17)

Tenth, perhaps reformation will happen when believers obey Mordecai and pick up their cross to follow Christ, knowing it might mean their death; when they truly see themselves as expendable for God. Esther's words "If I

perish, I perish” need to be our words as we think about our involvement in reformation. Not “if I feel comfortable I will get involved”; not “if it fits into my schedule”. If we are to see reformation of society in our lifetime we need more people who will take risks and be willing to lose all so that they can gain all for Christ. That is what I want for my life, and I pray that is your desire too. Let’s be out and out for Jesus and pray that His kingdom would come in power and glory.

Perhaps it will happen when we are not ashamed of Christ but are bold for His cause (4:16; 5:1-2; 7:6; 9:13)

And finally, perhaps reformation will happen when we are not ashamed of Christ, but like Mordecai and Esther, we are bold for the cause of Christ. I’m going to have to skip over my notes for the rest of your outline and just summarize.

V. Who wrote the book? - Mordecai

VI. Key theme - providence

Even though God’s name is hidden, God’s providence is evident throughout the story. And I will put evidence online of how His name is hidden in four remarkable places in the story. It is such a perfect display of the way God’s providence functions.

Did you know that God’s name does not appear one single time in this book - at least in any obvious way? The king is mentioned 192 times, and his name “Ahasuerus” is given 29 times, but God’s name does not appear once as a word. Do you know why? It’s because God seems to be hidden in some ways. And yet, as you read the book, you see God everywhere. This is the paradox. In this book God doesn’t work by way of miracles. He works by way of Providence. Miracles are God’s fantastic power in the extraordinary. Providence is God’s fantastic power in the ordinary. And it is fantastic when you realize that Scripture says that not a detail of life is outside of God’s predestination. This book helps us to take delight in God’s providence, and to gain a trust in God’s providence as being just as fantastic as miracles. Actually, more fantastic. In your desire for miracles (which is legitimate), never downplay the importance of Providence or of the ordinary. It is a far more important doctrine than miracles, and it is far more pervasive. Once you see God in providence, you see Him working everywhere.

So - God is hidden in this book, yet He is powerfully present. And there are a number of ways that the author shows that theme. One way that he does so

(and I will admit that I used to be skeptical of this), is the Jewish tradition that Mordecai deliberately hid God’s name four times in this book by way of an acrostic. But as I took the time to study what they had to say, (skeptical as I was) I realized that these acrostics are marvelously and strategically placed in this book. Two of the sentences where God’s name is hidden are spoken by Gentiles, and two by Jews. Two are by women, two are by men. Memucan gives the first acrostic, then Esther, then Haman then the writer of the book. And there are sixteen features of these acrostics which show that they were not accidental. And interestingly, some ancient Hebrew manuscripts make these letters larger than the other letters so that they are very noticeable. I’ve put the Hebrew from one manuscript into your outline. You read Hebrew from right to left, and so the first letter of each word forms the name Yahweh.

יְבוּא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּן הַיּוֹם

And these enlarged letters are exactly how they appear in these Hebrew manuscripts. So this is one of sixteen reasons why I think these letters aren’t accidentally, but were truly meant as an acrostic. It shows God hidden, and yet God so powerfully present that even the pagans can’t speak apart from God’s presence. All men live and move and have their being in God. Their very breath comes from God. That is the fantastic power of God hidden in providence.

VII. Key word - purim

Another way in which God shows this theme of providence is in the word “purim,” which occurs 10 times. Purim is the key word of Esther. Purim is a pagan word for dice. It was the symbol of chance or luck. Haman cast pur or dice to determine what was a lucky day on which he should kill the Jews. And he started on his day, and it got ruled out, then the next day, then the next. He practically went through the whole year before he found his supposedly lucky day. Well, any Jews reading through that would know immediately that God wouldn’t let it fall on just any day. The timing was perfect for God’s people. God was in control. And isn’t that exactly what Proverbs tells us? Proverbs 16:33 says, “The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD.” In other words, there is no such thing as

chance. God controls all.

VIII. Key verse - Esther 4:14

The key verse emphasizes the flip side of the coin - human responsibility. Esther 4:14 says, “For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” Notice that Mordecai firmly believes in God’s superintending providence - that deliverance will come from another place if she doesn’t take her responsibility. “Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” God has placed us here for a purpose, and it is imperative that we live out that purpose and have lives with meaning.

IX. Key phrase - Esther 8:17b

The key phrase is in chapter 8:17 - “Then many of the people of the land became Jews...” God was building His church even as he is doing today.

X. Key chapter - Esther 8

The key chapter is chapter 8 - the chapter that leads up to the evangelization of the pagans. And all of these keys tie in with the fact that this book was written to institute Purim in obedience to the prophecy in God’s law.

So that is the story of Esther.

And I want to end with three additional admonitions. First, when you read the book of Esther, thank God for His providential control over even the tiniest details of your life, like when you roll dice in monopoly, or when you lose sleep, or when a conflict happens that you cannot solve. Trust His providence and look to the Lord for meaning. It may be that He is wanting to change you, and not your circumstance.

Second, don’t let your belief in providence make you avoid responsibility. Take your responsibilities seriously.

Third, not everyone can be a Esther or a Mordecai. Be yourself. Everyone wears a different hat, and since you don’t have their hat, focus on your responsibilities. And as you do so, may the Lord prosper the work of your hands. Amen.

