



# Esther

## *A Verse-By-Verse Study*

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## ESTHER 1:1-12 (NAUGHTY VASHTI A PARTY GONE BAD)

*\*To watch the video of this study, select from the following: [YouTube](#) or [Sermon Audio](#)*

The book of Esther. Not having decided on what book we should do before returning to the Pentateuch, I asked my (our) friends Sergio and Rhoda to help me out. They never really gave me an answer until I had to know. Quite lazy of them I'm sure...

Friday before sermon typing is when I do the advanced work, such as typing poems and other non-sermon typing work. But one cannot type a poem for a book that they have not decided on. So I asked them that week. Sergio said, Esther; I wanted to do Song of Solomon. One had to give. Esther comes before the Song of Solomon, so at least they will have been done in the right order by choosing Esther. And so, I present to you the book of Esther.

Esther is the 17<sup>th</sup> of the 66 books in the Christian Bible. It thus corresponds to Malachi, the 39<sup>th</sup> book, and 2 Peter, the 61<sup>st</sup> book when the Bible is divided into three sets of 22 each. It is a part of the Old Testament known as the *Ketuvim*, or writings. The three major divisions are the *Torah*, meaning the five books of Moses, the *Neviim*, or the Prophets, and the *Ketuvim*, or the writings.

Esther is comprised of ten chapters and totals 167 verses.

Esther is also one of the five *megillah* scrolls. That comes from the word *galal* meaning "to roll," and thus it is a story which is a detailed, or embroidered account; it rolls along. The five *megillot* are the Song of Songs, read each year at the Passover; Ruth, read each year at Shavuot; Lamentations, read each year on the mournful day of the Ninth of the month of Av; Ecclesiastes, read each year at Sukkoth; and Esther, which is read each year at Purim.

Esther was the last book of the Old Testament to have been canonized by the Jews, but it was canonized, and it was done so rightly. It is an important part of the canon of Scripture and also of Jewish history.

The writing of Esther dates to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, and the exact year will be given for the occurrences which it records. It is not sure who wrote the book, but it was probably not Mordecai, a main character of the story. The author distances himself from the person of Mordecai. However, several of the gospel writers do this as well, so it is not impossible that he authored it.

The purpose of the book is almost always cited as to bring to remembrance the people and events which brought about the feast of Purim for the Jews. Thus, it would be an anchor back to their history, and how they have remained a unified people.

A second, less-cited reason, but one which is made, is to show the conflict between the people of Israel and the Amalekites. This is certainly a highlight of the book – warring against and gaining victory over the enemies of the people. This will be explained when the main antagonist of the story, Haman, is introduced.

However, neither of these reasons is at all sufficient to describe the main purpose of the book. The book, and indeed all of the Bible, is not about the Jewish people. They are a main part of the subject matter, but the Bible is about the Lord – the Creator, the Sovereign, the Sustainer, the Protector of His people, the One who may not even be seen or acknowledged, and yet the One who is still there, working behind the scenes, to effect His purposes in redemptive history. In particular, the purpose of bringing to fruition His promise of a Redeemer – the true Subject of all of Scripture.

The people of Israel were the people through whom He would come, and therefore it was necessary to keep them as a people in order for Him to arrive. Further, promises were made to them that they would always be kept as a people, even after the arrival of the Messiah, and therefore, Esther shows the faithfulness of God to the stiff-necked and unfaithful group of people He had covenanted with.

**Text Verse:** *“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went.”<sup>23</sup> And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord,” says the Lord God, “when I am hallowed in you before their eyes.” Ezekiel 36:22, 23*

It is kind of a depressing text verse for a sermon to start with, but it is the reality of what occurs in Esther. Ezekiel was specifically speaking about the second return from exile, meaning Israel’s return to the land in modern times. But the premise holds true for both exiles. Leviticus 26 explained what the Lord would do to the people if they failed to honor and obey Him. He did as He promised, especially the promise of exile.

It is the greatest tragedy of all of the curses for the Jewish people. They became a people without a land and without their God openly evident in their lives. The events in

Esther actually occur after the return of the people to the land of Israel, but many Jews remained dispersed in the foreign lands willingly.

And so it is with the book of Esther that the Lord is not at all openly evident. He is never explicitly mentioned – as God or Lord. Other than fasting, which may not even have been to Him, there is no mention of prayer, worship, or sacrifice in the entire book. The people have all but left Him, and He has supposedly all but left them. And yet, the outcome of the book shows that to not be so.

Either extreme chance and happenstance directed the affairs, or the Lord was there, working behind the scenes to ensure things would come out as He covenanted with Israel. The truth of which is correct is obvious when searching the details of the book.

Deuteronomy 31 says that in disobedience, the Lord would hide his face from the people, and that many evils would befall them. He even repeats Himself saying, “And I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they have done, in that they have turned to other gods.” To hide His face means that they would not know He was there with them any longer. And thus it is in Esther. The Lord is hidden, they are not in their homeland, and they are about to face total annihilation.

But the Lord is there. Hidden, yes, but the Lord is there. Four times in the book of Esther the divine name, Yehovah, is secreted away in acrostics. Also, the name He proclaimed to Moses on Mount Sinai – EHYH or, I AM THAT I AM – is also hidden within the text. Though He has hidden His face from Israel, He has not hidden His face from His covenant with Israel. He is there, ensuring that all will turn out as it should.

In God, there is no lack, and for Israel who has forgotten the Lord, He has not forgotten them. His promise is to the people of the world. It is a promise of redemption, and restoration which goes back the very fall of man. Without Israel, Christ would not have come. Israel must stand, and Israel will stand. From them came Messiah, and to them Messiah will return. But it is not for Israel’s sake that these things have, and will, come about, but for the sake of the Lord’s holy name. This is the overarching purpose of the book of Esther – sanctifying the holy, and yet unseen name of the Lord. It’s all to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

## I. A Feast of One Hundred and Eighty Days (verses 1-4)

### <sup>1</sup> Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus

The book of Esther begins with the words *v'hi bime Akhashverosh*, or, “And it came to pass in *the days of Ahasuerus.*” Beginning a book with the word “and” might seem a bit unusual to our ears. It is as if we are reading and come to a new book and find it is merely a continuation of the same story we have been reading all along.

And for all intents and purposes it is. God is revealing to us a single story, unfolding it in a logical sequence which may or may not be chronological, but each section fits in a fashion as orderly as if it is chronological.

This same “and” begins the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Ezekiel, and Jonah. Beginning this way is certainly intended to show us an unraveling of a thought process which had already begun elsewhere.

The name *Akhashverosh*, or as we transliterate it, Ahasuerus, is believed to come from the Persian *Khshayarsha*, signifying “mighty eye” or “mighty man.” The name here needs to be explained. The same name points to three different people in the Bible. One is found in Daniel 9:1, known as the father of Darius, and so he is identified as Cyaxares. Another is found in Ezra 4:6. He is identified as Cambyses, the son of Cyrus. The third is the person named here in Esther, believed to be Xerxes, a Greek name derived from the word *Akhashverosh*. Xerxes is believed to mean “warrior” or “hero among rulers.” Scholars do disagree on which Ahasuerus is being referred to, but Xerxes is generally accepted as correct. This is more probable because of...

<sup>1 (con't)</sup> **(this was the Ahasuerus who reigned over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces,**

There is great specificity here in order to relay several things. The first is the greatness of the area over which Ahasuerus ruled. In this, it shows the magnitude of the danger in which the Jews would find themselves as a people in the coming narrative, and then also the greatness of the exaltation of the Jews because of the role of Esther and her cousin, the man Mordecai, both of whom will be introduced as we go on. The land he controls is inclusive of the land of Israel.

And secondly, the words are given to guide us to who the true Ahasuerus is. First, it says that he ruled over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces. Daniel 6:1 says that under Darius the Mede, there were one hundred and twenty satraps in the Persian empire. That could simply be a rounding down of the exact number, or it is that the empire expanded after that time. The latter is probably correct.

The word translated as “provinces” is *medinah*. It is derived from *din*, or “to judge.” This, in turn, comes from a root meaning to sail directly, in a straight course. Thus, one is to judge without deviating from what is proper. Herodotus writes that the nations of Xerxes were sixty, and so this is referring not to nations, but subdivisions of nations divided into provinces. In total, they equal one hundred and twenty-seven. Thirdly...

### <sup>1</sup> (con't) **from India to Ethiopia),**

Here it mentions *Hodu*, or India. The Hebrew *Hodu* is formed from the Persian *Hidush*, which speaks specifically of India. It was subdued by Darius Hystaspis, the father of Xerxes, and so Xerxes was inheritor of the rule of this province.

And then, finally, it mentions *Kush* or, Ethiopia. The name goes all the way back to Genesis 2:13 as a place identified with one of the four river heads which came from the river flowing from Eden. But that is only given to identify the name which later came from Kush, the son of Ham, noted in Genesis 10:6. Eventually, the name became associated with the people derived from this line who dwell in Ethiopia. The writings of Herodotus tell us that Kush, or Ethiopia, paid tribute to Xerxes.

The specificity of this first verse of Esther has been given to us to properly identify the right person named Ahasuerus here. It is Xerxes who most exactly fits the details.

### <sup>2</sup> **in those days**

The words *ba'yamim ha'hem*, or “in days, the those,” signify a chronological explanation of the words of verse 1. Attention is being directed to this specific time of the reign of the Persian empire.

### <sup>2</sup> (con't) **when King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom,**

To sit on the throne of one's kingdom means to rule. In this case, it indicates that he is ruling with full authority over the entire kingdom just named. To sit would normally imply peace, but Persian kings sat on a throne even when they went to battle. This is

actually seen in the movie 300, where this same king fought against the 300 Spartans at Thermopylae.

At this point though, he had not only assumed the throne, but all areas under his authority would have been subdued. Otherwise, he would have sat on a throne in battle, not in the royal residence. But there he sat, on the throne of his kingdom...

<sup>2</sup> (con't) **which was in Shushan the citadel,**

The name Shushan is identical to the Hebrew word *Shushan*, meaning a lily. That, in turn, is derived from *sus*, meaning to exult or rejoice. In some Bibles, the name is translated as *Susa*, rather than *Shushan*. Aristotle apparently visited this city and called it “a wonderful royal palace, shining with gold, amber, and ivory.”

The word used to describe the citadel here is *birah*. It signifies a castle, but it probably includes the idea of a fortress. David uses the same word twice in 1 Chronicles 29 to describe the temple to be built for the Lord. The naming of the citadel Shushan then extends out to the naming of the entire city. This will be seen in Esther 3. This was the main royal palace of the Persian empire, but Ecbatana and Babylon were also residences of the Persian kings. This was Xerxes’ favorite palace, and the one he used during the winter and spring months. It was from this main royal citadel that the story now begins to come alive...

