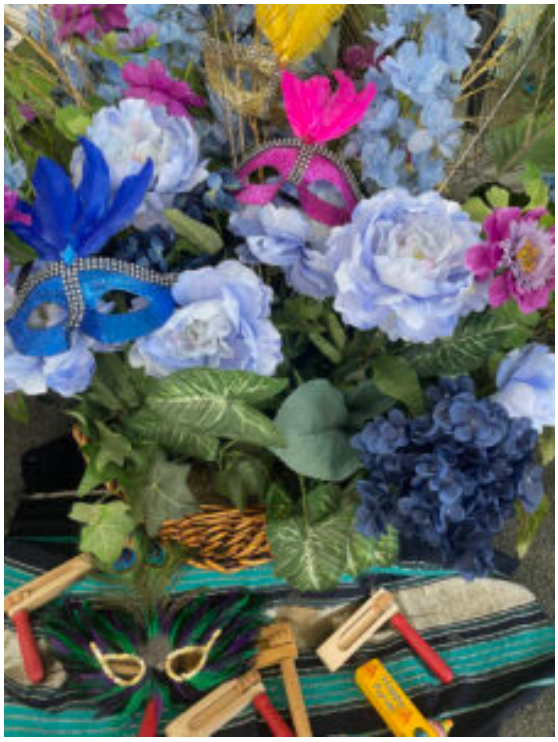
–Save This Page as a PDF–

The Theology of the book of Esther



The theological application of the book is found in its historical setting. For the Jews who returned to Jerusalem, the post-exilic books of **Chronicles**, **Nehemiah**, **Ezra**, **Haggai** and **Zechariah** specifically answered the larger theological question of that day, which was, “Are we still **the apple of His eye (Deuteronomy 32:10b)** and in a covenant relationship with **Him**?” The conflict between **Haman,** the Agagite and **Mordecai,** the Jew drive the reversal of fortunes at the end of the book. The seemingly insignificant detail that identifies **Haman** as an Agagite is the key that links the Jews of the Diaspora to the ancient covenant **ADONAI** made with their ancestors at Sinai, reassuring them of its continuing truth in their lives.

Agag was the king of **the Amalekites** at the time Saul was Isra’el’s first king **(First Samuel 15)**. The Amalekites had the questionable distinction of being the first people to attack **God’s** people just after the **Exodus** (see my commentary on **Exodus Cv – The Amalekites Came and Attacked the Israelites at**

Rephidim). Consequently, **the LORD** promised Moses that **He** would **be at war** with them **from generation to generation** until **the memory of Amalek** was blotted **out from under heaven (Exodus 17:14-15)**.

The story of **Esther** is another episode of that ancient battle between Isra'el and the Amalekites, and it sure looked like the Jews would be annihilated. They had no king, no city, no army, no prophet, no land, no Temple, no priesthood and no sacrifices. They were but a small, defenseless minority living at the mercy of a ruthless and powerful pagan monarchy. Moreover, they found themselves in that dire circumstance because their sin had been just as bad as that of the pagan nations **(Ezekiel 8)**. They could only expect the worst, and humanly, they only deserved the worst. But when **Haman** was impaled, and **Mordecai was** elevated to a **rank** that was **second** only **to King Ahasuerus (10:3)**, it revealed that despite their sin and despite the fact that they were not in the Land, **ADONAI's** promise to Isra'el was still valid. **He** had said to Abraham: **I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all the peoples of the earth will be blessed through you (Genesis 12:3).** The book of **Esther** shows us that the Jews living in Persia were still under the watchful care of a loving **God (Psalm 91)**.

The book of Esther is perhaps the most striking biblical example of the providence of God. The word providence comes from the Latin *providere*, which literally means to foresee. But more than merely knowing about the future, the word carries the connotation of making preparation for the future. Therefore, God operates behind the scenes to govern all circumstances through the normal and the ordinary course of human history, even without the intervention of the miraculous.

The book of **Esther** is the most true-to-life biblical example of the providence of **ADONAI** precisely because **He** seems absent. Even in the most pagan corner of the world, **the LORD** is controlling all things to the benefit of **His** people and the glory of **His** name. Even **His** own people, like **Esther** and **Mordecai**, made decisions that came from cloudy motives at best, or perhaps even outright disobedience, **God** still worked providentially through those very actions to fulfill **His** covenant.[7] Surely **Romans 8:28** is a New Covenant summary of the theological message of the book: **And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.**