XI. Appendix A - Mordecai wrote the book of Esther

Of the suggestions that have been made on the authorship of Esther, the three most serious candidates would be

- Ezra (suggested by Augustine)
- Nehemiah
- Mordecai (urged by Josephus, Clement of Alexandria, Ibn Ezra,¹⁴ Thomas McCrie,¹⁵ de Wette, J. Stafford Wright,¹⁶ certain rabbinic traditions, and others¹⁷)
- Mordecai for 1:1-9:19 and Ezra for 9:20-10:3 (Adam Clark).

There is not much internal or external evidence for Ezra or Nehemiah and “for either of these there is no good linguistic evidence.”¹⁸ Of the three main candidates, Mordecai has by far the strongest internal and external evidence. This paper will seek to defend the view that Mordecai was a prophet and that he wrote the entire contents of this book. However, I will make note of any evidence that could support an alternative view. I will also give all known objections to my position and seek to answer them. The main arguments in favor of Mordecai are as follows:

- **Internal Evidences in Favor of Mordecai**
 - ***Intimate knowledge of court, customs and geography shows that the writer must have been a citizen of Persia, and probably of Susa.***

Virtually all scholars agree that the author had to have “an intimate knowledge of the Persian court, customs, and geography... [this would] suggest that he was a Persian Jew living in Susa.”¹⁹ On the other hand, Ezra could have gained information on the palace from Nehemiah or Mordecai (see notes on dating and authorship of the books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther), though the latter two would have been the only candidates who had personal knowledge of the inside of the palace.

14 An 11th Century Jewish commentator.

15 Thomas M’Crie, Lectures on the Book of Esther (New York: Robert Carter, 1838), 287-288

16 Though I utterly reject his low view of inspiration, he acknowledges that Mordecai has strong reasons to be the author. J. Stafford Wright, “the Historicity of the Book of Esther,” in *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*, pp. 46-47.

17 Like Matthew Henry, Canne, Browne, Blayne, Scott, John Wesley, etc.

18 Far Eastern Bible College Course Syllabus on the Book of Esther, p. 18. Many authors have come to the same conclusion citing in addition to differences in vocabulary, differences in style.

19 Though this quote is taken from the New Geneva Study Bible Intro to Esther, it is the conclusion of virtually all scholars.

A. Precise knowledge of palace details make a date much beyond the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus unlikely

Most conservative scholars believe that the author couldn't have written the book of Esther much beyond the lifetime of Artaxerxes since the palace burned down in the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus,²⁰ yet the author obviously has an incredible grasp of the details of the palace. Both Nehemiah and Mordecai would fit this criteria since they both served within the palace.

B. The author appears to be an eyewitness of these events

Dr. Thomas Constable says, "The writer also wrote as though he was an eyewitness of the events he recorded."²¹ Who but Mordecai could have been a witness of these things? The previous paper ("Which Ahasuerus Reigns in Esther?") gives 19 Biblical fingerprints which match Darius Hystaspes alone. Though Mordecai fits the evidence of authorship even if my revisionist dating is rejected, it is interesting that there is abundant ancient rabbinic evidence which ties Mordecai to the reign of Darius.²²

C. The author had to have access to the Persian historical archives of the kings of Media and Persia (Esther 10:2).

Though some of the acts of the king mentioned in this book could have been revealed by the Lord without prior knowledge, the way they are written implies that the author had access to them. But what is implicit earlier in the book is made explicit in chapter 10 where the writer says, "Now all the acts of his power and his might, and the account of the greatness of Mordecai, to which the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia?" This is not only a statement of his familiarity with the official historical archives of the kings of Media and Persia, but an invitation to other archivists to check the records for themselves. Only Nehemiah and Mordecai would fit this evidence of any candidates that we know.

D. When the author says that Mordecai "wrote these things"(9:20), and that they were later "written in the book" (9:32), it may be a reference to the book of Esther.

The book of Esther itself says, "And Mordecai wrote these things..." (9:20),

20 See G. L. Archer, A Survey of Old Testament Introduction (Chicago: University Pres, 1948), p. 168.

21 Notes on Esther, p. 1.

22 The Jewish Encyclopedia says, "But all the Rabbis agree that Mordecai was a prophet and that he prophesied in the second year of Darius (Meg. 10b, 15a; ?ul. 139b)."

and later “the decree of Esther ... was written in the book” (9:32). This could simply be a reference to original sources that the author compiled, but it could also be a statement as to the authorship of Esther. Notice that it does not say, “was written in a book”, but “was written in the book.”²³

E. There is internal evidence to support the ancient rabbinic tradition that Mordecai was a prophet who began to prophecy in the second year of Darius.²⁴

1. His writings seem to carry divine weight

Mordecai wrote “words of peace and truth, to confirm these days of Purim at their appointed time” (9:30-31). This may or may not have been a reference to inspired words, though the phrase “words of truth” seems to be so (see Psalm 119:43; Prov. 22:21; Eccl. 12:10; 2 Cor. 6:7; Eph. 1:13; 2 Tim. 2:15; James 1:18). However, when that phrase is coupled with what follows, the evidence mounts that Mordecai was writing inspired literature: Mordecai’s writings (9:20,23,26,27,29,30,32) appear to carry “full authority” (9:29). Most assume that this is simply the authority of a magistrate. This would be very plausible if the author had not endorsed Mordecai’s right to wield such authority over the consciences of men. There are other instances where God speaks against the tyranny of kings imposing new feasts and fasts,²⁵ and we could chalk this up to another example of tyranny in religious matters. But the author of Esther does not in any way imply that Mordecai had overstepped his authority. If Mordecai is not a prophet this poses a problem because he is wielding authority that binds the conscience in ways only God’s law can bind. For example, his writings are not only treated as binding

23 The phrase “it was written in the book” (9:32) may be a reference to Esther being included in the canon (“the Book of the Law”) at the moment of its writing much as Joshua and later books were immediately written into the book of the law (Josh 24:26). Or it may be a reference to the book of Esther itself being written. On canonization, see the separate paper by Phil Kayser.