<sup>3</sup> **that in the third year of his reign**

The words here belong as a continuation of verse 1. “Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus ... that in the third year of his reign.” With the identification of Xerxes being the king during this story, we can then identify the year that this is taking place as 483BC. In fact, this has been identified as the time when he had called his leaders to make arrangements for invading Greece. It is for this most important campaign that...

<sup>3</sup> (con't) **he made a feast for all his officials and servants—**

The feasts of the Persian kings were well-documented by those who participated. Some were said to have entertained as many as 15,000 subjects. The hall where this would have occurred is said to have been big enough for thousands to attend.

Here the word feast is *mishteh*. It isn’t a feast as “a feast of the Lord” in Leviticus 23. Rather, it is a feast where banqueting takes place. It comes from the word *shatah*,

meaning “to drink.” In this case, it is speaking of a banqueting feast revolving around the drinking of wine and the like.

**<sup>3 (con't)</sup> the powers of Persia and Media, the nobles, and the princes of the provinces *being* before him—**

The kingdom is one of both Persia and Media. The Hebrew for Media is the name *Maday*, who was first noted in Genesis 10:2. He was a son of Japheth, the oldest son of Noah. Within this kingdom of the powers of Persia and Media, a large group of people have been invited to participate in the feast.

The word translated as “powers” is *khel*. It signifies an army, and thus by extension, an entrenchment. Thus, the word “powers” looks to those people entrusted to maintain and safeguard the power of the empire. It probably included the military generals, as well as the royal bodyguards, and the like.

Along with them were included the elites, and the lower rulers of nations and provinces. One group of them here are called *ha'partemim*, or “the nobles.” It is a Persian word brought into the Hebrew which literally means “first.” It may be more info than you care to know, but the word is similar to the Greek word *protos*, and the Latin word *primus*, which we are all aware of. They are etymologically similar to this Persian word as all three cultures descended from the same son of Noah, Japheth.

**<sup>4</sup> when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty**

There are a lot of superlatives used here to describe the scene – riches, glory, kingdom, splendor, excellence, majesty. Each is a noun in the Hebrew, one being heaped upon the next to show how great the scene was. One word is a new one in the Bible, *yeqar* – translated here as “splendor.” It will be used 17 times, but for the author of Esther, it is a favorite, being used 10 times in this small book. It comes from a verb meaning “precious,” and so it signifies wealth, but abstractly, it gives the sense of honor, costliness, dignity, and so on. All of this pomp was on display for, and lavished upon, the nobles of the land, and it went on and on...

**<sup>4 (con't)</sup> for many days, one hundred and eighty days *in all*.**

*yamim rabim* – “days in abundance.” As it would be unlikely that he would have all of his nobles present at one time, except maybe at an opening and closing of the feast, he

extended it so that all could come, party, enjoy, and certainly give their thoughts on the conquest of Greece. It was a party united to conduct a war-planning session. During this time, troops would have been arranged, plans would have been made, resources from the provinces would have been mandated and allocated, ships would have been prepared, and so on. All of this is in accord with Daniel's prophecy of this coming great king named Xerxes, even pinpointing the reason for such a banquet in his prophecy in Daniel 11:2 –

“And now I will tell you the truth: Behold, three more kings will arise in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than *them* all; by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece.”

*The riches of the King and of his kingdom  
Are on display for all to see  
And for those who are invited to come  
A grand banquet for them there shall be*

*Those from near, and those from far away  
All who are invited are instructed to come  
The banquet is set, and it is a marvelous day  
As arrive the subjects of the kingdom*

*To stand in the presence of the King!  
What a thing to believe; what a thing to see  
An honor that truly makes the heart sing  
Yes, a grand banquet for the people there shall be*

## **II. A Feast of Seven Days (verses 5-9)**

**<sup>5</sup>And when these days were completed, the king made a feast lasting seven days for all the people who were present in Shushan the citadel, from great to small, in the court of the garden of the king's palace.**

After the one hundred and eighty days of feasting for the nobles, a feasting which was intended to prepare for the coming war with Greece, a larger feast of a week's duration was then given for all of the citadel. This is defined as for the men of the realm in verse 9, but it included all, from the greatest to the least.

One might ask why he would do this, but if the previous feast was as a time of planning for war, now the plans have been made. In the military, planning is made by the higher ups, but eventually everyone is included in what has been decided. The king was probably so satisfied with the prospects of a successful engagement, that he held a feast to honor the battle to come, including everyone who would be affected by a win or a loss.

The word *bitan*, or “palace,” in this verse is not the same as “citadel” in verse 2. It is a rare word, found only three times in the book of Esther. It comes from the Hebrew word for “house,” and so it is actually at the residence of the king, and in his royal garden, that this feast took place. Hence, the amazing details of this royal palace are next given...

**<sup>6</sup> *There were white and blue linen curtains fastened with cords of fine linen and purple on silver rods and marble pillars;***

The scene being described here is one of outdoor garden luxury. There would have been hangings above and along the open areas, especially of the royal colors of Persia – white and blue. The blue was, however, more especially a violet. The word translated as “linen” for the curtains here, *karpas*, was incorrectly translated by earlier versions as “green.” It is from a Persian word, found only here in Scripture, indicating fine linen. So if you have “green” there, make a note. These curtains would have been fastened to pillars of silver in bases of marble by beautifully dyed cords.

**<sup>6 (con’t)</sup> *and the couches were of gold and silver***

It is debated whether these couches were made of gold and silver, or if they were covered with cushions and cloths of gold and silver embroidered into them. Both are possible, and records of antiquity speak of couches with frameworks of gold and silver work.

**<sup>6 (con’t)</sup> *on a mosaic pavement of alabaster, turquoise, and white and black marble.***

Three of the words used in this portion of the verse are found only here in the whole Bible. Thus translations will vary widely as to what the colors and stones actually are. Being dogmatic might not be the best option, as the words are simply obscure. The final one translated as “black marble” is the word *sochereth*. It may be from *socherah*, meaning bulwark, and thus it would be a border pavement. Regardless of the meanings, the beauty of the garden was certainly stunning.

**7 And they served drinks in golden vessels,**

Considering the size of the gathering, the wealth relayed here is astonishing. All of the cups for drinking were of gold. With the great attention on drinking here, and in other verses of the book, the term “banquet” is probably better than the word “feast.” Wine is the prominent item on display rather than the food. And the wine is highlighted by the drinking vessels, and of special note...

**7 (con't) each vessel being different from the other,**

The banquet was a form of artwork. The curtains, pillars, and pavement were extravagant, but so were the vessels. No two were made alike in order to excite the eyes and bring a note of delight to the conversations which would arise. Everything was considered unique and magnificent due to its originality.

**7 (con't) with royal wine in abundance,**

As the king had access to every wine from India to Ethiopia, the storehouse would have been full, and it would have been immensely varied in type and potency. For the wine connoisseur of the time, it would be more exciting than a trip through the finest wine store. And surely nothing one enjoyed would be in limited supply because it was...

**7 (con't) according to the generosity of the king.**

*ke'yad ha'melekh* – “according to the hand of the king.” The hand is what bestows. When a person holds something out with their hand, it is an indication of their generosity. If he holds out an immense or valuable amount, it is according to his wealth. Thus, “according to the hand of the king” means that his great riches and generosity to his subjects was being placed in prominent display.

Before we continue, verse 7 has an interesting acrostic in it. In the words *v'kelim mi'kelim shonim v'yen malkut rav ke'yad ha'melek*, or “and vessels from vessels diverse, with wine royal, in abundance according to the hand of the king,” the first letter of each word backwards reads, “And his name is ‘the Vine.’” It is at first interesting because the verse deals with wine, and more, Jesus proclaimed, “I am the Vine” in John 15:5. It is surely a reference then to Jesus, the Lord, being the one to watch over the events of the produce of the vine, meaning wine, which will then affect the outcome of what transpires during this banquet. In the Bible, wine symbolizes the merging together of

expressions into a result. The thing that ought to happen can happen, symbolized by wine.

**<sup>8</sup> In accordance with the law, the drinking was not compulsory;**

The word translated as “law” is found 21 times in the Bible, with 20 of them in Esther. The only other time is in Ezra, still speaking of the edict of a Persian. It is a foreign word which indicates that the law was enacted just for this feast. The king had given special orders that anyone could drink as they saw fit, and without compulsion. It is then at complete variance with the tradition of the Greeks who had the motto: “Drink or begone.”

**<sup>8 (con't)</sup> for so the king had ordered all the officers of his household, that they should do according to each man’s pleasure.**

In this, the king is showing exceptional care for his subjects. In essence, he is elevating each man’s choice of drinking to the level of anyone else. As it said earlier, “from the greatest to the least.” No boss would dare counter the king’s edict, and so those under him were able to drink more than him, or less than him, without fear of punishment. This goes with all stations and all men. It brought the people to an equality that would not exist at any other time, and it would have been a great motivator of them to love the king and to be willing to honor him all the more with their work and their lives.

**<sup>9</sup> Queen Vashti**

The wife of Xerxes was a woman named by the Greeks as Amestris. Herodotus and others say that she was cruel and led a dissolute life. There is much speculation about whether this is Vashti or not. Maybe it is his later wife, Esther. If Vashti, it may be that Vashti is more of a nickname than her true name. This is possible based on its meaning.

This Vashti is the only woman in the Bible with a name starting with “V.” There is an obvious reason for this. First, she is the only Vashti in the Bible, and she will only be mentioned ten times. Secondly, Hebrew technically does not have a V. The V sound is used, such as in the name Avraham, or the desert known as the Arava, but this is simply a B that is pronounced as a V.

This is no different than our “C” being pronounced as a “K”

Everything is “OK”

When it happens this way, There’s really nothing to “C”

Her name is Persian, and it means in Old Persian, “The Best.” In more modern Persian, it would be “Beautiful Woman.” However, the name when transliterated into Hebrew carries a meaning all its own, a rather stunning pun in fact. First, to spell it, it must be initiated with the letter vav. Vav at the beginning of a word or sentence normally means “and.” However, it can also “introduce a circumstantial clause” (HAW). Nehemiah 2:2 does this when the king asked Nehemiah why his face was sad, where it says, *v’attah enekha holeh* – “**since you** are not sick.”

Taking the name Vashti, and dropping this vav, then leaves the word *sheti*, meaning “a drinking.” That word is found only once in the Bible, in Ecclesiastes 10:17 where it mentions “drunkenness.” By reading the vav where it should be in front of this word to spell the name Vashti, you then have the conditional statement, “When Drinking” What is implied is, “That’s what you get!” (Abarim). Remember that as we watch her seal her own fate, but it is the king who also suffers, as will later be seen. In other words, “This is what happens when someone drinks too much.”

