

SERIES: God Incognito, as Seen in the Book of Esther  
SERMON: **When Chauvinism Confronts the Domino Theory**  
SCRIPTURE: Esther 1  
SPEAKER: Michael P. Andrus  
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Today we are beginning a new series on a much-neglected book of the Bible, the Book of Esther. There are reasons why it has been neglected (which I will enumerate in a few moments), but no excuses. Many evangelical preachers and commentators never touch it. I regret to say that during my 40 years of preaching and teaching, this is the first time I have tackled Esther with any thoroughness. I think I did something with it on Sunday nights for a few weeks back in the 70's, but it wasn't anything that deserved to be called "preaching." But over the past few months that I have been studying Esther, I have come to see it in a whole new light. I am actually quite excited about this study.

I must warn you that I am going to share with you some conclusions that may well challenge what you learned in Sunday School or have always thought. For example, I do not believe Esther and Mordecai, the principal characters in the story, are great heroes of the faith or shining examples of godliness. They are heroes in the story, but not of the faith. Esther is no Daniel (or even a Ruth), and Mordecai is no Shadrach, Meshach or Abednego. Rather I see both Esther and Mordecai as secret, compromising believers who have barely maintained their cultural Jewish faith, much less a strong commitment to God. They show courage but they are not particularly courageous for God. Yet God uses them anyway to accomplish His purposes.

### **Introduction and background**

**Two women, two books.** Two weeks ago we completed a month-long journey through The Book of Ruth. As we noted, Ruth is the story of a Gentile girl who was taken in by the Jews and married a Jew. Esther, on the other hand, is the story of a Jewish girl who was taken in by the Gentiles and married a Gentile. But neither of these stories is really about their respective heroines. Rather both are ultimately about the Bible's larger story line of God's covenant to protect and redeem His people despite their sin and disobedience.

Specifically the purpose of Esther is to show how hundreds of thousands of Jews, living in exile in the Persian Empire, were saved from extermination by the hand of God, and to motivate the Jewish people to remember God's providence perpetually through a feast known as Purim.

If Ruth is a story in which the providence of God is often hidden behind the ordinary events of life, how much more is that true of Esther! God's name is not mentioned even once in the ten chapters of Esther!<sup>i</sup> That is why I came up with the title for this series: *God Incognito: As Seen in the Book of Esther*. There's an intentional play on words there. He is incognito in one sense, yet clearly seen in another. There is no mention of Him, yet His providence and grace and mercy are prominently on display. His fingerprints are everywhere.

Both Ruth and Esther point us to Christ as the One in whom God's grace and mercy ultimately comes to aliens and exiles, allowing them to become members of His family, a family which He will go to any lengths to protect. (By the way, I so appreciated Josh's powerful message on adoption last Sunday, and find it interesting that both Ruth and Esther were adopted—Ruth unofficially by her mother-in-law, and Esther officially by her cousin Mordecai after the death of her parents).

**Authorship, date, and location.** The Author of the book of Esther is unknown, but the best guess of scholars is that perhaps Ezra or Nehemiah, contemporaries of Esther, wrote it. The time of writing is also unknown, but the time of the events recorded in the book is clear. They fit chronologically between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> chapters of Ezra, covering a period of ten years, from 483 to 473 B.C. Xerxes (called Ahasuerus in some versions) was the king of Persia during this entire period. He had an extensive empire, with 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia. The location is present-day Iran.

#### **Unusual facts about the Book of Esther:**

1. Esther is one of only two biblical books named after a woman.
2. There is no mention of God in the Book of Esther, and also no mention of the Law of Moses, sacrifices, worship, Jerusalem, the temple, or prayer.
3. The New Testament does not quote or allude to Esther. The only other books of which this is true are Ezra, Nehemiah, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.
4. Esther is the only OT book not found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Of the 40,000 inscribed fragments discovered, some 500 books have been reconstructed, but nothing from Esther.
5. For the first seven centuries of the Christian church, not one commentary was produced on Esther. Neither Luther nor Calvin wrote a commentary on it (and it is the *only* biblical book they ignored). In fact, Martin Luther actually denounced the book, saying, "I am so great an enemy to the second book of the Maccabees (an apocryphal book), and to Esther, that I wish they had not come to us at all, for they have too many heathen unnaturalities."<sup>ii</sup>
6. With the exception of Xerxes, no other person in the book has been historically verified.