24 See Jewish Encyclopedia, “Mordecai.”

25 Jereboam is rebuked not only for his competing altar and sacrifices, but even for having “ordained a feast for the children of Israel” “in the month which he had devised in his own heart” (1 Kings 12:33). God had not authorized that month for a feast day. Likewise, Zechariah 7:1-7 indicates that God had not authorized the new feast days and fast days that had developed in the exile. “When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months during those seventy years, did you really fast for Me – for Me? When you eat and when you drink, do you not eat and drink for yourselves? Should you not have obeyed the words which the Lord proclaimed...” (vv. 5-7) In Zechariah 8:19 God reverses their man-made laws with respect to fasts.

law,²⁶ but as a law that has universal jurisdiction over Jews,²⁷ and a timelessness into the future that is only appropriate for God Himself to impose.²⁸

2. His actions in establishing the feast of Purim show divine authorization.

But the feast itself shows evidence of divine approval. Mordecai “established,” “imposed,” “prescribed,” decreed,” and “confirmed” a sacred feast (Purim) which is not lawful for man to do apart from divine revelation. Some have claimed that he exceeded his authority to do this, but the inspired author gives no hint that this is true. Instead, the author calls Mordecai’s words “words of peace and truth” (9:30). It is clear that one of the author’s purposes is the endorsement of this feast.²⁹ If that is so, then Mordecai wields the same authority as the author with respect to the feast since he was trying to do the same thing that the author of this book was seeking to do. Indeed, he did it before the book was written. This argues at least that Mordecai was a prophet, authorized by God to begin this feast. Certainly, ancient Jewish tradition said that Mordecai was a prophet who wrote not only Esther, but some of the Psalms in our Psalter.³⁰

Some Puritans (who agree that Mordecai was the author) insist that this was

26 That he sees Purim as law can be seen in the imperative tense that is used in the Hebrew as well as in the words “establish,” “should,” “established and imposed it,” “without fail they should celebrate these two days every year,” “written instructions,” “prescribed time,” “should be remembered and kept,” “should not fail to be observed,” “with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim,” “words of peace and truth to confirm these days of Purim at their appointed time,” “prescribed,” “decreed for themselves and their descendants,” “decree,” “confirmed these matters of Purim, and it was written in the book.” It is also clear from chapters 9 & 10 that this was not a Persian law that applied to the empire, but was a Jewish law that applied to Jews alone. This was a law that could never be changed (“without fail” = *rwøbSoÅy aølðw* – see Ezek 48:14; Psalm 148:6; Job. 14:5).

27 “sent letters to all the Jews” (9:20), “in all the provinces, both near and far” (9:20), “established and imposed it upon themselves and their descendants and all who should join them” (9:27), “Kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city, that these days of Purim should not fail to be observed among the Jews,” (9:28), “sent letters to all the Jews, to the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus” (9:30).

28 It was to be celebrated yearly (9:21). It had to be celebrated “without fail... every year according to the written instructions and according to the prescribed time” (9:27). It was a day of remembrance that had to be “kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city, that these days of Purim should not fail to be observed among the Jews, and that the memory of them should not perish among their descendants” (9:28). This was a law that could never be changed (“without fail” = *rwøbSoÅy aølðw* – see Ezek 48:14; Psalm 148:6; Job. 14:5). Who but God (or tyrants who pretend to be God) could make such a transcendent law?

29 Again, most scholars would agree that this is one of the purposes of the book of Esther.

30 The Jewish Encyclopedia says, “But all the Rabbis agree that Mordecai was a prophet and that he prophesied in the second year of Darius (Meg. 10b, 15a; ?ul. 139b).” The same article also says that he was part of the Great Sandhedrin, and that “according to R. Jose the Galilean, the psalms which are styled “Hallel” were composed and sung by Mordecai and Esther after the Jews had been delivered from Haman (Pes. 117a).” Thomas M’Crie (Ibid.) gives cogent arguments from the text itself on why Mordecai had to have had prophetic authorization for what he did.

not a holiday (i.e., a holy day), but simply a civil celebration. However, such an argument is thereby authorizing the civil government to establish annual feasts and fasts that Scripture forbids.³¹ Furthermore, Purim has all the marks of divine approval. 1) The language parallels that of the God-authorized feasts in the Pentateuch.³² 2) It is called “a feast,” “a holiday”(8:17; 9:19,22) and a day of “rest” (9:17,18). 3) It was not optional for future generations but was imposed as law, universally and for all generations (see footnotes 13-15). 4) Unlike occasional feast days, but like other Divine Feast Days, this day was given a name: Purim. It needed a name since it would continue in perpetuity. 5) Like every other divinely authorized feast day, Purim foreshadows the work of Christ in the New Covenant (see next point). But if it was a divinely authorized feast day, this means that what Mordecai wrote (Esther 9:20,23,26,27,29,30,32) has the character of Scripture and bears the same authority, purpose and effect that the book of Esther itself does. It is much easier to believe that Mordecai pulled together his previous prophetic writings into one book, than to believe that a new, anonymous author made use of Mordecai’s inspired writings as primary source material, but did not at any point include any of Mordecai’s writings. If Mordecai was a prophet, and if his writings bear the character of inspired writings, then why can we not believe that he did indeed write the final edition – Esther?

