

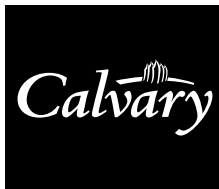
THE VERDICT TEACHING SERIES

The Book of

Esther

GOD'S INVISIBLE HAND

THE VERDICT
WITH PASTOR JOHN H. MUNRO



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THE VERDICT

WITH PASTOR JOHN H. MUNRO

Thank you for listening to The Verdict

We hope you find this listening guide helpful as you follow along with Pastor John Munro in his teaching series and continue your study in God's Word.

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I AM EXCITED FOR US TO EMBARK on a study of one of the most unusual books of the Bible — the book of Esther. It is one of only two books in the Bible named after a woman. Yet it may be best known for the interesting fact that there is no mention of God in the entire book.

Why is this? We will discover that the unique theme of the book of Esther is “God’s Invisible Hand.” Although God’s hand is often invisible, He is always in control, working out His plan. His hand may be hidden, but His people are never forgotten!

Often we fail to discern God’s hand at work. Sometimes it seems that God is in hiding, distant, or unloving. But as we study the book of Esther, we will be reminded of the faithfulness of God, the love of God, and the sovereignty of God as He accomplishes His purposes.

I pray you will be strengthened and encouraged as we study this fascinating book together.

Remember, the verdict is yours!

Warmly in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Pastor John H. Munro

MESSAGE 1

God's Invisible Hand

Esther 1

On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded... the seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus, to bring Queen Vashti before the king with her royal crown, in order to show the peoples and the princes her beauty, for she was lovely to look at. But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command delivered by the eunuchs. At this the king became enraged, and his anger burned within him. — Esther 1:10–12

THE BOOK OF ESTHER IS A REAL-LIFE DRAMA with real people in real situations, but there is no mention of the name of God. Yet we are going to see God's invisible hand at work.

A king's pride (v. 1–9)

- We see the historical setting (v. 1–2).
- Ahasuerus is in his power and glory (v. 3–9).

A king's intemperance (v. 10–12)

- At the height of the party, the king commands his eunuchs to bring in Queen Vashti.

A king's vengeance (v. 13–22)

- The powerful king doesn't know what to do (v. 13–15).
- A law of vengeance is passed (v. 16–22).

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

Where do the events of the book of Esther take place? Why are the Jews not in Israel?

What does King Ahasuerus command of his queen? Why is this request unusual?

What is the king's reaction? What does the new law say?



THE VERDICT IS YOURS

How do you react when you make a mistake? Do you respond humbly, or do you see the consequences of pride in your life and the lives of others?

Do you believe in luck and coincidence? Or do you see God's hand in the events of your life?

MESSAGE 2

The Beauty Pageant

Esther 2

⋮ *And when Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign,¹⁷ the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she won grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. — Esther 2:16–17*

KING AHASUERUS HAS REMOVED HIS QUEEN, and we begin to see how God's invisible hand is working to take care of His people in Persia.

- The beauty pageant is announced (v. 1–4).
- Mordecai and Esther are introduced (v. 5–7).
- Esther enters the beauty pageant (v. 8–11).
- The rules of the beauty pageant are clearly outlined (v. 12–14).
- The long-awaited night arrives for Esther (v. 15–16).
- Esther becomes queen (v. 17–20).
- Mordecai uncovers a plot (v. 21–23).

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

How are Mordecai and Esther related? Given their situation, what are some of the facts and implications about the Jews living in Persia?

What do we know about Esther and how she interacts with others, including Mordecai, Shaashgaz, and the king?

What are some of the questions we have about Esther? What doesn't the text mention?



THE VERDICT IS YOURS

How are you seen by "outsiders" and those in the community? Are you a person of grace?

Do you get frustrated by what you observe or experience in life? Or do you trust that God is at work? Do you realize that God is way ahead of you?