<sup>9 (con’t)</sup> **also made a feast for the women in the royal palace which *belonged* to King Ahasuerus.**

It was custom of the Persians that the feasts of men and women would be kept separate, and so Vashti made her own banquet for the women at the royal house. The word *beit*, or house, used here is one different from both verse 2 and verse 5, although it is similar to that found in verse 5. Interestingly, the words in Hebrew, *beit ha’malkut asher la’melik*, or “house royal which *belongs* to king” forms a backward acrostic *l’ahav*, or “to love.” How that will play into the story is yet to be seen.

*A palace garden, filled with delight  
Beautiful stones and curtains to grace the eyes  
Everything makes such a beautiful sight  
To walk in the garden is its own special prize  
Cups of gold, each marvelous and unique  
It adds to the joy of the wine within  
A banquet of wonder to last an entire week  
It will be over almost before it does begin*

*And wine to enjoy, any amount desired will do  
A wonderful banquet fit for a king  
We shall enjoy the feast, through and through  
Such a marvelous time; it makes the heart sing*

### **III. The Fury of the King, or “Naughty Vashti” (verses 10-12)**

**<sup>10</sup> On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine,**

This is the ending of the special banquet for the people. The king was doing well from his seven days of drinking wine, and decided that the best thing to do to close out the feast would be to elate the hearts of the men even beyond what wine could do, and so...

**<sup>10</sup> (con't) he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus,**

Sets of two's occurring in Esther are rather common. This is the first of them. There are two sets of seven names of the king's servants. The second set of seven names will be seen in verse 1:14. As we go through the book, I will try to remember to give you the other sets of twos that are included. Two's in the Bible signify a contrast and yet a confirmation of something. These contrast as they are seven lowly eunuchs and then seven high nobles, but they confirm the orders of the king in regards to Queen Vashti.

With the exception of Harbona, the names of these seven eunuchs are all mentioned only this once in the Bible. They are all Persian names, and unfortunately, it is total speculation as to what they mean. If there is a secret code in their meaning, it will remain that way. One may force meaning into them in order to find something secret, but it will not be what the Bible intends for us to see.

The number seven, like with the Hebrews, was a sacred number to the Persians of old. It is the seventh day, there are seven eunuchs, and verse 10 is comprised of 21 words, or seven times three. That's about the most I can give you concerning the number 7 in verse 10. What I can tell you, is that these seven eunuchs are selected to go to the queen on a mission...

**<sup>11</sup> to bring Queen Vashti before the king, *wearing* her royal crown,**

One eunuch was sufficient to accomplish the task unless it was an unusual task. We cannot read too much into this, but the king is merry with wine, and the command is rather odd – “bring Queen Vashti before the king in her royal crown.” The crown here is a unique word, *kether*. It will be seen three times in Esther, and not again in the Bible. It comes from the word *kathar*, meaning “to surround,” and thus it is a circlet. It would encircle her head as a beautiful highlight.

Albert Barnes says, “This command, though contrary to Persian customs, is not out of harmony with the character of Xerxes; and is evidently related as something strange and unusual. Otherwise, the queen would not have refused to come.”

The targums may explain the matter. They include the word “naked.” In other words, the king is tipsy, he is now at the end of a week of feasting, and he wants to end it in a way that the people would never forget, and thus he sends seven eunuchs as a protective measure because it is possible that the crown is *all* she was to wear. This would certainly be justification for Vashti’s response, and the following words make it a possibility...

**11 (con’t) in order to show her beauty to the people and the officials, for she was beautiful to behold.**

The king intended to show off her beauty. This is something she could do with all of her clothing on, and it is something that queens are famous for. And so unless she was being placed in a truly distressing situation, it makes little sense. Albert Barnes is right, something strange and unusual seems tied to the request. Additionally, the word “people” is plural. It would be an indication that there were people of all different races and cultures in attendance. This would make the request even more appalling, if this is what is being conveyed. It isn’t worth arguing over, but verses 10-12 each have their own subtleties that do point to this.

**12 But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king’s command brought by his eunuchs;**

The queen, for whatever reason, from innocently not wanting to be around a room full of wine-soaked men of different cultures and positions, to not wanting to be highly embarrassed in front of the same, refuses the command of the king. This is something that was far more serious than almost anything else that she could do. Her very life could be forfeit, and it shows that the request must have had something more than that which is explicitly stated.

Many scholars say that it was the custom of the time to keep women, and especially queens, from the view of other men. That is not at all borne out by either Scripture in general or the book of Esther in particular. Rather, Vashti’s refusal came from something which would have placed her in a truly undignified position. If the targums are correct, she has done the right thing. If not, then what comes upon her will be justly deserved. Either way...

**\*12 (fin) therefore the king was furious, and his anger burned within him.**

This brings in another set of two's. Here the king's anger burns against Vashti. In verse 7:7, the king's anger will burn against Haman. They contrast, one is to a woman, the other is to a man, but they confirm royal authority. One will lead to a new wife for the king, a Jewess, and the other will lead to a new second-ruler for the kingdom, a Jew. Of the anger of the king, Proverbs 16:13 says –

“As messengers of death *is* the king's wrath,  
But a wise man will appease it.”

Such is true here. It will take the wise counsel of others to resolve the situation, and also to save the queen's life. For now, all we can do is wait and see what will transpire in the pages ahead. But the story begins as it does for a reason. It is to show how certain circumstances will lead, one to another, to bring about an end which is completely unsuspected at the beginning.

This is often how the Lord works in us, if we just pay attention to how things come out. We can look back on all of the mistakes and stupid decisions we've made, and yet, they seem to lead to the most marvelous events of our life. We can look back and say, “If I didn't do that, I would never have met such and so.” Or maybe, “If that terrible day didn't happen, I never would have gotten that promotion.”

For those who don't know the Lord, it all seems like random chance and accidental luck or misfortune. But when God is put into the equation, we see that with everything that happens – good or bad – it suddenly comes out as it does for a reason. This will be one of the major themes of Esther, and it is a major theme of everyone before meeting the Lord. We don't even consider that He's there, but He is. How much more then should we realize that now that we know Him personally!

If your week was tough, know that it had a purpose. If your week ahead is tough, know that it will serve a purpose. In the end, the Lord is in the background tending to you with care that you can't even fathom. That is even true for those who haven't called on Jesus, but who are destined to do so. Who knows, maybe you don't know the Lord, but you decided to hear this sermon because you were curious about the book. I'll do my best to instruct you on the book, but it is the Lord you should be seeking. If you haven't accepted God's offer of peace through Christ Jesus, let today be the day. And then you will understand not just why you came to this sermon, but why everything in your life has happened as it has. I assure you, the Lord will reveal it all to you in due time.

**Closing Verse:** *“Wine is a mocker,  
Strong drink is a brawler,  
And whoever is led astray by it is not wise.” Proverbs 20:1*

**Next Week:** Esther 1:13-22 *You’d better do as he says if you are his spouse...* (Master of the House) (2<sup>nd</sup> Esther Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. At times, you might feel as if he has no great design for you in life, but he has brought you to this moment to reveal His glory in and through you. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **A Party Gone Bad**

Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus  
(This was the Ahasuerus who reigned  
Over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces  
From India to Ethiopia), as the Bible has explained

In those days when King Ahasuerus  
Sat on his kingdom’s throne  
Which was in Shushan the citadel  
As the Bible to us makes known

That in the third year of his reign  
He made a feast for all his officials and servants too  
The powers of Persia and Media  
The nobles, and the princes of the provinces being before him  
-----so he did do

When he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom  
And the splendor of his excellent majesty  
For many days  
Yes, days in all one hundred and eighty

And when these days were completed  
The king made a feast lasting seven days  
For all the people who were present  
In Shushan the citadel, a feast surely to amaze

From great to small, so we are told this thing  
In the court of the garden of the palace of the king

There were white and blue linen curtains  
Fastened with cords of fine linen also  
And purple on silver rods and marble pillars  
And the couches were of gold and silver, as we now know

On a mosaic pavement of alabaster; turquoise also  
And white and black marble; really quite a show  
And they served drinks in golden vessels  
Each vessel being different from the other  
-----a most impressive thing  
With royal wine in abundance  
According to the generosity of the king

In accordance with the law  
The drinking was not compulsory  
For so the king had ordered all the officers  
Of his household, that such was how it should be

That they should do according to each man's pleasure  
And serve freely, without measure

Queen Vashti also made a feast  
For the women in the royal palace  
Yes, in that royal place  
Which belonged to King Ahasuerus

On the seventh day  
When the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded  
Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas  
Seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus  
-----so the king demanded

To bring Queen Vashti before the king  
Wearing her royal crown  
In order to show her beauty to the people and the officials  
For she was beautiful to behold; she could really knock 'em down

But Queen Vashti refused to come  
At the king's command to be brought by the eunuchs of the king  
Therefore the king was furious  
And his anger burned within him, because Vashti refused this thing  
Lord God, thank You for Your presence that is with us  
Even when we don't realize that You are there  
Because You sent Your own Son Jesus  
We can know that You truly do care

And so Lord, be real to us in a wonderful new way  
Open our minds and our hearts to seeing You always  
Through every step we take, and throughout every day  
Be real to us, O God, and to You will shall give all of our praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

## ESTHER 1:13-22 (MASTER OF THE HOUSE)

*\*To watch the video of this study, select from the following: [YouTube](#) or [Sermon Audio](#)*

There are probably as many reasons to have faith in the word of God as there are people who read the word of God. Each person who picks it up and finds strength in their faith through it does so because it speaks to them personally. In strengthening their faith, their assurance of the word itself is also strengthened.

Though it is as common as candy bars at 7-11 today for people to say they trust the Christian God in general, or the Lord Jesus in particular, and yet not trust the Bible, that is a logical contradiction. One cannot say he trusts the Lord properly in one breath, and then say he does not trust the source which tells of Him in another.

Not only is it illogical, but frankly, being illogical, it is then also stupid. It would be like saying, "The neighbor built a new concrete house next door to us, but I don't believe it's concrete." "Did you see them build it?" "Yes." "Did they use concrete?" "Yes." So, why don't you believe it's concrete?" "I just don't believe it is. They aren't the kind of people to live in a concrete house." "So you're basing your idea about the makeup of the house on what you think, not on what it is made up of." "Of course! Why would I ever believe that they would live in a concrete house." Any normally thinking person would find that both illogical and stupid. And yet, the number of people who say they believe in Jesus, but then say that they don't believe in the word which tells us about Jesus could fill the Pacific Ocean.