31 Jereboam is rebuked not only for his competing altar and sacrifices, but even for having “ordained a feast for the children of Israel” “in the month which he had devised in his own heart” (1 Kings 12:33). God had not authorized that month for a feast day. Likewise, Zechariah 7:1-7 indicates that God had not authorized the new feast days and fast days that had developed in the exile. “When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months during those seventy years, did you really fast for Me – for Me? When you eat and when you drink, do you not eat and drink for yourselves? Should you not have obeyed the words which the Lord proclaimed...” (vv. 5-7) In Zechariah 8:19 God reverses their man-made laws with respect to four new fasts. In Zechariah 7, in response to the question of a civil leader whether they should fast on these days established without authority in exile, God says “No.” “Now in the fourth year of King Darius it came to pass that the word of the LORD came to Zechariah, on the fourth day of the ninth month, Chislew, when the people sent Sherezer, with Regem-melech and his men, to the house of God, to pray before the LORD, and to ask the priests who were in the house of the LORD of hosts, and the prophets, saying, “Should I weep in the fifth month and fast as I have done for so many years?” Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying, “Say to all the people of the land, and to the priests: ‘When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months during those seventy years, did you really fast for Me — for Me? ‘When you eat and when you drink, do you not eat and drink for yourselves? ‘Should you not have obeyed the words which the LORD proclaimed through the former prophets when Jerusalem and the cities around it were inhabited and prosperous, and the South and the Lowland were inhabited?’”

32 This can be seen by examining the Biblical phrases “appointed time,” “remembered,” “kept,” “prescribed time” and “throughout every generation.” These are all terms used to describe the other feasts of Israel that God wanted remembered throughout their generations. Though the term “holiday” is not as strong of a term, it is translated “feast day” in 1 Samuel 25:8.

F. The feast of Mordecai is a prophetic feast foreshadowing the days of the New Covenant.

Related to the above, but deserving separate mention, is that the feast day that Mordecai imposed has a prophetic typology that foreshadows the latter days of the New Covenant. Indeed, if this feast was removed from the book, Esther would become the only book in the Old Testament that does not prophetically foreshadow Christ and the New Covenant. Since “all the Scriptures” point to Christ (Luke 24:27) and since, “all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days” (Acts 3:23), we must wrestle with this issue. There are only two ways of resolving it. Some have said that the whole book is a type of Christ and the church. However, typological interpretation of this book has been fraught with so many problems that most scholars have abandoned it. It is hard to find two typological interpretations that agree with each other, and if the text can mean anything, it comes to mean nothing.³³ But what is worst about most typological approaches to Esther, Mordecai and the other characters is that inevitably, evil things symbolize good things, and the evil is trivialized. For example, the tyranny of Ahasuerus is downplayed if he is seen as Jesus, the loving and powerful husband of the church. The meaning and application of the passage to contemporary issues becomes completely obscured. A hermeneutical principle that I operate by is that nothing in Scripture should be seen as a type unless the Scripture itself offers it as a type.

But that does not leave the book of Esther without any reference to Christ.

³³ As examples: One interpretation says that Ahasuerus is Christ, Vashti is Israel, Esther is the church, Mordecai is the Holy Spirit, the seven eunuchs are the heavenly hosts and Purim is the Lord’s Table. Another interpretation says that Ahasuerus is the Roman Catholic Church, Haman represents apostate Protestantism, Esther represents Jesus, and Mordecai represents the faithful remnant. A Seventh Day Adventist interpretation that I read had this revolving around compromised Sunday worshippers persecuting the remnant Seventh Day Adventists. Another interpretation ties the four beasts of Revelation with the book of Esther so that Ahasuerus represents the first beast, Haman the second beast, etc. Another interpretation has figures representing one thing in the beginning of the book and something different at the end of the book. Ray Sutton divides the book into a covenant treaty form with Transcendence (1:1-9 with the king in his garden of Eden and a sacramental presence where he feeds the people), Hierarchy (2:1-23 where Esther replaces a rebellious wife and because of her submission gains authority), Ethics (3:1-15 where Mordecai proves himself unfaithful to the covenant promises and breaks the law by refusing to bow to Haman; as a result of his disobedience he places the whole nation in jeopardy), Oath (4:1-7:10 where Mordecai becomes a living sacrifice [both a purification offering for the nation and a whole-burnt offering with ashes on his head], then following repentance, covenant renewal with the feasts), Succession (8:1-10:3 where Mordecai as the new humanity bears the king’s image in himself [the ring which had a seal] and God’s people receive an inheritance.) (Ray Sutton, “Esther and the Covenant” in *Covenant Renewal*, vol. Iv, no. 7 (July, 1990). Other examples could be multiplied. After reading numerous allegorical and typological approaches, I have become utterly cynical of such an approach to Scripture. Scripture becomes a wax nose which can be twisted wherever the author wants it to go. In the process, the true meaning of the passage and its application to contemporary issues is completely missed.

