

Survey of the Bible part 72 **Esther 7:1-5**

Last week we saw how Haman was on his way to the banquet that Esther had prepared for him and the king. And, as part of this celebration, Haman is ready to get the king's blessing to hang Mordecai.

But instead, the king, because of a sleepless night, had the book of records read to him and discovered that Mordecai had not been fully appreciated for saving his life and so the king plans to honor him the next day.

As Haman comes into the palace he is summoned to the king to get his input on how to honor someone who is worthy of special attention, and Haman thinking it is him begins to lay out how this should be done.

Esther 6:7-9 ⁷ Then Haman said to the king, "For the man whom the king desires to honor, ⁸ let them bring a royal robe which the king has worn, and the horse on which the king has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown has been placed; ⁹ and let the robe and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble princes and let them array the man whom the king desires to honor and lead him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him, "Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor."

But the next words out of the king's mouth are not what Haman expected to hear.

Esther 6:10 ¹⁰ Then the king said to Haman, "Take quickly the robes and the horse as you have said, and do so for Mordecai the Jew, who is sitting at the king's gate; do not fall short in anything of all that you have said."

Of course, Haman has no choice and so he does as instructed.

But then he goes home to share with his wife and friends what had happened and he is now in full panic mode as he should be, even as his wife points out.

Esther 6:13 - 14 ¹³ Haman recounted to Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him. Then his wise men and Zeresh his wife said to him, "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish origin, you will not overcome him, but will surely fall before him." ¹⁴ While they were still

talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hastily brought Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared.

Imagine the last words from his wife and friends as he now is hastily taken to the banquet; 'you're going down.'

Now, let's keep in mind the context.

Why did Esther originally approach the king two days prior?

To discuss Haman's plan for the extermination of all Jews across the kingdom.

And, what was Haman's intent of coming to the king prior to the banquet?

To get the king's blessing to hang Mordecai.

And whom is the king in the process of blessing with royal robes and horses?

Mordecai.

And does the king know that Mordecai is a Jew?

Esther 6:10 ¹⁰ Then the king said to Haman, "Take quickly the robes and the horse as you have said, and do so for Mordecai the Jew,

This is not going well for Haman, but it will get worse.

One of the things we discussed last week was the plan that Esther had put in place that seemed genius as she is apparently manipulating her desired outcome. But this is not about Esther, or Mordecai or Haman or the king.

This is about God who is moving forward with His plan to accomplish His will for His people. And nothing will thwart it.

Isaiah 46:10-13 ¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'; ¹¹ Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned *it, surely* I will do it. ¹² "Listen to Me, you stubborn-minded, Who are far from righteousness. ¹³ "I bring near My righteousness, it is not far off; And My salvation will not delay. And I will grant salvation in Zion, *And* My glory for Israel.

One of the things that we have discussed is that when we speak of Israel the nation during O.T. times we are talking about a called out people who represent God. In fact, the name Israel means, governed by God, and the implication is that they have been called out to follow Him and represent Him faithfully in this world.

But what do we know about the history of Israel the nation?

They continually rebel against the God who called them out and thus they were judged by God on numerous occasions.

In fact, what is the setting for the book of Esther?

God's called out people living in exile under the authority of the king of Babylon.

But when we talk about Israel in the O.T. we are actually speaking of God's people of all ages because the nation of Israel was always meant to represent the remnant of God's people, not just the physical seed of Abraham.

Romans 9:6-8 ⁶ But *it is* not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel; ⁷ nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED." ⁸ That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.

In our Sunday school class at the church we're going to in Sarasota we are studying through the book of Hosea. And listen to how God views Israel.

Hosea 1:8-10 ⁸ When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and gave birth to a son. ⁹ And the LORD said, "Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not My people and I am not your God." ¹⁰ Yet the number of the sons of Israel Will be like the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered; And in the place Where it is said to them, "You are not My people," It will be said to them, "*You are* the sons of the living God."

How is it possible for God to say to Israel, you are not My people and I am not your God in one sentence, and in the very next sentence He says, you are the sons of the living God?

Because He's speaking of two Israel's, just as Paul was speaking of two Israel's.

“For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel; ⁷ nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED." ⁸ That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.”

Out of the physical descendants of Abraham are the true seed of Abraham, those of the same faith as Abraham. And so, when we see God dealing with the Jews in Babylon during the time of Esther we are seeing God protecting His people from the hand of the enemy, but it is the remnant who are ultimately saved, and no amount of the enemy's hatred will be able to thwart God's plan for His people.

And so, as we come back to our text, we see God orchestrating all of the events that will lead up to their deliverance as He uses people like Mordecai and Esther in the process.

So, all of the players are now together at the banquet that Esther has prepared. And, just as the day before, the king asks Esther what he can do for her.

Esther 7:1-2 ^{NAU} Now the king and Haman came to drink *wine* with Esther the queen. ² And the king said to Esther on the second day also as they drank their wine at the banquet, "What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be done."

At this point the king is committed. Whatever the queen requests he is willing to fulfill. His reputation is now on the line. And Esther lays it out.

Esther 7:3-4 ³ Then Queen Esther replied, "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me as my petition, and my people as my request; ⁴ for we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed and to be annihilated. Now if we had only been sold as slaves, men and women, I would have remained silent, for the trouble would not be commensurate with the annoyance to the king."

The first thing Esther requests is what according to the end of verse 3?

She begs for her life.