Now my reason for mentioning these rather surprising facts is not to create doubt in your minds as to whether Esther belongs in the Bible. Rather it is to be honest with the facts and to help explain why the book has, by-and-large, been neglected. But the fact is, some neglected things are very valuable, and Esther is one of those. I'm convinced that Martin Luther must have had a bad case of indigestion the day he made his observations about the Book of Esther.

We won't even meet the two principal characters of our story today—that will have to wait until

next week. But we are going to lay the groundwork for their introduction. The title of my sermon this morning is original. (I might as well admit it, because no one else would claim it). I hope its meaning becomes clear as we read the first chapter of The Book of Esther.

*This is what happened during the time of Xerxes, the Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush: At that time King Xerxes reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa, and in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials. The military leaders of Persia and Media, the princes, and the nobles of the provinces were present.*

*For a full 180 days he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty. When these days were over, the king gave a banquet, lasting seven days, in the enclosed garden of the king's palace, for all the people from the least to the greatest, who were in the citadel of Susa. The garden had hangings of white and blue linen, fastened with cords of white linen and purple material to silver rings on marble pillars. There were couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and other costly stones. Wine was served in goblets of gold, each one different from the other, and the royal wine was abundant, in keeping with the king's liberality. By the king's command each guest was allowed to drink in his own way, for the king instructed all the wine stewards to serve each man what he wished.*

*Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the royal palace of King Xerxes.*

*On the seventh day, when King Xerxes was in high spirits from wine, he commanded the seven eunuchs who served him—Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar and Carcas—to bring before him Queen Vashti, wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to the people and nobles, for she was lovely to look at. But when the attendants delivered the king's command, Queen Vashti refused to come. Then the king became furious and burned with anger.*

*Since it was customary for the king to consult experts in matters of law and justice, he spoke with the wise men who understood the times and were closest to the king—Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena and Memucan, the seven nobles of Persia and Media who had special access to the king and were highest in the kingdom.*

*"According to law, what must be done to Queen Vashti?" he asked. "She has not obeyed the command of King Xerxes that the eunuchs have taken to her."*

*Then Memucan replied in the presence of the king and the nobles, "Queen Vashti has done wrong, not only against the king but also against all the nobles and the peoples of all the provinces of King Xerxes. For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women, and so they will despise their husbands and say, 'King Xerxes commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, but she would not come.' This very day the Persian and Median women of the nobility who have heard about the queen's conduct will respond to all the king's nobles in the same way. There will be no end of disrespect and discord.*

*"Therefore, if it pleases the king, let him issue a royal decree and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed, that Vashti is never again to enter the presence of King Xerxes. Also let the king give her royal position to someone*

*else who is better than she. Then when the king's edict is proclaimed throughout all his vast realm, all the women will respect their husbands, from the least to the greatest."*

*The king and his nobles were pleased with this advice, so the king did as Memucan proposed. He sent dispatches to all parts of the kingdom, to each province in its own script and to each people in its own language, proclaiming in each people's tongue that every man should be ruler over his own household.*

The Book of Esther was not written as a comedy but a tragedy. Nevertheless, the author certainly has a lively sense of humor. I actually think he wants us to laugh at his subtle satire of the most powerful king of his day.

### **A powerful monarch shows off to the world.**

**For six months King Xerxes displays his vast wealth.** Xerxes the Great became King of Persia when his father Darius died in 486 B.C. Our story starts in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of his reign, at the very time history tells us Xerxes is planning a campaign against the Greeks to avenge his father's defeat in the world-famous Battle of Marathon. Some scholars believe this six-month-long exhibition of Xerxes' wealth was primarily for the purpose of drumming up support for this military campaign, to demonstrate that he could reward those who would rally to support the effort. Nobles and officials from all over the Empire are invited to this extravaganza.