Most conservative scholars would agree that all divinely authorized feasts of God were given to teach by way of type and foreshadowing. They “are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ” (Colossians 2:17). In our sermon series I will seek to open up the prophetic meaning of this feast and relate it to the other feasts of God.

But the main point here is that what Mordecai authorized has grand prophetic significance. The Jews who treated this feast with the same respect as the feasts of Moses have warrant to do so. Purim is not a minor feast. Liberal scholars have been at pains to describe the preoccupation with writing in this book. Some of them have concluded that unless it was written, Purim would not have been taken seriously. From a conservative perspective we know why. Given its elevated and enduring character, Purim had to be authorized by Scripture itself or it would not have been a lawful feast. But this argues that the writings of Mordecai (9:20,23,26,27,29,30,32) were inspired and that when he “wrote with full authority” (9:29) it was the authority of God’s revelation.

G. Finally, “it was written in the book” (9:32) may be a reference to Esther being included in the canon at the moment of its writing much as Joshua and later books were immediately written into the book of the law (Josh 24:26). Or it may be a reference to the book of Esther itself being written

- **External Evidences**

- ***Mordecai is placed by ancient witnesses in the reign of Darius.***
 - All ancient rabbis
 - 1 Esdras
- ***Mordecai is called a prophet by ancient witnesses***
 - All ancient rabbis
 - He is credited with writing the Hallel Psalms (Psalms 113-118) by one rabbi
- ***Mordecai has the strongest support of scholars who have committed themselves to a candidate***
- Refutation of Arguments Against Mordecai Being the Author

L. It is claimed that the moral character of Mordecai and Esther and their names militate against his being a prophet.

5. ### Alleged evidence for this objection:

It is alleged by some that Mordecai was not even a believer, or if he was a believer, that he had grossly compromised his faith in many ways. His character and actions are alleged to be completely incompatible with a prophetic calling by God. It is alleged by some commentators that his name refers to the god Marduk and that he changed Hadassah’s name to Esther (the name of the goddess Ishtar) in order to hide her identity and enable him

to climb the ladder of success. Rather than protecting his daughter, he arranged a marriage with the king for his own personal gain, despite the fact that the king was a pagan, a lecher and an unworthy husband. But he further sins against his daughter by threatening her in a menacing way (one author even suggested a veiled threat that he would kill her if she did not cooperate) in chapter 4. Throughout the story they paint Mordecai as a money-grubbing man who is intent on personal success even at the expense of his daughter's well being. He jeopardizes an entire nation through needless antagonism to Haman and refusal to obey the king's legitimate demand to honor Haman. Furthermore, they allege that there is no evidence that he brought Esther up in the faith. She was a willing accomplice who, far from resisting the advances of the king, must have fully and enjoyably cooperated. Otherwise, how could she have pleased this lecher on a one night stand? They claim that both Mordecai and Esther hide their faith, violate God's clothing laws, sin against God by failing to return to Israel, and make absolutely no mention of God throughout the narrative. In addition, it is alleged that Esther violates God's food laws, sexual taboos, and his commands to pray toward Jerusalem, all of which laws would have revealed her faith to others. Some say they are deists at best, and atheists at worst, while one suggested that they were simply compromised believers. In any case, this would all militate against Mordecai being a prophet who wrote this book.

The objection answered:

Let me first address the issue of the names. a) A survey the journal literature shows that there continues to be great debate on the meaning of either name.³⁴ Yahuda³⁵ argued very cogently that Esther is the Old Persian form of the Medic astra or "myrtle." This seems to fit the phraseology of Esther 2:7 very well. Since Hadassah means "myrtle" and since Esther 2:7 says that he "brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther," it appears that the author is defining ("that is") the names Hadassah and Esther as the same thing. Thus, it is extremely unlikely that Esther means anything other than "myrtle" – the Persian form of her Hebrew name. Likewise, D.J. Clines says, "Possibly Mordecai was a 'Gentile' name roughly equivalent to some Hebrew name."³⁶ If this is true (and there is still much debate), then there is no connection

34 Some of the suggestions that have been given for the meaning of Esther are 1) Ishtar (the goddess), 2) "star," 3) "myrtle tree," 4) a Hebrew word meaning "I am hiding." Suggestions for the meaning of Mordecai are 1) the god Marduk, 2) "worshiper of Marduk," 3) "warrior," 4) Hebrew for "little man," 5) Aramaic for "pure myrrh" (see Jewish Encyclopedia).

35 See A.S. Yahuda, "The Meaning of the Name Esther" in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1946), 174-78, reprinted in Carey A. Moore (ed), *Studies in the Book of Esther*, (KTAV Publishing House: New York, 1982), pp. 268-272.