MESSAGE 3

Satan Hates the Jews

Esther 3

⋮ *And when Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage to him, Haman was filled with*
⋮ *fury. ⁶ But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone. So, as they had made known to him the people*
⋮ *of Mordecai, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, throughout the whole*
⋮ *kingdom of Ahasuerus. — Esther 3:5–6*

THERE IS AN ONGOING BATTLE between right and wrong, between good and evil, between God and Satan. Yet despite the opposition, conflict, and persecutions, God always takes care of His people.

Haman's promotion (v. 1–5)

- Haman is elevated (v. 1).
- Haman is provoked (v. 2–5).

Haman's plan (v. 6–15)

- Haman's plot (v. 6–9)
- The king's proclamation (v. 10–15)

Haman is an agent of Satan seeking to thwart the purposes of God. Throughout history, Satan repeatedly tried to block God's plan of salvation, and he hates and persecutes God's chosen people. But God is always faithful to watch over His people.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

Why are Mordecai and Haman enemies?

How does Haman's plan continue — and foreshadow — Satan's past and future persecution of the Jews?

Why should the Abrahamic Covenant encourage us when we consider the persecution of the people of God?



THE VERDICT IS YOURS

Do you feel the hostility of the world against the Word and ways of God? Do you struggle with temptations or feel personally attacked? Do you ever get discouraged? Read Psalm 121.



Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills.

From where does my help come?

My help comes from the Lord,

who made heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot be moved;

he who keeps you will not slumber.

Behold, he who keeps Israel

will neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord is your keeper;

the Lord is your shade on your right hand.

The sun shall not strike you by day,

nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from all evil;

he will keep your life.

The Lord will keep

your going out and your coming in

from this time forth and forevermore.

MESSAGE 4

For Such a Time

Esther 4

⋮ *“For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you
⋮ and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such
⋮ a time as this?” — Esther 4:14*

IN ALL OF OUR LIVES, there are defining moments. These moments reveal our character, priorities, values, and faith. We must be ready to do the right thing and leave the consequences to God.

Mordecai’s response (v. 1–3)

- Mordecai puts on sackcloth and ashes.

Esther’s first response (v. 4–12)

- Esther is informed (v. 4–9).
- Esther answers (v. 10–12).

Esther’s second response (v. 13–17)

- Mordecai tells Esther that this may be her defining moment (v. 13–14).
- Esther replies (v. 15–17).

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

How do Esther's reactions change after Mordecai's first and second messages? What does her final answer indicate?

How does Mordecai demonstrate his knowledge of the promises of God and his faith in God's ultimate sovereignty and salvation?

What is the court protocol for seeing the king? Why is it important?

What is the significance of Esther's instruction to Mordecai for preparation?



THE VERDICT IS YOURS

Have you experienced any defining moments in your life? How have you responded?

Do you feel prepared to take a stand if the Lord presents an opportunity? What are some of the obstacles?

Does it give you courage to think that you can trust the consequences to our all-powerful God?

MESSAGE 5

Life's Defining Moments

Esther 5

... And when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she won favor in his sight, and he held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter.³ And the king said to her, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given you, even to the half of my kingdom." — Esther 5:2–3

GOD IS ALWAYS IN CONTROL, but this does not mean we relax and do nothing.

Esther's request (v. 1–8)

- Esther's audience (v. 1–2)
- Esther's petitions (v. 3–8)

Haman's reactions (v. 9–14)

- Haman is full of joy and pride.
- Haman is full of anger and hate.

[SPIRITUAL LESSONS]

In life's defining moments...

- 1) Take a stand for God.
- 2) Pray to God for guidance and wisdom.
- 3) Trust God for the impossible.
- 4) Humble yourself before God.
- 5) Obey God, and He will give you confidence and courage.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

Why does Esther not present her request to the king in the throne room? How does her approach show restraint and trust in God?

How do the preparations of Esther contrast with the plans and responses of Haman?



THE VERDICT IS YOURS

How have you responded in the defining moments of your life? Have you relied on God? Or is your instinct to do things your way?

Do you wait for God's perfect timing? Or do you find yourself rushing ahead?