But enough about them. For those who actually read the word, accept it as the word, and who then are strengthened in their faith concerning the word, they do so for a ton of reasons. Some, because they find it uplifting, just as God Himself is uplifting. Some because they see the harmony in the message – stretching from Genesis to Revelation. And yet, it was authored by 40 or so men, over 1600 years, in several languages, and in various countries. Despite this, it is seamless and continuous in what it states, how it states it, and the way things are stated.

Some realize that Jesus is revealed pretty much everywhere, and so they come to strength of faith because of this. We could go on and on with things like this because this word is an inexhaustible source of information, wonder, and delight. If we treat it as such, it will always fill our lives with the faith it was intended to impart.

**Text Verse:** *“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” Deuteronomy 29:29*

For me, all of the things I just mentioned increase my faith in the word, and also in the Lord who gave us the word. But one of the things that just amazes me, and which I can always refer to in my mind when I have doubts, is the patterns found in the Bible. There are numerical patterns, there are pictorial patterns, and there are word patterns. There are also literary patterns such as poetic, chiasmic, parallelistic, and acrostic. It goes on and on.

Many of the patterns overlap. Many of the patterns have only been discovered in the past few years. Some of them in the... past few days. And then some that were discovered in the past have been built upon by others using new technologies. Today, guess what we will see in some of our verses? If you said to yourself, “Patterns,” give yourself an A+. We’ll start with some today, and they will continue to develop in the chapters to come.

If you are like me, these will help you in your times of doubt. “Lord, are You there? I feel distanced from You.” Just think on the word, remember the patterns, and they will let you know that He is, in fact, there. If He spent so much time hiding stuff in this word that has never been seen before in order to bring the curious mind to a state of ecstasy, how much more do you think He wants you to trust the stuff that is right there in the open! Be of good cheer. He is there. He has not forsaken you nor abandoned you. This is some of the marvel to be found His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

## **I. A Question of Law (verses 13 & 14)**

### **<sup>13</sup> Then the king said to the wise men**

The words here show that the king, though probably rather incensed at the embarrassing situation, still had enough restraint to not fly off the handle. It needs to be remembered that this has been a banqueting party, and he certainly would have been enjoying the banqueting. That alone is enough to lower one’s restraint. But further, he was embarrassed in front of everyone who attended the party, regardless of the propriety of his initial request – something noted in our last sermon. And yet, he kept his demeanor as a wise king before deciding anything, and refers to his wise men.

What type of “wise men” referred to here is debated. The word is a common one which simply indicates intelligent, skillful, and wise-hearted. Some scholars define the counselors of a Persian king as being in two categories. The first being astrologers and astronomers who looked to the heavens for direction. The second would be those schooled in laws and customs of the empire.

Others disagree and state that, unlike the Babylonians, diviners and astrologers were not a known part of the Persian kingdom. Regardless of this, in this case and for the type of decision, the words of the wise men seem to point to a body of men who were familiar with law and custom, rather than seekers of divination. This is seen in the following words...

<sup>13</sup> (con’t) **who understood the times**

The king’s counselors had an understanding of the state of the empire, how Vashti’s actions might affect it, and what the consequences of not taking action appropriate to the situation might be. In saying they “understood the times,” it is almost a metonymy where the things done in the times are spoken of as the times themselves.

The same type of thought is seen in 1 Chronicles 12:32 when the men of Issachar were said to have an understanding of the times concerning David’s position as king. They knew of the importance of aligning with him to unite the kingdom of Israel into one body and then to further the army in that state.

<sup>13</sup> (con’t) **(for this was the king’s manner toward all who knew law and justice,**

Although not a king of Israel, Ahasuerus here displays the wisdom of Solomon. Several times in the proverbs, he expresses a similar thought to that of Proverbs 15:22 –

“Without counsel, plans go awry,  
But in the multitude of counselors they are established.” Proverbs 15:22

Instead of arbitrarily rendering a decision or making one without consulting others who were skilled in law and justice, the king sought out his counselors. This was not a trait particular to Ahasuerus though. It was considered the right thing to do among each of the rulers of the empire.

This is expressed in the words *davar ha’melekh*, or “word (of) the king.” In this sense, the “word” doesn’t signify his command, but the matter and manner of how the king

approached such things. It is similar to how the office of US President works. He has cabinet secretaries, a chief of staff, etc., who are there to consult before rendering a decision. In the end, the Bible says that this is the wise path to follow. As such, it is something that we all should apply to our own decisions. Is there someone that you can turn to when you need to make an important decision? Along with prayer to the Lord, seeking out wise human advice is the right thing to do when matters could otherwise go awry.

**<sup>14</sup> those closest to him *being* Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media,**

This verse closes out a set of two's. The first was in verse 1:10, listing the seven servants of the king. Now it lists the second set of seven servants of the king. As I said in the previous sermon, two's in the Bible signify a contrast and yet a confirmation of something. These contrast as they were seven lowly eunuchs and then seven high nobles, but they confirm the orders of the king in regards to Queen Vashti.

For now, like the eunuchs in verse 10, some of the names here are very difficult to pin down as to their meaning. To attempt to find a secret code in them would be an act of finding what one is looking for, rather than finding what is actually intended. But what is interesting is that the number seven arises again. There were seven eunuchs, sent out on the seventh day of the feast, and there are now seven counselors to the king. It is apparent that, like Israel, the number seven was an important one to the Persians.

Some say this is because of the seven planets known at the time, or that it is because of the seven-day cycle which permeates cultures, and which directs the movement of man. Or finally, the seven counselors may have been selected in order to correspond to the seven *Amshaspands*, or "glorious ones" of the spiritual and mental worlds. These go back to the Babylonian empire, but were known to the empire of the Persians and Medes as well. For whatever reason, the number seven is known to play an important part in the kingdom of the Persians and Medes. This is true with the appointment of these seven counselors...

**<sup>14</sup> (con't) who had access to the king's presence, *and* who ranked highest in the kingdom):**

The translation here is more literally stated as, "who seeing *the face of* the king; those sitting first in the kingdom." To sit indicates authority in this case, and thus these seven possessed authority equal to one another, but below that of the king. These seven counselors are most likely similar to those referred to again in Ezra 7:14 at the time of

king Atarxerxes. Thus, this is more than just a counsel which would be adjusted based on circumstance and choice of the king. Rather, it was a set number during the duration of the empire.

As they were “seeing the face of the king,” it indicates that they had free and unrestricted access to him. Such was not the case with any others. This will be revealed as we continue through the book. For now, Ahasuerus takes advantage of the wise counsel of these men by asking for their advice.

*Is there law and justice in the land?  
How shall we approach this thing which has been done?  
Can we let what occurred be left to stand?  
If not handled, what course will we see run?*

*There must be order, and there must be law  
If not, then things will surely get out of hand  
Those who have seen will tell what they saw  
No, what occurred cannot be left to stand*

*Give advice! Tell us what is found in the law  
Let us do what is right, so that nothing gets out of hand  
Our final decision should be rendered without a flaw  
So we will be able to maintain peace throughout the land*

## **II. Memucan’s Advice (verses 15-22)**

<sup>15</sup> **“What *shall we* do to Queen Vashti, according to law,**

The verse actually begins with, *ke’dath mah la’asot*, or “according to law, what shall we do.” “According to law” prefixes the question, as a strong stress. Further, there is no article in front of “law.” In other words, and as a paraphrase, “Legally, what is required?” Queen Vashti is placed as a subject of the kingdom, and thus one not immune from the standards set within the kingdom.

Along with that, it appears that the king is acting in a completely dispassionate manner concerning what should be decided. In all, the entire matter is being held as a breach of that which is legal and against the throne, rather than a mere offense to the king personally. This is then more fully expressed in the next words...

<sup>15</sup> (con't) **because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus *brought to her* by the eunuchs?"**

The king doesn't say, "because she did not obey my command." Instead, he refers to himself in the third person with, "the command of King Ahasuerus." Here it uses a word, *maamar*, or command, which is found only three times in the Bible, and all are right here in Esther. It is derived from the word *amar*, or "said," and thus it indicates a command, because it is the stated word of the king.

Interestingly, the first time it is used is here from the mouth of the king. The second will be from Mordecai, the cousin of Esther, and the third will be a command from Esther herself. It is an implicit note of the importance of both Mordecai and of Esther.

One point that John Gill makes while citing ancient sources, and which is worth repeating, is that it very well may be that all of this has occurred while the king and his counselors were still under the wine's influence. He says, "it was the manner of the Persians at festivals, and when inflamed with wine, to consult and determine about matters of the greatest moment; yea, reckoned their counsels and decrees firmer than when made when they were sober; so the ancient Germans."

If this is so, one can imagine them actually saying this in an open and even slurred way. In other words, this all may have been conducted in front of the entire group gathered before him, and he is making light of the matter while still being precise in the handling of it. The entire episode may be one of conduct outside of a state of sobriety. If so, it might reveal the substance behind the words of verse 2:1. It is all speculation, but it might help us to explain quite a bit to look at it this way.

<sup>16</sup> **And Memucan answered before the king and the princes:**

Of the seven named princes, Memucan was named last, and yet he is the first and only one recorded as voicing an opinion. It is thus suspected then that he was the youngest of the advisers, and so he was asked to speak first. This is something which carried on even in legal circles of England where the puisne judges, and the youngest peers would voice their thoughts first. His advice now shows that there was no known law to cover this situation. Instead of citing law, he cites what the condition is and what should be done to correct it...

<sup>16</sup> (con't) **"Queen Vashti has not only wronged the king, but also all the princes,**

Before giving advice on what should be done, he gives a major consideration for the king to contemplate. The first portion of that consideration is the scope of the offense. In this, he goes from the specific, the king, to the general, those below the king. He notes that it is true that the king had been wronged, but then he says that the wrong extends also to those below him as advisers.

In other words, this could affect their positions, which would only cause more harm to the king. The royal court itself had been wronged, bringing the entire scope of the throne into question if the matter was to not be handled in a suitable way, appropriate to the level of the offense. But, Memucan doesn't stop with this. As an adviser to the king, rejection of his advice would be rather embarrassing.

In fact, in 2 Samuel 17, Ahithophel, adviser to Absalom, son of David, gave advice as the king's adviser which was rejected. The rejection was so displeasing to him that it says that "he put his household in order, and hanged himself." And so, in order to have the best possible chance that his advice will be looked on favorably, he continues to exemplify the scope of the crime...

<sup>16</sup> (con't) **and all the people who *are* in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus.**

Not only was the king wronged, and not only was the royal court wronged – both of which might be straightened out or handled in a suitable fashion – but no indeed! The entire kingdom was affected. Memucan continues from the more specific to the more general, even to the house of every soul within the empire. It is a kingdom which stretched from India to Ethiopia, and which encompassed 127 provinces. To allow this offense to go unpunished would affect the whole sh'bang. To show how this would come about, he turns next to the second portion of his consideration...