36 Clines, p. 286.

whatsoever with paganism. b) Secondly, since Darius was a monotheistic Zoroastrian, it is unlikely that either he or Mordecai changed Esther's name to the name of another goddess. Nor would Mordecai have scored any points with Xerxes or his court by naming her or himself after a god that Darius did not worship. Thus if their names happened to be Ishtar and Marduk, it would not have been for purposes of gaining advancement in Darius' court. Nor would the names even be appropriate poetic devices of an author seeking to critique Darius since Ishtar and Marduk are names out of accord with his ethos. c) But for the sake of the argument, let us assume that Esther and Mordecai mean Ishtar and Marduk. That no more makes them compromisers than the names Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego made Daniel and his three friends worshippers of foreign gods.³⁷

As to the issue of moral character one can argue two ways: a) First, one can argue that even if some of the compromises can be proved, how does that invalidate the arguments for authorship? It just shows that a prophet sinned. Did not the prophet Abraham fail to protect his wife when she was taken into Pharaoh's harem and again later into Abimelech's harem? We see no evidence of his laying down his life on her behalf (as some claim that Mordecai should have done). Nor did faithful Sarah commit suicide rather than become a part of their harems (as some have suggested that Esther should have). We have many examples of prophets who sinned out of fear (like Abraham) or bitterness (like Jonah) or peer pressure (like Peter) or adultery and murder (like David), or polygamy and marrying pagans (like Solomon). Did these sins disqualify those prophets from writing Scripture. No. It is inspiration that makes a text infallible, not the sinlessness of the author, "for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). If Mordecai can be disqualified on this basis, then so can David, Solomon, Jonah and others.

b) But at the same time, the statements made about the immoral character and actions of Mordecai and Esther can be challenged. The natural reading of the text is that Esther was taken from Mordecai against his will (much like Sarah was twice taken from the prophet Abraham). This is implied in

³⁷ Belteshazzar means "May Bel protect his life," Shadrach means "the command of Aku (the Sumerian moon god), Meshach means, "Who is what Aku is?" and Abed-Nego means "servant of Nebo." These were names given to them by the pagan court. By answering to these names, the four men were not compromising their faith. It should be remembered that even Scripture uses pagan names for the calendar in the interest of communicating, even though those months are named after pagan gods. For example the first month, Abib, changed to Nisan as seen in Deuteronomy 16 and Nehemiah 2:1; Esther 3:7. (See ISBE, pp. 541-542) The month Tammuz is named after the Phoenician god mentioned in Ezekiel 8:14. etc.

the Hebrew verb “was taken” (v. 8). Indeed, D.J. Clines says, “The narrator effortlessly forecloses any criticism of Mordecai; the three passive verbs, ‘were heard,’ ... were gathered and was taken, portray an irresistible series of events.”³⁸ That she was taken against her will can also be seen by the strong parallels (linguistically and thematically) between the Joseph story and the Daniel story.³⁹

If it is objected that she should have resisted both marriage and his sexual advances it should be noted that a) we don’t know that they didn’t try to resist,⁴⁰ b) by the time she prepares for the king she is already married to him.

If it is objected that she could not have pleased him on her first night unless she was willing to go along with his perverted desires, it may be noted that 1) We know next to nothing of Darius’ sexual practices. We cannot say that he was a pervert; only an ungodly polygamist. 2) the inspired text says that “the king loved her” (2:17), not that he abused her. It says that “she obtained grace and favor in his sight” (2:17), not that she allured him. It says she was a “virgin” (2:2ff), not a pervert. Her criteria for being selected was beauty (2:7), not sexual experience. The text implies that she and Mordecai were elevated because of God’s favor resting upon them. It seems that God favored her more than these critics do. If God’s favor and grace rested upon them both, could God not have also favored him as a prophet (as rabbinic tradition says that He did)?

But the criticism that they were ashamed of their religion is a very common one. In verse 20 it says, Now Esther had not revealed her family and her people, just as Mordecai had charged her... The critics say that since faith and nationality were so tied together, to fail to reveal her Jewishness would of necessity mean denying her faith or at least hiding her faith; being ashamed of her faith. But notice two things: First, notice that the author uses the term “Jew” in a non-ethnic way in 8:17. He speaks of many Gentiles becoming Jews. He does not identify “Jew” with people and kindred, but with religion. Thus there is a distinction between kindred and faith. Second, notice that nowhere does it say that she was asked to deny her faith. Mordecai asked her not to reveal “her people or kindred” (2:10,20).

There are three possible ways of explaining what this means without

38 D. J. Clines, the New Century Bible Commentary: Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, p. 288. Emphasis his.

39 See Adele Berlin, the JPS Bible Commentary: Esther, (The Jewish Publication Society: Philadelphia2001), pp. xxxvi-xl. Also see articles by L.A. Rosenthal and A. Meinhold in Carey A. Moore (ed), Studies in the Book of Esther, (KTAV Publishing House: New York, 1982).

40 Many rabbi’s taught that she did indeed attempt passive resistance.

involving her in a compromise of her faith: 1) Mordecai might have asked her not to reveal her relationship to him, and he may have done this to protect her from reprisals against himself. 2) He could have asked her to not reveal herself as an ethnic Jew. 3) He could have asked her to not reveal her lineage that linked her to King Saul. I believe that the last option fits the facts the best. But let me briefly explain each option.

Option 1 (hiding her family connections with Mordecai) would be motivated by fear of antagonism to his own stands in Shushan. In this case the danger that he was seeking to protect her from would not necessarily be anti-Semitism, but could be simply anti-Mordecai sentiment. Alternatively, one rabbi suggested that Mordecai did not desire to benefit in any way from this shotgun marriage. Esther 8:1 favors this view, implying that it was not until that chapter that Esther had told of her relation to Mordecai.⁴¹ While this is possible, I think it is unlikely for three reasons: 1) First, since he worked in the palace, it is unlikely that at least some people did not already know of the connection. 2) Second, he constantly identified himself with her by inquiring into what was happening to her (2:11) and by communications between them (4:4-16). 3) Third, “Esther informed the king in Mordecai’s name” (2:23) about the conspiracy of Bigthan and Teresh. Unless she was related to Mordecai, such communications with the king would be frowned upon. Throughout, Mordecai seems to have no worries about people finding out that they are related.