If you think the kind of spectacle described here in verses 5-8 is fanciful and unrealistic, you have probably forgotten what the Shah of Iran did in 1971 to commemorate the 2500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Persian Empire. Allow me to read a brief description:

*A City of Gold was planned by a Swiss interior design firm on 160 acres. Fifty prefabricated luxury apartments with traditional Persian tent-cloth surrounds were arranged in a star pattern around a central fountain, and vast numbers of trees were planted around them in the desert, recreating something of how the ancient Persepolis would have looked. The large Tent of Honor was designed for the reception of the dignitaries. The Banqueting Hall was the largest structure and measured nearly the size of a football field. The tent site was surrounded by gardens of trees and other plants flown in from France. Catering services were performed by Maxim's de Paris, which closed its restaurant in Paris for almost two weeks in order to provide for the glittering celebrations. Legendary hotelier Max Blouet came out of retirement to supervise the banquet. Lanvin designed the uniforms of the Imperial Household. 250 red Mercedes-Benz limousines were used to chauffeur guests from airport and back. Dinnerware was created by Limoges and linen by Porthault.<sup>iii</sup>*

Persians certainly know how to party!<sup>iv</sup>

But the focus of our chapter is not so much on the six-month-long party, as on the last seven days when Xerxes . . .

**For seven days he puts on the mother of all banquets.** Xerxes' banquet is held in the

enclosed garden of the king's palace, and everyone in the winter capital of Susa<sup>v</sup> is invited. The decorations are described in some detail in our passage, from the blue and white linens draped everywhere, to gold and silver couches for the guests to recline on, to mosaic floors made of precious stones. Wine is served in golden goblets, with no two alike, and by royal decree no one is denied what he wants. One can only imagine how much wine is consumed, which becomes an issue as we move to the next scene.

**On the last day of the banquet, while drunk, Xerxes determines to show off his trophy wife.** Remember that Queen Vashti is giving a banquet for the women in the palace while this stag party is going on in the garden. When Xerxes is "in high spirits from wine" (which is a polite way to say he is drunk), he orders seven of the eunuchs who guard his harem to bring the Queen before the men so he can display her beauty. This doesn't pass the smell test. If the king is drunk, no doubt most of these men are too. The king is clearly treating Vashti as a sex object, a toy to be played with. In fact, some Jewish commentators see behind the command in verse 11 for her to "wear her royal crown" a hint that she is to wear *only* her royal crown. At any rate, Queen Vashti courageously refuses her husband's sexist demand.

#### **A bold queen refuses her husband's sexist demand. (1:12-22)**

Please understand that Vashti could not have taken this step lightly. She knows her husband has a history of unpredictable, unreasonable, despotic behavior. Herodotus the Greek historian tells how a few years later during his campaign against the Greeks, Xerxes beheaded all the men building a bridge at the Hellespont for his army when a storm delayed its completion.<sup>vi</sup> She knows he is unlikely to accept her refusal without retribution. And sure enough . . .

**The king becomes furious and consults the "wisest" men of the kingdom concerning an appropriate course of action.** He calls a special cabinet meeting of the highest and wisest officials in the land to decide what should be done about Queen Vashti, or *to* her. These seven nobles are described as experts in law and justice, wise men who understood the times, and closest to the king. But in truth they come across more as Seven Stooges, pompous characters gathering in a huddle, each offering his idea of what to do about Vashti. Again I believe the author wants us to laugh.

There is a risky job, of course, for whatever they suggest has to make sense to the king not only while he's drunk but also when he sobers up. If they suggest her execution for Vashti, for example, they have to consider that the king may miss her later, and thus they may find themselves following her to the gallows. In fact, such fears are not entirely unfounded. Take just a peek at the first verse of chapter 2, where we read, "Later when the anger of King Xerxes had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what he had decreed about her." I think at this stage he is beginning to have regrets, so his counselors have to scramble fast to come up with a plan to get his mind off Vashti. But that's getting ahead of our story.