<sup>17</sup> **For the queen's behavior will become known to all women,**

What Vashti did was against her husband, but it was also against the highest authority in the land. Memucan argues that eventually this will get out, and that when it does, all women will hear of it, and it will be known that the king himself was unable to control his disobedient wife. Thus, she will become a model for all women to follow...

<sup>17</sup> (con't) **so that they will despise their husbands in their eyes,**

Different words are translated as "husband" in the Bible. Though not uncommon, the word used by Memucan here is one of authority, *baal*. It means "master" or "owner."

The choice is certainly purposeful in using this word. When the conduct of Vashti towards the king is made known to the women of the realm, he argues that the obvious result will be that every woman will despise their *baal*.

But the wording is stronger than the NKJV makes it. Rather than “they will despise their husbands in their eyes,” it more literally says, “to render their husbands contemptible in their eyes.” In other words, it’s not just that the husbands will be despised, but that they will appear despicable. “If the king is so weak, then how much more is the man I’m married to who is just one of his lowly subjects!” This is the intent of the Hebrew. Memucan is passing along to the ears, and for the consideration of the king, that it will be empire-wide chaos...

**<sup>17 (con’t)</sup> when they report, ‘King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in before him, but she did not come.’**

The words “when they report” are actually masculine in the Hebrew. The masculine suffix is substituted for the feminine. It is they who usurp the normal order when they appeal to the disobedience of Queen Vashti. She was commanded, and yet she did not come. The entire body of Memucan’s words are intended to ensure that the king would consider no other option than accepting the advice he is to be given based on the consideration which has been laid before him. The king’s authority is in question, the judgments of the advisers are in question, and the order of the entire realm is in question – all because of disobedient Vashti. In fact, the cancer is already about to spread...

**<sup>18</sup> This very day the *noble* ladies of Persia and Media will say to all the king’s officials that they have heard of the behavior of the queen.**

If you read the older English, KJV, it says, “Likewise shall the ladies of Persia and Media say...” Reading that in today’s English, one would think it is speaking of all of the ladies in the realm. This is not the intent of the words. The Hebrew word is *sarah*, which is identical to the name of Abraham’s wife, Sarah. It signifies a noble lady, a princess, etc. In older English, and among the more refined English today, the term “ladies” still carries this connotation, but just note that this is speaking of the wives of the nobility. Memucan is moving from the more general toward the more specific once again to prove his point, and to highlight the urgency of the situation which is...

**<sup>18 (con’t)</sup> Thus *there will be* excessive contempt and wrath.**

In marvelous literary fashion, a man after my own heart, Memucan uses two thoughts when but one might be sufficient. He first says a word unique in Scripture *bizayon*, or contempt. He precedes it with a preposition *u-ke'day bizayon*, or “and thus sufficient contempt.” The idea of “sufficient” here, however, is one of excessiveness. He then adds in *va'qaseph* or “and indignation” for good measure.

One would presume that the excessive contempt would be on the part of the wives, and the wrath would be on the part of the husbands. There would be snippy attitudes, there would be angry words, and there would be scratches, punches, and shouting matches. Oh my! Could the realm survive? The entire tenor of Memucan's consideration is given for the maximum effect upon the mind of the king. He is arguing as an orator before long ears. And so with his words of consideration complete, he next proceeds to a recommended course of action...

**<sup>19</sup> If it pleases the king,**

*im al ha'melekh tov*. The identical words are repeated by Nehemiah in Nehemiah 2:15. It is a way of saying, “I have a recommendation for the king to consider, and to act upon, if it is good in his eyes.”

**<sup>19</sup> (con't) let a royal decree go out from him,**

A royal decree is a published decree. It would be sent out to all provinces and made public to all people. Coming from the king, it was considered established law.

**<sup>19</sup> (con't) and let it be recorded in the laws of the Persians and the Medes, so that it will not be altered,**

The Hebrew literally reads, “that it may not pass away.” Once recorded as a law, it would be considered fixed, firm, and unchanging. In theory, it is believed that the king could override the law, but it would be at the expense of his own honor to do such a thing. It would be considered weak and vacillating. Further, if it is written into law as recommended, the king couldn't later blame Memucan for recommending that he dethrone Vashti. He would thus be safe from any later retribution.

This is also the first of another of the author's use of two's in the book – the irrevocability of the law is noted here, and then it is noted again in verse 8:8. They contrast as one is concerning the authority of man over woman in the realm, and the second concerns the protection of the Jew throughout the Gentile realm. But they

actually confirm what God has ordained in His word. Man is to have authority over the woman, and the Jew is to be preserved as a people forever. Such sets of two's will continue to be used throughout the book.

**19 (con't) that Vashti shall come no more before King Ahasuerus;**

The law is to read that the separation of them was to be, in fact, a permanent divorce. She would never again enter into the presence of the king.

Another backwards acrostic is seen in this verse. The first letters of the words *tavow Vashti lipne ha'melekh Akhashverosh*, or "shall come Vashti before the king Ahasuerus," form the word *ohalot*, or "tents." Ohel, or tent, is the word used to describe the tent of meeting, for example, which was seen numerous times in Exodus. The tents of all men of the empire will be affected by the decree, and the tent of the king is now no longer accessible to the dethroned queen. Instead...

**19 (con't) and let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she.**

The word Memucan uses for "another" is *reuth*. It is a rare one, so far only seen once in Exodus. It is a feminine noun which signifies a fellow woman. In other words, Memucan is anticipating one of the royal concubines would be elevated to queen in place of her. This would be the expected course of action, but there is a hidden Force behind the scenes, working toward a particular end in order to highlight, save, and exalt the people called by His name. The Name of that all-seeing Force is secretly hidden in the next words...

**20 When the king's decree which he will make is proclaimed throughout all his empire (for it is great), all wives will honor their husbands, both great and small."**

A new word, *pithgam*, or "decree" is used. It is of Persian origin and it will be seen just two times. Surprisingly, despite being Persian, the second and final time will be by Solomon in Ecclesiastes 8:11. As this is a royal decree, no wife would dare to challenge it and do less than honor her husband. If the queen was dethroned for her act, a common wife – after the edict was published – would possibly be libel to face execution. No other commentary is necessary on the surface. However, to get to the secrets of Esther, we have to stretch our minds a bit. To begin doing that, I'll translate the sentence in the order that it is written in the Hebrew. It is a little clumsy, but it will still make sense – "And shall be heard decree the king which he shall make in all his kingdom (for great it) and all the wives shall give honor to their masters to from great and unto small."

By the time we finish Esther, the words here will fit so many varied patterns that you will need a computer to sort them all out... literally. Some of the patterns came out only days before I typed the sermon as Sergio accessed the Superior Word computer over an entire night in order to run a program to find them.

Great scholars, such as Keil and Lange, note the structure of the verse. Lange says, "The predicate *nishma* (heard) is chosen, since it makes a presupposition for the *yitenu* (shall give) which is expressed." In other words, the proclamation of the king will lead to the giving of honor by the wives to their husbands. Keil notes that the parenthetical clause, "for it is great," is intended to flatter the king's vanity, and induce an inclination to agree to the proposal.

These are both correct, but the structure is more purposeful than just that. We've already noted that the name of the Lord, Yehovah, is never mentioned in Esther. But this teeny book of 10 chapters with 167 verses, is said by one scholar to mention the king 192 times. The kingdom is mentioned 26 times. The name Ahasuerus is mentioned 29 times. That is a lot in so few verses. But it would actually be untruthful to say, Yehovah isn't mentioned at all. The first time He is seen is in this oddly-structured verse. It is found in a backward running acrostic of the words *hi v'kal hanashim yitenu*, or "it and all the wives shall give." YHVH, or Yehovah, is the first letter of each word, in reverse. That could be mere coincidence, but it isn't, as you will see.

Further, the verse itself forms an entire acrostic sentence. In proper sequence it reads, *Yehovah harekhem mevi*, or "Yehovah brings forth your (pl) mountain." Mountains in the Bible have a lot of memorable symbolism attached to them, but as an individual symbol, it represents the place where government is established. This is seen, for example, in Isaiah 2 –

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days  
That the mountain of the Lord's house  
Shall be established on the top of the mountains,  
And shall be exalted above the hills;  
And all nations shall flow to it.  
<sup>3</sup> Many people shall come and say,  
"Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,  
To the house of the God of Jacob;  
He will teach us His ways,  
And we shall walk in His paths."

For out of Zion shall go forth the law,  
And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Isaiah 2:2, 3

This same type of symbolism is used when speaking of Babylon in Jeremiah 51:25. Here in Esther, we can see that the Lord is behind the scenes continuing to bring Israel to the point where their mountain will be brought forth; the place from which Messiah will send forth His law. All of this is being pictured here in Esther. Further, it is rather amazing because this acrostic is found in a verse about the Persian government; its mountain.

The introduction of the Divine Name here brings in several instances of two's which we already started earlier. First, this instance is spoken by Memucan, a Gentile. There will be four times the divine name Yehovah is seen in an acrostic. This and the third will both be spoken by Gentiles. Also, the first and the third are a pair because they both have the name spelled backwards. However, the first and the second are a pair because they have the Name formed using the initial letters of the four words of which they are comprised.

Further, the first and the fourth are a pair because they are spoken *about* Queen Vashti and then *about* Haman. The third and the fourth, as we will later see, will be spoken *by* Queen Esther and *by* Haman. But this in turn makes the first and second a pair because they are both in relation to (about and by) a queen, whereas the third and the fourth are both in relation to (about and by) Haman.

And more, the first and the third, which both have the Divine Name spelled backward, form a pair revealing the truth that Yehovah is seen overruling what the Gentiles have counseled in order to effect His own purposes. And then even more, the first and the second, which have already been identified as a pair because they are formed from initial letters, both speak of initial facts within the story, and these initial facts are in relation to events where Yehovah initiates His will to overrule the events.

All of this may be confusing, but the information is so beautifully laid out that it is not possibly by random chance. We will see this as we highlight the other sets of twos which will arise as we get to the next three instances of the hidden Divine Name, Yehovah.

**<sup>21</sup> And the reply pleased the king and the princes, and the king did according to the word of Memucan.**

The words here must be taken in a general way simply because the next verse does not say that the matter was recorded in the law of the Persians and Medes. It very well may

have been, and it probably was so, but the king may have simply fired Vashti and put out a proclamation concerning wives being obedient to their husbands.

This is the third, and last, reference to Memucan in the Bible. However, some scholars believe that Memucan is the same as the wicked Haman who will be introduced in verse 3:1. If this is so, then the edict of his own suggestion will eventually lead to his own downfall. That can only be speculation, however. Regardless though, the king and the princes were pleased with the reply of Memucan, and his suggestions were accepted as far as the final verse now notes...