*Behold, he who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.*

PSALM 121:4

MESSAGE 6

The Gallows

Esther 6 & 7

On that night the king could not sleep. And he gave orders to bring the book of memorable deeds, the chronicles, and they were read before the king. ² And it was found written how Mordecai had told about... two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, and who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. ³ And the king said, "What honor or distinction has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" The king's young men who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him." — Esther 6:1–3

WE WANT TO SEE EVERYTHING, understand everything, and instantly resolve our problems. But God's ways are not our ways, and we must trust Him.

- Ahasuerus' insomnia (v. 6:1–3)
- Haman's pride (v. 6:4–9)
- Haman's humiliation (v. 6:10–14)
- Esther's petition (v. 7:1–6)
- Ahasuerus' decision (v. 7:7–9)
- Haman's death (v. 7:10)

[SPIRITUAL LESSONS]

God is always at work...

- 1) God is at work in the silences and hopeless situations of life.
- 2) God often works through the seemingly insignificant, trivial events and circumstances of life.
- 3) God is always faithful to His promises.
- 4) Kill sin, or it will kill you.
- 5) The cross of Jesus Christ is the greatest victory of all.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

How do the king's insomnia and the following events show how God's timing is perfect?

How does Haman's pride set him up for humiliation and ultimately death?

How is the cross the ultimate example of a reversal of fortune?



THE VERDICT IS YOURS

Do you know you are on the victory side? Have you turned from sin to Christ? From the condemnation of death to eternal life?

Looking back, how have you seen God at work in the circumstances of your life?

MESSAGE 7

A Brilliant Reversal

Esther 8

Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows, because he intended to lay hands on the Jews.⁸ But you may write as you please with regard to the Jews, in the name of the king, and seal it with the king's ring, for an edict written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's ring cannot be revoked." — Esther 8:7–8

IN HIS GOODNESS AND GRACE, God specializes in dramatic reversals as seen in Esther's story — and the most glorious example, the cross of Christ!

A reversal in power (v. 1–2)

- Mordecai is rewarded with Haman's property and position.
- Don't put your trust in riches or worldly power.

A reversal in law (v. 3–14)

- Esther's request (v. 3–6)
- The king's decree (v. 7–14)
- This was God's vindication of His people rather than His people being vengeful.

A reversal in emotions (v. 15–17)

- Gloom is turned to joy and celebration.

- 1) Our God is able, and He always takes care of His people.
- 2) Today we are in a spiritual battle. Be burdened for others, as Esther was for her people. Share the good news of the Gospel, as the couriers did of the Jewish deliverance. And celebrate with joy, gladness, and thanksgiving!
- 3) Just as the Jews were under sentence of death, so is every human being. But God gives a brilliant counter-decree of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 4) How is the cross the ultimate example of a reversal of fortune?

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

Do you understand how Haman is a serious warning against our pride — trusting in ourselves and the things of this world?

How do we see that Esther is personally invested in saving her people?

Why was the decree of self-defense necessary for the Jews?



THE VERDICT IS YOURS

Are you tempted to take unjust situations into your own hands? If God can bring down Haman, will you let him deal with the difficult, hurtful, and evil situations in your life?

Is there a situation in your life that you have regarded as hopeless? Do you see that God can do the impossible and reverse the irreversible?



*Who knows whether you have
not come to the kingdom
for such a time as this?*

ESTHER 4:14

MESSAGE 8

Celebration and Remembrance

Esther 9

... *And Mordecai recorded these things and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far,²¹ obliging them to keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar and also the fifteenth day of the same, year by year,²² as the days on which the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month that had been turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday... — Esther 9:20–22*

TIMES OF CELEBRATION AND REMEMBRANCE — such as the Feast of Purim and the ordinance of communion — help us remember and give thanks to the Lord in a meaningful way.

The enemies of the Jews are defeated (v. 1–19).

- In self-defense, the Jews slay their enemies (v. 1–11).
- The king grants another day for the Jews' enemies to be destroyed (v. 12–19).

The Feast of Purim is instituted (v. 20–32).

- Mordecai's proclamation
- The practice of Purim

Like the Jews celebrating Purim, we as followers of Jesus Christ should celebrate the ultimate victory He accomplished over Satan, darkness, death, and hell at the Lord's Table (communion).