Now you can imagine the look on the king's face when she says this because in his mind there is no way anyone in the kingdom would be able to come against her. But keep in mind she is not asking the king for protection from some outside force.

The reason she is directly asking the king for her life is because her life is in the hands of the king who has approved the killing of an entire group of people that she is about to identify. Let's go back to that passage.

Esther 3:8-13 ⁸ Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from *those* of all *other* people and they do not observe the king's laws, so it is not in the king's interest to let them remain. ⁹ "If it is pleasing to the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who carry on the *king's* business, to put into the king's treasuries." ¹⁰ Then the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. ¹¹ The king said to Haman, "The silver is yours, and the people *also*, to do with them as you please." ¹² Then the king's scribes were summoned on the thirteenth day of the first month, and it was written just as Haman commanded to the king's satraps, to the governors who were over each province and to the princes of each people, each province according to its script, each people according to its language, being written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king's signet ring. ¹³ Letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces to destroy, to kill and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to seize their possessions as plunder.

Now, my first question is, did the king not bother to ask who these certain people were?

Haman is not asking some small thing here. He is asking for a decree from the king to destroy a certain people. You would think you might like to know who you are destroying.

But the king doesn't give it a second thought. In fact, he must trust Haman enough to give him everything he needs to destroy such a people and the official decree reads, "to destroy, to kill and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, women and children,

in one day, the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to seize their possessions as plunder.”

If the king didn't know what group of people were to be annihilated prior to this point it has now been made clear what group is being addressed, which begs the question, why did the king desire to honor Mordecai, the Jew?

We can speculate that the king is so detached from the on-goings of his kingdom that he leaves it to people such as Haman do deal with such things and that it simply escaped his mind that he had sanctioned the killing of all Jews.

I think a better explanation is that because God is moving forward with His plan for Israel He has allowed the events to play out as He desires.

In any event the king is going to be reminded of that decree as Esther continues her request that he has promised to fulfill.

Esther 7:4 ⁴ for we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed and to be annihilated.

Notice the language Esther uses here. Where did we see this language before, “to be destroyed, to be killed and to be annihilated?”

She's quoting the edict which the king signed and literally put his stamp of approval on.

But notice what group she now identifies herself with. She doesn't mention that she is a Jew, only that whatever group is on the receiving end of this edict that the king has sanctioned to be destroyed, is the same group that she belongs to and thus by law she must be put to death.

But I love the way Esther frames the issue here as she addresses the king.

Esther 7:4 Now if we had only been sold as slaves, men and women, I would have remained silent, for the trouble would not be commensurate with the annoyance to the king."

Esther is basically saying, that if slavery were the only thing that I and my people had to suffer we could deal with that, since we've been slaves for many years now. We can deal with slavery and I would never dream of annoying you with such a trivial matter. But with this annihilation thing, it was hard for me not to speak up.

Now, obviously the king would not have tolerated his queen being put into slavery, but she is trying to be as humble as possible so as not to give the impression that she is being too forceful in her request.

Now, whether or not the king knew that this group to be destroyed was the Jewish people in his kingdom, he becomes incensed that his queen would be subject to this law which put her at risk.

Esther 7:5 ⁵ Then King Ahasuerus asked Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who would presume to do thus?"

Now at this point you can imagine what is going through Haman's mind. But this whole process is remarkable in that Esther doesn't have to make a case for her and her people by trying to convince the king to be merciful to them.

Again keep in mind that at the very beginning of this book we are told that the king chose Esther above all the other virgins to take Queen Vashti's place.

Esther 2:17-18 ¹⁷ The king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found favor and kindness with him more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. ¹⁸ Then the king gave a great banquet, Esther's banquet, for all his princes and his servants; he also made a holiday for the provinces and gave gifts according to the king's bounty.

Here is the beauty of God moving the heart of the King as He placed Esther in a unique position.

Consider this. If Esther were not a Jew and she was making an appeal to the king for the lives of the Jews would he necessarily be inclined to show mercy?

No. Of course that doesn't mean that God would not over-ride the king's intentions, but all of this in the book of Esther is designed to show how God moves His people into positions to serve Him for His purposes to His glory.

Wherever we are in life God is still directing and moving so as to show forth His grace and mercy and to magnify Himself through us in the process.

God can use us whether we're at work, caring for our children, or just dealing with neighbors or friends and family, God is in the

middle as He is prompting and sometimes over-riding our desires to accomplish what He desires.

A classic example of this is found in the book of Acts as Paul is desiring to take the gospel into Asia.

Acts 16:5-10 ⁵ So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily. ⁶ They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; ⁷ and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; ⁸ and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. ⁹ A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰ When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Was it sinful for Paul to take the gospel into Asia?

Absolutely not. It just wasn't in God's timing for Paul. God had other plans for him. But the point is that Paul was willing to go wherever God lead, and we need to be willing as well as God opens doors. And one door that God seems to be opening is an opportunity to get out into a community in Sarasota with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And whenever God opens doors God accomplishes His will with the desired results. We just need to be willing to follow and watch Him work.

God has His people everywhere and those who need to hear the gospel are those whom God will put His people in touch with, with the express purpose of allowing them to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Romans 1:16 ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

The power of God is in the message of God through the Holy Spirit of God who regenerates hearts and allows people's eyes to be opened and to see their need for a Savior from their sin, and who then in turn are given the faith to embrace their Savior, Jesus Christ.

You and I are given an opportunity to be used by the hand of God in this way and many other ways, but however God uses us it is for our good and His glory.