**All the wise men agree her offense is not just personal but universal and urge the**

**king to issue an irrevocable decree that she be deposed and replaced.** Here's what Memucan, their spokesman, says in verse 16: "Queen Vashti has done wrong, *not only* against the king *but also* against all the nobles and the peoples of all the provinces of King Xerxes." He then espouses the age-old Domino Theory.

The Domino Theory has often been employed in times of political crisis. Briefly stated it is this: "If you allow X, then X squared will surely happen." Some of you remember in the 60's when President Johnson used the theory to justify his expansion of the Viet Nam War. If South Viet Nam falls, the communists would soon be landing in San Diego. It didn't happen, did it? But sometimes the theory is more valid. It was appealed to by opponents of the first state lottery in modern times when it was established in New Hampshire in 1964. They argued that it would open the floodgates to gambling, and it certainly has. Now 40 states have lotteries, and at least 28 have casinos.

Though the Domino Theory has a somewhat checkered history, Memucan's use of it is certainly one of the most questionable. He argues that if this offense to the King is overlooked, then all the women in the Empire will despise their husbands, and "there will be no end of disrespect and discord." So the advisers urge Xerxes to sign an irrevocable decree that Vashti be deposed and a better queen replace her. "Better" obviously means "more submissive" (though she will undoubtedly have to be at least as beautiful as Vashti). And so..

**A royal decree is published throughout the empire that every man should be the ruler of his own household.** Once again the humor is barely under the surface. In the first place, these clowns themselves are about to become the primary publicists of the Queen's behavior, deciding to send the Pony Express to the far-flung regions of the Empire with news of her rebellion. So if there is a real threat that women all over the Empire are going to follow Vashti's example, then the King's advisers have only themselves to thank.

Furthermore, if one woman's refusal of an unreasonable request by a drunk husband is all that stands in the way of a Persian version of the Women's Lib movement, then the husbands' authority and leadership is tenuous indeed. I cannot improve upon Iain Duguid's questions at this point:

*What was actually achieved by all this huffing and puffing? Was the social order of Persia really threatened by this one woman's resistance? Even if it were, can such a principle of male authority in the household really be imposed by governmental decree? Are all men to exercise power in such a self-centered way as Ahasuerus did, and then expect instant obedience? Is every man supposed to banish his wife if she fails to submit to his will?<sup>vii</sup>*

Now that is essentially the story as we have it in chapter 1. I hope your appetite is sufficiently whetted to return next week. But my purpose this morning is not simply to tell a story. Rather it is to get *behind* the story for truth we need to consider for our own lives. I would like to try to do that by posing this question:

## How can *we* survive as exiles under the Empire?

We haven't met the principal characters in our story yet, but let me tell you in advance that they are Jewish people. The writer of the story is Jewish. The recipients are Jewish. But these Jews are not in Jerusalem but in Persia. Let me go back in history and tell you how they got there and why they are still there.

In about 1100 B.C. the kingdom of Israel was established, with Saul, David, and Solomon serving as its first three kings. Then in 931 B.C. Solomon died and the kingdom was divided, with 10 tribes forming the northern nation of Israel and two tribes forming the southern kingdom of Judah. The northern kingdom quickly became apostate, and of the 19 kings who served over the next 200 years there was not a single godly king among them. After many warnings God finally allowed the Assyrians to come and destroy Israel, taking most of its people into captivity and sending settlers from other nations to their land.

The southern kingdom was almost as bad, but at least they had eight kings out of 20 who were somewhat godly. God tolerated them for another century, but when they persisted in rebellion against Him, He allowed King Nebuchadnezzar of the Babylonians to launch a conquest of Judah in 606. Nebuchadnezzar first looted the treasury and seized captives (among them Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego), then came back 8 years later and took thousands more captives, and finally in 586 B.C. he leveled the city of Jerusalem and the Solomonic Temple, took the rest of the people back to Babylon as slaves, and Judah effectively ceased to exist as a nation.