**<sup>22</sup> Then he sent letters to all the king's provinces,**

The king's decree went forth copied as individual letters for each of the 127 provinces of the kingdom. It is noted by Herodotus that this was the first standardized postal system of its kind, one which is said to have been an excellent operation. Word was transmitted quickly, efficiently, and throughout the entire kingdom.

**<sup>22</sup> (con't) to each province in its own script,**

It is not known how many different scripts were used throughout the empire, but it would be a large number. In order to have competent scribes, people would certainly have been brought to the royal palace from each province, and there given an intensive study in the Persian language. From there, they would be maintained as scribes for all royal edicts and other governmental notices.

**<sup>22</sup> (con't) and to every people in their own language,**

This is an important addition to the verse. There can be many languages which use the same script. To send a note in German could be read, but maybe not understood, by the English. The same is true with the various languages which use Cyrillic symbols, but which are entirely different when spoken. The system employed to ensure all scripts and languages were clearly transmitted must have been massive. But for something as important as the next words, it was a necessary thing to have. They are good and relieving words for the often downtrodden and commonly ignored husband...

**<sup>22</sup> (con't) that each man should be master in his own house,**

Such words of wisdom. They go back to the creation of man, and they have often been interrupted by bad influence concerning what is right. Solomon speaks quite a bit on the matter, in the positive, and in the negative. In just one proverb, he defines both –

“An excellent wife *is* the crown of her husband,  
But she who causes shame *is* like rottenness in his bones.” Proverbs 12:4

From this point on, at least in the kingdom of Ahasuerus, things would be a lot better for the once overwhelmed man of the house. He was now officially appointed as master. A good deal indeed.

**\*22 (fin) and speak in the language of his own people.**

The verse and the chapter close out with some of the most complicated words of the book. The thought, at least translated as it is here, has nothing to do with what occurred with Vashti, and so it seems to have nothing to do with the edict at all. Before analyzing it then, we should see how various translators have handled them –

using his native tongue. NIV  
should say whatever he pleases. NLT  
speak according to the language of his people. ESV  
*it* should be published according to the language of every people. KJV  
should be in charge of their wives and children. CEV  
should be the master of his home and speak with final authority. GNT  
be the ruler in his own house and speak with authority. GWT  
should publish it according to the language of his people. ERV

The intent here is that the man is to rule his house. If he has a foreign wife, she and the children were to be subject to him. They were to speak his language, thus he would be in control of the house, not a side piece to be picked on in a foreign tongue. This exact occurrence is seen in the book of Nehemiah –

“In those days I also saw Jews *who* had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, *and* Moab. <sup>24</sup> And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke according to the language of one or the other people.” Nehemiah 13:23, 24

This was not to be accepted within the realm. The husband was to be master of the house, and the structure of the family would be based on that, including the language

which he spoke. In this, there would be much less discontent for the once neglected, over-worked, and under-appreciated man of the house.

We're finished with the first chapter of Esther, and frankly as I typed this (26 February, a few weeks before you got to hear it), I was completely excited about what lay ahead. I hope you feel the same now. The story itself is just fun to read and analyze. With the added bonus of hidden acrostics and the like, it is like opening a treasure chest and seeing wondrous riches.

But let's also not miss the overall subject while analyzing the details. There is an ultimate point to what we have started in Esther. It is the protection of the Jewish people in order for God to reveal Himself in and through them. He's done it in the word, as we have seen today, but He has also done it for His people, even in exile – just as His word said He would.

In the protection of Israel, despite their state as exiles and being subjected to foreign rule for disobedience to Him, we see that God is faithful to His covenants through the patriarchs and through Moses, and He is also faithful to His promises which predate those covenants. He said He would send a Redeemer all the way back in Genesis, and He is continuing to work on that promise here in Esther. By preserving Israel, He is preserving the line through whom He would enter the stream of humanity. This is the message of Scripture. Messiah is coming; Messiah has come; Christ will come again. Be assured and reassured of this.

**Closing Verse:** *“For My own sake, for My own sake, I will do it;  
For how should My name be profaned?  
And I will not give My glory to another.” Isaiah 48:11*

**Next Week:** Esther 2:1-11 *Beautiful virgins brought to Shushan. What does it mean?* (In Search of a Queen) (3<sup>rd</sup> Esther sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and design for you. At times, you might feel as if he has no great purpose for you in life, but he has brought you to this moment to reveal His glory in and through you. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

## Master of the House

Then the king said to the wise men  
Who understood the times  
(For this was the king's manner  
Toward all who knew law and justice, and how to handle crimes

Those closest to him being Carshena  
Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan also  
The seven princes of Persia and Media  
Who had access to the king's presence; anytime they could go

And who ranked in the kingdom highest  
To them his voice he then addressed

"What shall we do to Queen Vashti according to law  
Because she did not obey the command  
Of King Ahasuerus brought to her by the eunuchs?"  
She has flippantly disobeyed my demand!

And Memucan answered before the king and the princes:  
"Queen Vashti has not only wronged the king  
But also all the princes  
And all the people who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus  
-----to them also she has done this thing!  
For the queen's behavior will become known  
-----to all women, so that they will despise  
Their husbands in their eyes

When they report, 'King Ahasuerus commanded  
Queen Vashti to be brought in before him, but she did not come  
-----she refused what he demanded!

This very day the noble ladies of Persia and Media  
Will say to all the king's officials; just do the math!  
That they have heard of the behavior of the queen  
Thus there will be excessive contempt and wrath

If it pleases the king, let a royal decree go out from him  
And let it be recorded in the laws of the Persians and the Medes  
So that it will not be altered  
That Vashti shall come no more before King Ahasuerus  
-----for her wicked deeds

And let the king give her royal position; surely you will agree  
To another who is better than she

When the king's decree which he will make is proclaimed  
Throughout all his empire (for it is great)  
All wives will honor their husbands, both great and small  
It will be a slam dunk, and also a checkmate

And the reply pleased the king and the princes  
-----it was really spot on  
And the king did according to the word of Memucan

Then he sent letters to all the king's provinces  
To each province in its own script  
And to every people in their own language  
And this is what the letters did depict  
That each man should be master in his own house  
Great advice indeed  
And speak in the language of his own people  
Yes, each man his own house he should lead

Lord God, thank You for Your presence that is with us  
Even when we don't realize that You are there  
Because You sent Your own Son Jesus  
We can know that You truly do care

And so Lord, be real to us in a wonderful new way  
Open our minds and our hearts to seeing You always  
Through every step we take, and throughout every day  
Be real to us, O God, and to You will shall give all of our praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

## ESTHER 2:1-11 (IN SEARCH OF A QUEEN)

*\*To watch the video of this study, select from the following: [YouTube](#) or [Sermon Audio](#)*

Bad starts do not always mean bad finishes. We all know this. We've seen the game, we've heard of the person born in poverty who rose above his circumstances, and so on. The same is true in the Bible. There are bad starts, and there are great finishes. Humanity started out poorly in Adam, but Christ turned things around. What lies ahead is rather magnificent because of Him.

Of the sons of Israel, some started out well. Reuben was the firstborn of Jacob, but he didn't finish too well. His father's final words from his deathbed were rather terse, and they close out with the anticipation of things not excelling for Reuben in the future.

Benjamin did not start out well. He was the last of Jacob's sons, and his mother died in giving him birth. In fact, she named him Ben-Oni, Son of My Suffering. Were it not for dad renaming him with a very positive name, it would have seemed like he would always be on the bad side of things. But like his naming and renaming, Benjamin's history takes a parallel course.

He remained somewhat in obscurity, but eventually during the time of the judges, he was caught up in something so wicked and so perverse that it looked like he might not survive at all. He was reduced to a mere 600 men. He may have blinked off into extinction at this point, but he continued on. The bad-streak didn't end there. Saul, the first king of Israel was from Benjamin, and it seemed like things had turned around for them. But Saul re-turned them around and lost the kingship. Benjamin's infancy was one of suffering, and it seemed that it was destined to continue.

But along with these, and other bad things, which happened to him, he is now given a chance to make things better. That really isn't apparent in the story yet, but the very fact that Benjamin is singled out shows us that this is possible. Will the son of suffering take on a new direction? Will he really become the son of the right hand? Well, all things are possible. The apostle Paul sure found that out...

**Text Verse:** *"If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: <sup>5</sup> circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." Philipians 3:4-6*

What? Paul... a Benjamite! And proud of it! Where does he get such confidence? While penning his words to those at Philippi, he probably was thinking about the events from the book of Esther. And probably about verse 5 of chapter 2. He knew the story, he celebrated it year by year at the Feast of Purim, and it could have been a great source of boasting for him that he was from this tribe, highlighted here for the first time, in the book of Esther.

Great things had come from Benjamin, including the Apostle Paul. But Paul would have us less happy for him about his heritage and lineage than he would have us fix our eyes on Jesus, the true Son of the Right Hand. These names, these stories, these actual events in human history... all of these things only point to the One who provides the greatest finish of them all.

We have little victories in life that change our destiny and put us on a path to success, fame, wealth, or whatever, but unless the Lord is in the equation, in the end it just doesn't matter. The billionaire will turn back to the same dust as the bum in the streets. The movie star will putrefy just the same as the ditch digger, and the stock broker is heading to the same end as the 7-11 clerk.

Benjamin started poorly, but Benjamin will get a chance to end well. But that good ending is only because of the Lord who directs the events and calls people to Himself. If the response is made, then good will come of things – not just for this life, but for all the ages to come. After finishing the list of things he could brag in... that he COULD brag in, Paul tells of what value those things are in relation to what is truly worthy of boasting – “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.” In the end, the entire Bible is to lead us to that one Person who is worth boasting in – Jesus. This is a truth which is to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. Queen Instead of Vashti (verses 1-4)**

#### **<sup>1</sup>After these things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus subsided,**

The words “After these things” take us back to all that occurred concerning Vashti, her refusal to heed the king, and everything resulting from that embarrassing ordeal. It is at some point after this that *kesok khamat ha'melekh akhashverosh* – “was subsided wrath the king Ahashuerus.” The word used for “subsided” is rather rare. It was seen in Genesis

and Numbers. It will be seen here in Esther twice, and then only one more time in Jeremiah.

It comes from a root meaning “to weave a trap.” And so figuratively, through the idea of secreting away, it gives the sense of subsiding or pacifying. The second time it will be seen in Esther is in verse 7:10 where it is again used to speak of the subsiding of the king’s wrath. Thus, it is the basis for forming a new set of two’s. This first subsiding of the king’s anger is after his actions against Vashti, and it will set up the decision to find a queen to replace her, leading to Esther being selected to fill her vacancy. The second subsiding of his anger is after his actions against the wicked Haman, and it will set up the decision to replace Haman with Mordecai, filling his vacancy.