Option 2 (hiding her ethnic Jewishness) would perhaps be motivated by anti-Semitism that was already appearing in the court. But it may also have been motivated by the presence of Haman the Agagite (an Amalekite descendant of King Agag). Since God had commanded Israel to fight against Amalek forever (Exodus 17:14-16; Deut. 25:17-19), Jews would automatically be enemies of all Amalekites. But even general anti-semitism could have motivated Mordecai to ask her to hide her ethnicity. If this is true, the following defense of this action could be plausibly taken:

One can assume that if she was forcibly taken from him, this may have been a wise move. I doubt that the faithful spies who went into the land of Canaan (Josh 2:1-24) revealed their people or kindred to those who were hostile to them, but throughout the story they were faithful to God. This is just as hostile a situation (to be kidnapped from the home!), and Mordecai was perhaps hoping that the Lord might in some way bring deliverance to her.

⁴¹ Alternatively, one could take chapter 8 simply as the king’s remembering (from 2:22) that Mordecai was related to her.

Granted, it would have been more difficult for her to hide her identity as a Jew since God's laws made visible differences. Critics insist for example, that she had to compromise God's dietary laws to remain unknown as a Jew. But again, that is an argument from silence. Authors who have cited the language borrowed from the Joseph and Daniel stories, sometimes almost word for word, point out that this may have been done to imply similar favor that she could expect. Well, look at verse 9. It says about the eunuch in charge: Now the young woman pleased him, and she obtained his favor; so he readily gave beauty preparations to her, besides her allowance and the NIV renders that "special food." She got special favors when it came to food that others did not get. It's not an absolute statement, but it is just as reasonable to assume that she got concessions from him just like Daniel did from his officials. And ancient Jewish traditions say this is exactly what happened. But we are simply not told what she ate or wore. Perhaps like Daniel and Joseph she dressed according to the customs of the Babylonians. But we ought not to accuse her of compromise that is nowhere made explicit in the text.⁴²

Option 3 (hiding her royal ancestry to Saul) may have been motivated by the presence of Haman in the court. This book seems to highlight not just the conflict between Amalekites and Jews, but the conflict between Saul and Agag. It is plausible that to obtain better treatment in the harem, Esther may have been tempted to tell others that she was of royal lineage. But Mordecai wisely (perhaps prophetically?) warns her not to do so. It is plausible that Haman would have had a life-long hatred for not only Jews, but especially for any connection to his arch-enemy Saul.⁴³ Since Mordecai and Esther were descendants of King Saul (2:5), knowledge of her ancestry ("her people or family" v10; "her family and her people"⁴⁴ v. 20) could have caused problems for her in the court. This option seems the most likely to me for five reasons: 1) the importance in this book of tracing her lineage to Saul and royalty, 2) the presence of an Agagite (3:1) in the court (again highlighting the role of Saul in this conflict), 3) the fact that the author immediately juxtaposes the command not to reveal her people or family (2:10) with the observation that Mordecai himself does not hide his relationship to Esther (2:11). Nor does she hide her relation to him (2:23).

42 Interestingly, one author, A.B. Leever, claims that Darius had become a Christian by this time. I'm skeptical, but if you read the king's letter in Ezra 6, a case could be built. This would change the whole complexion of the debate. However, I am not pursuing this possible line of reasoning in this paper.

43 Just as Haman is synonymous with evil in the mind of a Jew today (thousands of years later), it is not improbable that Amalekites who were almost totally wiped out by king Saul, would treat Saul as their arch enemy and perpetuate a hatred to him.

44 Though the most natural reading of "her people" would be Jews in general, the phrase "her family" could refer to her genealogy and the phrase "her people" could refer to her tribe (see Gen. 49:16).

The author does not seem to see any conflict between verses 10 and 11. 4) It appears that the king may have known that she and Mordecai are Jews (compare 2:23 with 6:10) though he has no idea who the people are whom Haman intends to destroy (7:4-6). It is not likely that he would command Haman to honor “Mordecai the Jew” (6:10) if he had realized that it was Jews who were destined by his decree to be destroyed. Haman certainly shows no fear of revealing his Jewishness (3:4) or his relationship to Esther (2:11,22). Therefore, the only thing that appears hidden is her ancestry

As to Mordecai’s lack of concern for Esther and his preoccupation with self-advancement, we should note that Esther 2:11 says quite the opposite: “every day Mordecai paced in front of the court of the women’s quarters, to learn of Esther’s welfare and what was happening to her.” This indicates that he hadn’t made these arrangements (he wanted to know what was happening to her), and he was looking out for her “welfare,” and he was worried (“every day Mordecai paced”). Furthermore, throughout the story we see a person who is concerned for the welfare of Israel as a whole. He not only was part of the first group of returnees to Israel (Ezra 2:2; Neh. 7:7), but chapters 9 and 10 of Esther over and over affirm his concern for God’s people. The writer of the this book affirms that he was “seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his kindred” (10:3).

Would she have had to stop praying toward Jerusalem? I don’t see any reason why. Darius allowed people to worship whatever gods they chose, and unless he inquired, there would have been no need to lie. Nor did every prayer have to be toward Jerusalem. Godly Nehemiah’s prayer in the presence of the king was shot up to God with no one else realizing (Neh. 2:4). Our exposition in our series will show that Mordecai was bold in his faith – bold enough to lay down his life rather than violate the commandment of God in Exodus 17:13-16 and Deut. 25:17-19. The character of Mordecai and Esther is no reason to conclude that he could not have been a prophet.