But as this tragedy was unfolding, the prophet Jeremiah predicted that as great as Babylon was, it would not last long as an empire. He prophesied that the captivity would last only 70 years. And sure enough, on October 12, 539 B.C. the Babylonian Empire was suddenly overthrown by the Medes and the Persians, and Cyrus the Great became Emperor.

Cyrus was a comparatively enlightened despot who allowed many captive peoples to return to their homelands, including over 40,000 Jews, who returned to the ruins that had once been Jerusalem (you can read about it in Ezra 1-2). They rebuilt the temple, though the result was a sorry excuse for the great Solomonic Temple, and re-established the Passover feast. The Jews were slowly becoming something of a nation once again.

However, most of the Jewish people taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar chose not to return to Jerusalem. They were reasonably comfortable in Babylon, and even more so under the Persians. They ceased to think of themselves as exiles. After all, hadn't Jeremiah told them to settle down and seek the success of the city where they lived? I want you to turn with me to Jeremiah 29, because this is a most important concept for us to grasp. This chapter contains a letter the prophet wrote to the exiles in Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed Jerusalem:

*This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat*

*what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."*

The Jews in exile took these words seriously, in fact, too seriously. They forgot what Jeremiah wrote next in his letter (10-14):

*This is what the LORD says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."*

Yes, Jeremiah had told them to settle down and make the best of their captivity, but he didn't mean permanently. Yet many of the Jews remained even after they were allowed to return. Being skillful merchants they had established businesses, experienced success, and even advanced in government. They reasoned, why give up all this wealth and comfort to go back to that wasteland that was once the Promised Land?

Now I would like to suggest to you that there is a parallel between the Jews in exile in Persia and the people of God today, particularly here in the United States. We are spiritual exiles, strangers, aliens, or at least we are supposed to be. That's what we are called in 1 Peter 1:17 ("live your lives as strangers here.") and 1 Peter 2:11 ("Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul"). But we have become pretty comfortable in our exile, and fairly successful. We have taken Jeremiah's advice to pray for the success of our city and nation, because its success contributes to our success. But in the process perhaps we have forgotten that our sojourn in the Empire is temporary, and we have a higher calling.

How are we to live as exiles? How should we respond to the Empire in which we live? I would like to make several suggestions:

**1. We must not take the power and glory of this world too seriously; sometimes we just have to laugh at its presumption.**<sup>viii</sup> We have laughed at the power brokers in the Persian Empire this morning, at their pomposity, their presumption, their self-importance. I think likewise we have to laugh at our own Empire today. If we didn't laugh once in a while, we would be crying all the time.

Some of us take government too seriously. We get very angry, or we become very fearful. We begin to believe that the Domino Theory is an absolute law of the universe, and that if one more tax is passed, or one more school textbook proclaims evolution as fact, or one more state adopts gay marriage, that's all she wrote. The end is near! Maybe, maybe not!

I remember the late 60's. I was in seminary and the world seemed to be going to hell in a handbasket. Woodstock did not seem like the peaceful rock concert that historians have made of it; rather it seemed like the culture was imploding. The Black Panthers and the Weathermen made it feel like revolution or anarchy was in the air. There were tanks on the streets of Kansas City after Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy were killed. I remember almost despairing and wondering what I was doing studying Hebrew and Greek while the Empire, was falling apart.

Some of you who are younger perhaps felt the same way during the Carter economic collapse or the Clinton moral collapse, or the collapse of the Twin Towers. Maybe you even feel that way today, as you see freedoms eroding, oil exploding, and an Emperor surrounded by advisers who seem more like Stooges than wise men.

I encourage you to laugh a little. And maybe not just at government, but also at the corporate world and the educational world and the sports world, perhaps even the ecclesiastical world, each of which takes itself much too seriously much of the time.

I don't mean that you shouldn't take any of this seriously or that you shouldn't be politically active, and I certainly don't mean that you shouldn't pray. But don't despair, don't lose heart, and don't lose your sense of humor.