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

Why is the traditional Jewish celebration of the deliverance from Persian persecution called the Feast of Purim?

Why are the book of Esther and the Feast of Purim important symbols for God's people?

How is Purim a precursor of the remembrance we celebrate through communion? Why is it even more significant?



THE VERDICT IS YOURS

Do you take time to reflect and celebrate the Lord's work in your life?

Are you able to celebrate our Lord Jesus as your personal deliverance from sin and death?

MESSAGE 9

Absent but Always Present

Esther 10

⋮ *For Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Ahasuerus, and he was great among the Jews and popular with the multitude of his brothers, for he sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all his people. — Esther 10:3*

THOUGH WE ARE LEFT WITH AMBIGUITIES and questions in the book of Esther, God is clearly at work.

When God seems absent, He is always present and always cares for His people.

- God seems absent in the story of Esther.
- God's hand may be hidden, but His people are never forgotten.

When life seems chaotic, God is always in control.

- Life was chaotic and confused for the Jews.
- When your life is chaotic and confusing, remember that God is always in control.

When the gallows seem to face us, God is always working for our good.

- The Jews were facing certain death.
- God works for our good amid the gallows of our life.

Because God is always with us, always caring for us, always in control, we are to trust Him with all of our heart. That is the essence of faith.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

Despite there being no mention of His name, how is God's work evident through Esther?

What are some of the promises of God we can claim as followers of Christ that demonstrate God's faithfulness?

How is God in the business of reversals for the good of His people?



THE VERDICT IS YOURS

As we complete the study of the book of Esther, what is your personal response? Have you trusted Jesus Christ for salvation? Are you trusting God daily to work in your life — even when you have no idea how things will work out?

Do you live each day aware that God has placed you in your particular situation? Do you look for opportunities to live for Him?

Do you know Jesus Christ?

WITHOUT OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, the unique and perfect Son of God, we cannot have a personal relationship with the living God. Without Jesus, we are without purpose, without hope, without joy, and without peace. His great love compelled Him to die for your sins in God's plan of salvation. His resurrection conquered fear and death!

PLACE YOUR FAITH IN JESUS

Jesus is the only One who can save you and transform your life. Turn from your sins and place your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Experience the living hope and personal security that come from knowing Him.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." — John 3:16

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." — John 8:12

"Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved." — Romans 10:9–10

"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand." — John 10:28

DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS

Would you like to talk with a pastor or have someone pray with you or for you?

Contact us at theverdict@calvarychurch.com.

THE VERDICT

WITH PASTOR JOHN H. MUNRO

"Where the Gospel is preached, the lives of men and women and boys and girls are transformed. Through His death and resurrection, Christ gives us peace with God, present power for living, and future hope for eternal life." — PASTOR JOHN H. MUNRO



The Verdict is a daily radio program featuring the expository Bible teaching of Pastor John Munro.

Born and raised in Scotland, John graduated from the University of Edinburgh and practiced law in Scotland before God called him to full-time ministry. He and his wife, Gudny, moved to Texas, where he attended Dallas Theological Seminary.

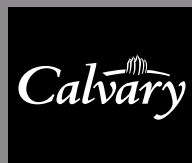
For more than 30 years, John has dedicated his life to pastoral ministry, preaching and teaching the Word of God. He has served as Senior Pastor in Kalamazoo, MI, Pittsburgh, PA, and Halifax, Nova Scotia. Since February 2006, he has served as Senior Pastor at Calvary Church in Charlotte, NC.

Each day on The Verdict, listeners are challenged to turn to the Bible and render a "verdict" as they consider their personal response to the truth of God's Word. John Munro presents a clear examination of Scripture, offering insight and application for all backgrounds, from those unfamiliar with the Gospel to mature believers following Christ.

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*The Verdict is a media ministry of Calvary Church in Charlotte, North Carolina.
At Calvary, our mission is to be and make authentic followers of Jesus Christ.*

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FOR THE WORD OF GOD AND FOR THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST

REVELATION 1:9