H. It is claimed that Mordecai was dead when the book was written

John Urqhart says, “Mordecai, whose claims have been strongly urged by some, is excluded by the closing words (Esther 10:3), which sum up his life work and the blessings of which he had been the recipient. The words imply that when the book was written, that great Israelite had passed away.” Three possible answers can be given to this: a) First, no reference is made to Mordecai’s death. b) Second, since the death of Ahasuerus is implied by the

phrase “all the acts of his power...” (v. 2), it is likely that Mordecai wrote the book after the death of Darius. c) Third, even if these verses were to imply closure to Mordecai’s public work, that closure does not necessitate death. It could be that he was retired from office when Xerxes came to power. d) There is archeological evidence that a Mordecai who worked under Darius continued to live until the third year of Xerxes’ (but only as an auditor).

I. The book is written in the third person as if referring to a different person when speaking of Mordecai

Some have objected that this is not written in the first person (“I,” “me” and “my” as in Nehemiah) but in the third person (“Mordecai,” he,” “his” and “him”). But this would rule out the true authorship of most Scripture. Much of the Pentateuch, 1 Samuel, the Gospels etc are written in the third person. That is not at all unusual.

J. It is alleged that a Biblical writer would never praise himself, and chapter 10 is self-praise if it is written by Mordecai.

Another argument is that no Biblical author would praise himself as Esther 10:1-3 does. Three possible answers can be given: 1) It is not praise of what he has accomplished, but an acknowledgment of honor that has been given to him by the king (“to which the king made him great”) and by the people (“well received”). There is a big difference between bragging about what you have accomplished on your own, and gratefulness for how others have advanced you. 2) Second, we must not require a false humility of these authors or we would have to deny Mosaic authorship of Numbers 12:3 where Moses is declared to be the most humble man upon earth, or Johanne authorship of John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7,20 where John is declared to be the apostle whom the Lord loved and who rested on Jesus bosom. Similar statements can be found in Ezra and Nehemiah. Are we therefore to deny that Ezra and Nehemiah wrote these books? 3) A third possible answer is that of Adam Clark who says that Mordecai wrote Esther 1:1-9:19, and that Ezra wrote the rest. I do not accept this reasoning, but it is better than rejecting the abundance of evidence that Mordecai did indeed write the book.

K. The writings referred to in the book are simply primary source materials from which facts were obtained for Esther. They are not parts of the book itself.

Some claim that when 9:20 and 32 refer to the authoritative writing of Mordecai, the book of Esther was not yet finished (the author is still writing) and therefore, the “letters” (vv. 20,30) and the “book” (v. 32) are distinct from Esther itself. It is claimed that at most these writings would be primary source documents that the anonymous author used. While there is substance to this argument, two answers can be made: 1) It should be noted that Scriptural writers frequently used identical language. They referred to portions of the book they were composing as letters that almost sound objective to the book itself. For example, the discussion of the scroll in Jeremiah 36 that was destroyed and the duplication of that scroll (which becomes a part of Scripture). Or Jeremiah 51:60 which says, Jeremiah had written on a scroll about all the disasters that would come upon Babylon – all that had been recorded concerning Babylon. The NIV Study Bible footnote says, “Probably the oracle of 50:2-51:58.” Likewise, Deuteronomy 29:20 speaks of “the curses written in this book” before all of them had been written. The next verse says, “the LORD will single him out from all the tribes of Israel for disaster, according to all the curses of the covenant writtedn in this Book of the Law,” but he says that before the curses of chapters 30,31 and especially chapter 32 had been written. (See also Deut 28:61; 29:20,21,27; 30:10; Jer. 36:18.) 2) Second, the definite article is used in 9:32 “it was written in the book” (A;b is the preposition “in” with the definite article.) This lends credence to the argument that even if there were separate portions of this book that had been written at different times, they were all put together into the book (i.e., either the canon, or the book of Esther).

L. In chapter 10, Mordecai is referred to in the past tense (as if dead).

Related to this argument is that chapter 10 speaks of Mordecai’s work in the past tense as if Mordecai himself were history. But this is silly. The past tense is used of Mordecai throughout the book, as it must in any historical account. Other Biblical authors frequently do this. For example Deuteronomy 31:9 says, “So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel.” But that does not imply that Moses is not the author. Likewise, Deuteronomy 31:22 says, “Therefore Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the children of Israel.”

In summary, there is much to commend the view that Mordecai wrote this book. He alone meets all seven internal tests. There are also numerous external evidences (both secular and religious) of his authorship. Like Joshua who autobiographically speaks of the immediate canonization of his book (“Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God” – Josh 24:26), Mordecai “wrote these things” (9:20) and “confirmed these matters of Purim, and it was written in the book” (9:32). Like other historical books, the book of Esther seeks to tie its history closely with books already written. The author does so by way of the standard waw consecutive at the beginning of the Hebrew text of 1:1.⁴⁵

45 Esther starts with the Hebrew word “And.” According to John Urquhart, “the conjunction that begins the whole book,” and “(waw in the Hebrew) shows that the book was designed for a place in the series of historical books in the OT canon.” (As cited by Far Eastern Bible College, Course on the Book of Esther, p. 19).