Do you remember Psalm 2:

*Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?  
The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together  
against the Lord and against His Anointed One.  
“Let us break their chains,” they say, “and throw off their fetters.”  
The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.  
Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, “I have  
installed my king on Zion, my holy hill.”*

If God can laugh at them, I think we can too. And why can we laugh? Because we know their power is piddly and temporary. Read Isaiah 40 and discover what God thinks of the power and pomposity of Emperors and Presidents and Prime Ministers. Let me read just a few verses from that greatest of all passages in the Bible:

*Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales; he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust.  
Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fires, nor its animals enough for burnt offerings.  
Before him all the nations are as nothing; they are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing.*

**2. We need to discern the fingerprints of God even when He is silent.** I have already noted for you that God is not mentioned in this book. But He is not absent from it either. The fact that we cannot see Him working does not mean He is not working. Even in this chapter He is behind the scenes, creating a vacancy in the palace so an individual of His choosing can be placed in a position of influence to accomplish His purposes.

God's name is less and less welcome in government and public life, but He's still there. We must discern the times and look for His fingerprints. We must honor Him as Lord of our lives.

And finally, . . .

**3. We need to realize how different our King is from Xerxes, and His Kingdom from the Empire.**<sup>ix</sup> Think about the differences. The God we serve is not capricious, He is not self-centered, He is not a show-off, He doesn't treat people as objects to feed His pride and pleasure, His law is beneficial for men and women alike.

He, too has prepared a sumptuous banquet for His people. But when God summons His bride (the church) to His banquet,

it will not be to expose her to shame

but to lavish His grace and mercy upon her.

One cannot help but cheer Vashti for refusing to come before the Emperor, but there is nothing noble about refusing to appear in the presence of such a good and gracious King as ours. Have you heard and responded to His call to come? If not, then you too, like Vashti, are doomed to be banished from His presence forever.

Remember, the Empire is not our home. One day, when Jesus returns, the true banquet will begin.

i. This phenomenon is so unusual and unexpected that I think we must deal with it as we consider our overall interpretation of the book. There has to be a reason for such a startling omission. Some have suggested that since the Book was written for Jewish people living in exile and in a hostile country, the name of God was left out to prevent the government from censoring it. The Jews could see God's fingerprints all over the book, but the Persians or other pagans would not perceive its spiritual themes and thus would not try to ban it. That makes some sense, but Persia, where this story takes place, was actually one of the least hostile empires of the ancient world, and by the end of our story a Jew is the Prime Minister of the empire!

I think it is rather more likely that the absence of God's name is an indication that the people are not leading particularly godly lives. They have compromised their convictions and they have been assimilated into the culture. But the message of the book is that even in times like that, God remains true to His covenant to save His people from extinction.

Is He not still doing that? In 1947 God regathered the nation of Israel to its homeland. He

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allowed them to re-establish their language and their nation, and He has preserved them for over 60 years from the most insidious attacks any nation has ever faced. Has He done that because the Jewish people are true worshipers or because they have been faithful to Him. No. He has done it because He is faithful to His covenant.

ii. Martin Luther, *The Table Talk of Martin Luther*, 13.

iii. Wikipedia

iv. Persia's wealth and magnificence dazzled even Alexander the Great when more than a century later he entered the palace at (or Shushan) and found 1200 tons of gold and silver and 270 tons of minted gold coins, which had been accumulated by the Persian kings. To put that in perspective, Fort Knox contains less than 4600 tons of gold.

v. The other capitals of Persia were Ecbatana, Babylon, and Persepolis.

vi. Loeb Classical Library, *Herodotus*, 7.35.

vii. Iain M. Duguid, *Esther & Ruth*, 12. By the way, I believe Duguid's commentary is the best there is on Esther; in fact, it may be the best commentary I have ever read on any book of the Bible. His insight into the story, as well as his application is brilliant, and I am highly indebted to him for the perspective I have taken in this series.

viii. I am indebted to Duguid for this insight. See his commentary, 11-13.

ix. See Duguid, 15-16.