

## Insider out, Outsider in!

Jim Williams

Editor's Note: We all have thoughts – some good - some bad, but nonetheless they are thoughts. Our thoughts should be reflected upon and dealt with biblically (Rom. 12:1-3; Gal. 6:3; Phil. 3:12-17; Phil. 4:8-9; 2 Pet. 3:1, etc.). 'Just Thinkin Out Loud' (spelling of 'thinkin' is purposeful) is a series of thoughts that are being made public. You may or may not agree with all of the thoughts you read in this series, but it will help all of us to discuss them – out loud. The hope of the author and editors at IIMM is that this will assist all of us to begin personal reflection upon our own thoughts and compare them with God's perspective in Holy Scripture. Readers are encouraged to use small discussion groups and/or our RPM forum for any irenic discussion(s) of these specific thoughts and others they may bring about.

Ruth and Esther stand out as the only two women mentioned in Scripture who have books named after them. They came from different backgrounds, but both ended up in the same kind of acclaim. They both preferred an identification that could have been discarded, but one that made a difference for others as well as themselves.

Esther was one whose compassion for her own people led to their survival in the midst of an alien people. Esther's king wanted his wife to perform a dance that she deemed beneath her dignity. She refused and lost her position as queen. A search was started for a replacement. Esther was eventually chosen, and made the new queen. Now Esther had an uncle who made it clear that she was who she was, and where she was in order to save her race from extinction. She was a Jewish maiden married to a gentile king who had been beseeched to destroy her people. Reading the book of Esther really shows a Divine Hand upending the best laid plans of mice and men, as they say. Esther was the insider who went out and saved her people by being among aliens and doing what she only could have done being out.

Ruth was a young gentile widow, by contrast, whose loyalty is oft quoted in wedding vows and other indications of loyalty and love. "Wherever you lodge, I will lodge, wherever you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God." Here was a gentile, an outsider, wanting in, simply because she preferred to be a comfort to her husband's mother. She had seen this woman lose her family. It was this compassion for another that put her among people of another culture. Because of this remarkable love she was sought out and found by her second husband, and became a part of the lineage of Christ Himself. She was the outsider who came in.

The king's heart is as a rudder for God to steer, Scripture says. The hearts of two women were also made a means of saving and steering the Children of God toward His appointed purposes. One woman's heart became part of the path to a Messiah to reconcile God to His chosen people. The heart of the other kept His people alive by avoiding a king's edict of death for them.

History is His Story. The flips and flops of the hand of man are always subject to the steady and sovereign Hand of God.

Tell me what you think, I'm just thinking out loud!

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