In both, there is a replacing of a Gentile with a Jew. One is a female; one is a male. The two accounts contrast, and yet they confirm the hand of God in the appointment of two of His chosen people to fill the highest roles of the king’s life and government. Both are of the same tribe and family, Benjamin, or “Son of My Right Hand.” It is a fitting name when considering that in verse 8:8 both Esther and Mordecai are given royal authority, using the king’s signet ring, to then issue an edict which will save the Jews.

As the signet is a symbol of the king’s right hand, or authority, the fact that they are from Benjamin points directly to Christ as the true Savior of the Jews, and the true Son of the Right Hand. All of this can be gleaned from a simple statement using a particular word that the king’s wrath had *shakakh*, or subsided. It prefigures the replacement of Adam by Jesus pictured by Mordecai, and also those merely circumcised in the flesh with those circumcised in the heart, seen in Vashti/Esther. Paul speaks of both. First Mordecai –

“The first man *was* of the earth, *made* of dust; the second Man *is* the Lord from heaven. <sup>48</sup> As *was* the *man* of dust, so also *are* those *who are made* of dust; and as *is* the heavenly *Man*, so also *are* those *who are* heavenly. <sup>49</sup> And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man*.” 1 Corinthians 15:47-49

Mordecai will replace Haman who acted wickedly, being a follower of the works of the devil, as we are shown in 1 John 3:8. Christ came and replaced Adam who acted wickedly when he believed the lies of the devil. For man, that sad state is overturned by the work of Christ. Second we see Esther –

“Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? <sup>27</sup> And will not the

physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, *even with your written code* and circumcision, *are* a transgressor of the law? <sup>28</sup> For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; <sup>29</sup> but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God.” Romans 2:26-29

Esther replaces the wayward bride, Vashti. She was externally beautiful, but her internal attitude was not directed towards the king’s command (circumcision of the flesh only). Esther will be both internally and externally obedient towards what is right (circumcision of the heart).

Although we are jumping ahead in order to understand our sets of two’s, it’s ok because we will get to number 2 too, and when we do, we can then review everything that here we looked into. That is, if it’s ok with you.

It won’t be seen until verse 16 of this chapter exactly when Esther will be chosen as queen, but for now, we can review the historical timeline. The feast at Susa of Chapter 1 was in the year 483BC. In the spring of the year 481BC Ahasuerus, or Xerxes, set out for Greece. It is some time between these dates that these events began to come about. There is a long absence of time between the events of chapter 1 and later in chapter 2 which is perfectly explained by the Greek campaign which is recorded in extra-biblical history. In other words, the account is perfectly reliable, and it fits with historical records found elsewhere.

<sup>1 (con’t)</sup> **he remembered Vashti, what she had done, and what had been decreed against her.**

The words here give us the sense that the king actually wished he had not made the decision and enacted the decree. Whether he could actually override his edict, or whether it was impossible according to law, hardly matters. Even if he could, by overriding it, he would demonstrate that his decision wasn’t firm, fixed, and final. It would reflect a vacillating king who had been more influenced by wine than by sound judgment.

This could not be allowed. And so the sense of almost sadness at what had come about is seen in these words. The king was left without a queen that he probably otherwise adored, and his decree finalized the matter. This is all the more surely the case, because he already would have had a harem, and yet there is no sense of pleasure in any of

them. Otherwise, the “another” of verse 1:19 would have been an easy replacement. But none of the harem interested him. We can almost see one of the royal court asking him, “Why haven’t you chosen a new queen to replace Vashti?” His answer, “None of the concubines interests me.” And so, to repair the situation, this deficiency, an exciting new avenue is recommended...

**<sup>2</sup> Then the king’s servants who attended him said: “Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king;**

The king’s servants mentioned here are not the royal court of seven. Instead, they are probably the attendants of the court, such as the eunuchs and the like who served the king, and who would be personally affected by his disposition, and aware of his demeanor. They would also know of his preferences concerning the harem and were aware that none of them was agreeable to the king as a replacement queen. And so, as a point of self interest in having a happy king, they set forth their proposal.

Four words are used to describe the women in the proposal, *nearot betulot tovot mareh* – “young women, virgins, beautiful *in* appearance.” In this, they have covered all of the desired bases. They are to be young, and thus not set in mind and demeanor. They are to be virgins, an obvious qualification. To not be a virgin would be wholly unsuited to the distinction of being presented to the king. And they were to be beautiful in appearance, another obvious requirement.

**<sup>3</sup> and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom,**

The kingdom consisted of 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia with princes appointed over them. It is a giant swath of land, with an enormous number of cultures and languages. In appointing officers in each province, they would be able to search out the most beautiful and cultured of all of the women. Even if only one was chosen from each province as the epitome of those she represented, it would increase the king’s harem by 127 women – of every color, culture, and ethnicity. The officers would be meticulously careful to find the very best, as it would then reflect favorably on them and on their status before the king.

**<sup>3 (con’t)</sup> that they may gather all the beautiful young virgins to Shushan the citadel,**

From their home, to which they would never return, and unless chosen as a queen, from their family whom they would never see again, these women would become property of the king, and would spend their lives at the citadel, awaiting his call.

**3 (con't) into the women's quarters,**

*el beit hanashim* – unto house the women. This would be a house where women were separately maintained. In one part of the house would be the virgins. In another part would be the wives or concubines. They would be kept under separate governors who would be over them, serving the king's interests.

**3 (con't) under the custody of Hegai the king's eunuch, custodian of the women.**

Hegai, as the Hebrew reads, is seen only here in Chapter 2. He will be also be called Hegai, but it is the same person. The context of the passage seems to show that he is the keeper of the entire house of the women, both virgins and the non-virgin concubines or wives. He is a eunuch, something rather necessary for someone being placed in such a position of authority under the king of the land.

**3 (con't) And let beauty preparations be given them.**

*v'naton tamruqehen* – “and a giving cosmetic purification.” The verb is in the infinitive absolute form, which highlights and gives prominence to the act. As John Lange says, it “presupposes the subject as being self-evident.” If this was modern English, the thought might be, “And of course, naturally, she will be purified in the usual way.”

This customary way of purification introduces the word *tamruq*. In the Bible, it will only be seen three times, all in this chapter. It comes from the word *maraq*, meaning to polish or scour. Thus, it would be a purification of rubbing. There would be cosmetics combined into a soap or oil, and then the rubbing may have been with hands, towels, or a nice soft luffa. Whatever is intended, it would have been a pretty delightful way to be pampered.

**4 Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti.”**

Going under the assumption that only one young woman was selected from each province, that still leaves the odds extremely slim for any particular girl to be chosen. Therefore, in order to be the one who pleases the king, she would have to be not only beautiful, but cultured; wise; pleasantly emotional, but not overly so; bold in one way, but completely submissive in another; and so on. The idea of, “You only get one chance to make a first impression,” is wholly true here. To be chosen would mean a completely different type of life lay ahead than to be rejected and to forever remain a concubine.

<sup>4</sup> (con't) **This thing pleased the king, and he did so.**

With the coming war with Greece, the order would go out, and there would have been plenty of time for selecting the finest virgins, for the women to be gathered, and then to educate them in the Persian language, and to properly prepare them according to the standards of purification. Further, an extended period under eunuch control would ensure that no chance of an already-pregnant girl could be presented to him. There was no rush in the matter, and the longer the period, the better for both the king and for the potential queen. He is pleased with the suggestion, and it would be carried out in a thorough and meticulous way.

*A chaste virgin, to be presented to the King  
Prepared and presented for His delight  
A woman who will make His heart sing  
A woman to outshine the darkness of night*

*Who will it be that is presented to the King?  
Who is the one chosen for the King's delight?  
The call has gone out; like a bell it does ring  
For a chaste and perfect virgin; beautiful to the sight*

*So the King will rejoice in His precious bride  
The beautiful virgin in whom He does delight  
Forever she will remain at His side  
And together they will outshine the darkness of the night*

## **II. Hadassah, That is, Esther (verses 5-7)**

<sup>5</sup> **In Shushan the citadel there was a certain Jew**

The Hebrew is laid out in a completely different way than almost all the English translations. It begins with *ish yehudi hayah* – “man, Jew, there was.” It is an abrupt and sudden change from the previous narrative concerning the king, the royal court, and the various things which transpired there. It is obviously a grammatical form used to introduce a complete contrast to what has been stated, and a look forward to what lies ahead. Cambridge states, “The influence which he, a Jew, is to have upon the history is thus placed in significant contrast with the brilliancy of the court of Susa.”

This is correct. The Jews had been in exile – though the exile was ended by Cyrus in 529BC. Many are scattered among the nations, and they have been out of favor with God. Jerusalem was not yet a walled and vibrant city. That wouldn't occur until the time of Nehemiah in 445BC. The Jews are in a lowly state which is completely contrasted to the royal scene which has thus far been presented.

This Jew is right in Shusan, the citadel. From later in the narrative, it would rightly be assumed that he is either a eunuch or a doorkeeper in the king's employ. Although there could be some further explanation for his ability to access the women's court. More about this Jew is next revealed...

<sup>5 (con't)</sup> **whose name was Mordecai**

The name Mordecai is generally debated as to belonging either to a Persian word, *mordkai*, meaning "Little Man," or it is tied to the name of the Babylonian god Marduk, and thus it would mean "Pertaining to Marduk." If this is so, it is not without precedent. The name of Daniel was changed to reflect a Babylonian god, as were others. If Mordecai was a eunuch or a doorkeeper, he would serve among the royals, and would be renamed accordingly. As Paul means "Small," I would go with Mordecai – Little Man – showing a connection between the two.

<sup>5 (con't)</sup> **the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish,**

Here are listed four names which are widely debated. Some see them as his four immediate ancestors. But this is unlikely. Names of ancestors in Scripture are, at times, given to highlight a particular genealogy without specifically naming all in that genealogy. This is the case with Jesus' record in Matthew 1. The term *ben*, means "son," but it can be, and often is, a generational term. One can be a son of Abraham even today, for example.

In this case, he was either the direct son of Jair, or Jair may be listed for another reason which I will explain in verse 6. From there, Mordecai is the son by ancestry of Shimei who is recorded as having cursed King David in 2 Samuel 16:5. Eventually, this same person was executed by Solomon in 1 Kings 2:46. Kish then is named as his next important ancestor. Though Shimei's father was Gera, it is Kish who is significant, being the father of King Saul, the first king of Israel.

Therefore, Kish is the tie between the two genealogies. It is from his house that both King Saul and Mordecai, through Shimei, come. They are both sons of Kish according to

ancestry. This Kish is mentioned by Saul, or Paul, in Acts 13:21. The importance of this connection to Kish lies yet ahead in the story. The name of Kish is connected to the word *qush*, a verb meaning to ensnare. Thus it may mean “To Snare.”

