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God Rules over All

Sing: Ps. 27:1,6; Ps. 77:1,3,5

“What’s the world coming to!”

That’s a phrase we hear a lot, and sometimes we may even wonder ourselves. Canada may have been Christian in the past, but is rejecting the Word of God with a vengeance. Our secular government seems to have one main concern: ridding our society of every trace of the Christian religion. Sin is legalized and almost every perversion is welcomed as an expression of the riches of the human spirit. The only crime seems to be when a person stands up for God and his commandments. We are still allowed to practice our religion privately, but the moment we enter the public square we are not only ignored but incur the wrath and discrimination of a society that has become thoroughly pagan.

When we add to that our own weaknesses and inclination to sin, it doesn’t take much to lose courage and wonder what the future will be like. Will Christ’s church still be around twenty years from now? Will we and our children drown in the tidal wave that’s flooding our world? A tidal wave where personal fulfillment and unrestrained freedom are key; where God’s kingship is mocked and dismissed and the religion of humanism is embraced? We haven’t even mentioned our personal struggles and concerns, like sickness (sometimes terminal), loneliness, sadness because of sin, and worries about making ends meet. We may ask: Where is God? Doesn’t he know about our fears? Isn’t he aware of our weaknesses? How can we go on? How can we live in peace and quiet surrender in a world where it looks as if God is absent?

We are not the first and certainly not the only ones who struggle with these matters. Already 2500 years ago God's children faced a similar scenario. That's why the Lord gave us the book of Esther.

What comfort can this part of God's Word provide? His name is not even mentioned! We don't read of anyone who lives a godly life and reveals a deep love of the Lord. On the contrary, we read of sin and naked power, of sensuality and royal court intrigues. We also hear of courage and heroism, of a willingness to lay down one's life and comfort for the wellbeing of one's countrymen. But without God, the question persists: What can we learn from this part of God's holy Word and how can it encourage us in a world which becomes more pagan by the day?

God's apparent absence is precisely what provides us with the comfort we need so badly. It's because everything in this book is so human and horizontal that we are forced to wonder why the Lord included it in the canon of Holy Scripture. The book of Esther proclaims that God rules, even though it may not look like it. Esther reveals that right through all human activities the Lord is in full control and watches over his people. It is God's providential care that carries the day. It's his covenant faithfulness that shines through. We need only to read this book with the eyes of faith! God's government and man's responsibility are not two separate entities which have nothing to do with each other. They are interwoven and, though it goes far above our understanding, even sin must serve redemptive history. There is a church to be gathered, defended and preserved.

Both in Esther's time and today we, God's people, remain weak and can't deny the growing enmity against the Lord and his church. It often looks as if the devil is in charge and sin will win out. Satan tries to smother the church of Christ to death. He does this not only by persecution but even more by luring us away from the certainty of God's promises and by enticing us with every imaginable temptation -- power, luxury, sensuality, easy-goingness, compromise, etc. We're living in a world where God seems absent. It only seems so, however. Just as in the past, God fulfills his counsel and we must live by faith. He is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. He watches over his people and we can trust him, even when it looks as if we are fighting a lost cause. Christ did not shed his blood in vain. He purchased a people to live with and for God, to sing of his love and grace and to praise him forever!

greatest victory imaginable. For there our sins were nailed to the cross and there Christ purchased everlasting life for his church.

When our glorified Saviour ascended into heaven, to sit on the throne of the universe he said to his church “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me... And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18,20) Did you read that? I am with you! With all of my authority and power, I am with you, to comfort and strengthen you! That Saviour now rules on his Father’s behalf, always and in every situation, so that you and I can walk by faith and not by sight!

Questions

Introduction

1. How can a Bible book that doesn’t mention God teach us about him?
2. What other Bible book does not mention God? How do these books compare in how they direct us to God?
3. The events in Esther occur at approximately the same time as what other Bible books?

The Evils of a World Without God

4. God’s anger at his people was over; they could return from exile. Why had many stayed in foreign lands? What was happening at this time in the land of Israel? Why was it so important for the people to return? Did the location from which God was served matter?
5. Why does Esther 1 describe the decorations at the week-long banquet in such detail?
6. The king’s advisors indicate their concern that if Vashti is allowed to disobey, then the other women would feel free to disobey their husbands as well. Did the advisors have a legitimate concern that a celebrity, such as the queen, could change the behaviour of an entire nation? Do we see this in society today? Do we have “church celebrities” that influence what we believe and how we worship?
7. What does it mean to live in a “nihilistic society”? Do we live in one?
8. We no longer have absolute tyrants; instead we have political correctness. How are these two still very much the same?
9. Many believers fear the evil the future will bring. Can we identify with those fears? What texts would you use to confront those fears?