<sup>5</sup> (con't) **a Benjamite.**

Finally, we learn here that the term *yehudi*, or Jew, only indicates that he fell under the broader term which is by now being used to designate any person from any tribe of Israel. He is thus both a Jew and a Benjamite. Again, Benjamin means “Son of my right hand.”

<sup>6</sup> ***Kish* had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives who had been captured with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.**

The name Kish is incorrectly inserted here. The Hebrew simply says, “Which has been carried away.” It is speaking in a general term, not of either Kish or of Mordecai. Rather, this means that this family line, leading to Mordecai, had been carried away. In fact, it very well may be Jair who then is listed for this very reason. He being the ancestor who saw exile. Though more a paraphrase, the New Living Translation gives the correct sense of this verse –

“His family had been among those who, with King Jehoiachin of Judah, had been exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar.” NLT

It is this family line which eventually was carried away along with Jeconiah, king of Judah, by Nebuchadnezzar. That was more than 100 years before (598/597BC). As a side note, this is the only time Jerusalem is mentioned in Esther. Further, it is spelled in an alternate way Yerushalayim.

As a completely amazing point. Of the acrostics found in this one verse, four are one and the same word, *mehera*, or “In a hurry.” Two are in the noun form, and two are in the verb form. They form from reading the verse both forward AND backwards. It is exceptional! The chances of this being random are zero.

<sup>7</sup> **And *Mordecai* had brought up Hadassah,**

This is the only time that the name Hadassah is used in the Bible. It means “Myrtle.” The myrtle is one of the branches used by the Jews to build their *sukkah* in the Feast of

Tabernacles according to Nehemiah 8:15. It is also one of the prophetic pictures of God's promised blessings in Isaiah 55:13. The *hadas*, or myrtle, is from the same root as *hadom*, or footstool. The root means, "to stamp upon." One can think of stamping out sin. Thus, it is quite appropriate to this story of saving and blessing the Jewish people.

<sup>7 (con't)</sup> **that is, Esther,**

The name Esther comes from a Persian word meaning "star." Specifically, it would be the "star" Venus, indicating beauty and good fortune. However, the name of Esther to a Hebrew would remind the audience of two different thoughts, both having a bearing on the story. The first is a compound word which would sound like, "She Searches out Evil." That would be relevant to the heroine. The second is even more relevant to the story itself. The name sounds like a word signifying "hiding." And so Esther would sound like "I Am Hidden." It is exactly what we discussed in the hidden, and yet fully evident, presence of the Lord in the book, and of the hidden acrostics pointing to the Lord in the book as well.

<sup>7 (con't)</sup> **his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother.**

This makes her his own first cousin. He was obviously older and took care of her from the time of the parent's passing. As the Lord directs the life of man, it is obvious that He directed the death of the parents in order to bring Esther into Mordecai's life to save the Jews. One can make obvious deductions by simply stepping back and seeing how God has orchestrated each step of what occurs in order to meet His purposes, and to fulfill His promises.

<sup>7 (con't)</sup> **The young woman was lovely and beautiful.**

The same words are used to describe both Rachel and Joseph as that of Esther – beautiful of form. In addition to this another adjective signifying "beautiful in sight" is added on. She was both shapely and pleasing to the eyes – each a gift of God, but the opposite in appearance cannot be considered a curse. God endows beauty according to His wisdom, and in order to complete the course of His will. One can anticipate details of the story at this point. She has met the requirements for beauty of the royal decision. Now we just have to watch the story unfold.

<sup>7 (con't)</sup> **When her father and mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.**

This was not by chance, but according to will. God's will was for the saving of the Jews, and so according to that greater purpose, the parents were taken away. Mordecai's will was for the safety of his cousin, and the preservation of her Jewishness, and so according to that greater purpose, he took her in as his own daughter. Possibly being a eunuch or a doorkeeper, he was already close to the royal court. This further met the plan which was to be realized by the Lord. This realization begins in verse 8...

*In search of a queen to be by My side  
A radiant beauty to live with through the ages  
A chaste virgin prepared as a bride  
Whose beauty exceeds the poems on thousands of pages*

*Adorned as a queen in royal splendor  
Gloriously appareled, such a beautiful sight  
A bride like no other, so soft and so tender  
And glistening with jewels, shining and bright*

*A bride fit for a King, radiant and lovely is she  
One to bring joy forever to the King's heart  
The perfect union, so shall it forever be!  
Nothing will separate them, nor tear them apart*

### **III. Under the Hand of Hegai (verses 8-11)**

**<sup>8</sup>So it was, when the king's command and decree were heard, and when many young women were gathered at Shushan the citadel, *under* the custody of Hegai, that Esther also was taken to the king's palace,**

The king's command is his spoken approval. The decree, or written law is what would have been issued based on that. Josephus records that there were approximately 400 women gathered together at this time, Esther being one of them. It is possible that the name Esther is being used in a future manner, having been given to her some time after coming into the palace. However, it very well may be that Mordecai called her Esther, and told her to use this name in order to hide her identity before entering the palace. It would go along then with what is stated in verse 10.

This now introduces another set of two's. This one corresponds to the second gathering of virgins recorded in verse 2:19. The first gathering is to find a queen, the second gathering is after a queen has been selected. The first gathering was for the king to find

sufficiency in a queen; the second is to fill a void in the king's desired harem. One meant a good life for Esther; the second could mean death for her. They contrast, and yet they confirm that the king was always on the lookout for others to find pleasure in.

**8 (con't) into the care of Hegai the custodian of the women.**

*el yad hegai shomer hanashim* – literally, “into the hand of Hegai keeper of the women.” The spelling of the name of Hegai varies from Hege of verse 3, but it is referring to the same person. The only difference in the spelling of the names is the final letter which changes from an *aleph* to a *yod*, previously known as a *yad*, which means “hand.” In this verse, Esther has been placed into the hand of Hegai, and the spelling of his name reflects that change. It is into his hand that care of this vitally important woman has been placed.

**9 Now the young woman pleased him, and she obtained his favor;**

Esther's beauty must have been extraordinary. Hegai would have had countless girls under his care – virgins, concubines, lesser wives, and female attendants for them all. And yet, he was truly smitten with Esther – probably both in her physical looks, and in her comportment and demeanor. He saw someone who truly was fitting as a queen, and in preparing her, he would be possibly finding even greater favor in the eyes of the king.

For him to place her in the order in which she arrived would be to keep her away from the king longer. This might be a source of the king's wrath for him later. If the king chose someone else before coming to Esther, and then was given Esther as a concubine, Hegai might look like the world's worst keeper of the women.

These words bring in another set of two's. Here, Esther finds *khesed lepanav*, or “lovingkindness before him.” This will be repeated concerning Esther in the eyes of the king in verse 2:17. Here it is favor of the keeper of the women, there it concerns the love of the king. They contrast, and yet they confirm that she was pleasing in all ways as a refined and beautiful woman. Because he has found her exceptional, he moves to prepare her for the king with all alacrity...

**9 (con't) so he readily gave beauty preparations to her, besides her allowance.**

The word translated as “so he readily” is *v'bahel*. The word *bahal* gives the sense of being dismayed. In this, the sense of hurriedly, or urgently is seen. In 2 Chronicles 26, King Uzziah illegally burnt incense before the Lord. When he did, his forehead broke out

in leprosy. In response to this, the priest *hurried* him out of the sanctuary. This is the sense of the word. Hegai was almost in a panic to have this marvelous beauty prepared for the king.

In this is seen the second of the three times *tamruq*, or items for purification, is found. She was quickly started on this course of preparation and also given *manah*, or a special diet of food, as most good translations state it. Those selected for the king's service, be it virgins or wise men, were given a special portion of food as their diet.

<sup>9 (con't)</sup> **Then seven choice maidservants were provided for her from the king's palace,**

The word "maidservants" is prefixed with the word "the." In other words, it is stating that there were designated seven maidservants to assist her and prepare her as a candidate to being queen. This then is more than just a glamour-fest. It is an entire body of training and introduction into how to conduct oneself in the king's palace. These seven would prepare both her physical looks, such as in bathing, hair care, and the like, but they would also train her in etiquette, manners, customs, and so on.

The word "choice" to describe these maidservants is a participle of the verb *raah* which is used for a particular purpose in both the Talmud and in rabbinical Hebrew, and which occurs only here in the Bible. It shows the special care of Esther as she is being readied for her encounter with the king. Hegai has gone to enormous lengths to ensure that Esther would be ready, that she would be ready quickly, and that she would be fully ready. And as a sign of true endearment to this fabulous beauty he does more...

<sup>9 (con't)</sup> **and he moved her and her maidservants to the best *place* in the house of the women.**

It is as if Hegai anticipates the outcome of the selection. He not only does all that he can for her to prepare her for what was to come, but he gives her the quarters which reflect what she would receive. The rooms would have been palatial, airy, and a delight to the senses. It is obvious that even if the king had not yet made his selection, Hegai had already done so for him...

<sup>10</sup> **Esther had not revealed her people or family, for Mordecai had charged her not to reveal *it*.**

This verse is supplementary to what has just been said about Esther's exceptional treatment, but the reason for it is not stated. Here, she has been commanded by

Mordecai to not reveal either her people, meaning being Jewish, or her line of birth, meaning being of the stock of Israel. Many scholars say that if her Jewish roots had been known, it would have been a setback to her chances to becoming the queen, as if being Jewish in itself was a liability. But that makes no sense. If the best beauties of all the provinces were gathered together, it would include the province of Judea. There is no reason to assume that to be correct.

However, being raised in Sushan, her spoken Persian would be flawless. It would be a plus if she were assumed to be a native Persian, even if it was not a minus to be a foreigner. If she, without lying, said “I am from Sushan,” it would be utterly delightful to both Hegai and the king that such a beauty was reared right in their backyard. Such seems to be the thinking on Mordecai’s mind.

This verse initiates yet another set of two’s. It is that Esther has concealed her identity. That is first found here, and then again in verse 2:20. The first is at the command of Mordecai, and the second is in obedience to his command. They contrast, and yet they confirm the obedience of Esther to her adopted father.

**\*11 (fin) And every day Mordecai paced in front of the court of the women’s quarters, to learn of Esther’s welfare and what was happening to her.**

Unlike the parents of all of the other girls who would probably never again hear of the state of their daughters, Mordecai was able to find out about Esther’s affairs. In whatever capacity he served, he was able to access the front of the women’s quarters and inquire about her there. Even in this, one can see the Lord’s hand working behind the scenes. He has chosen someone with at least partial access to find out what is going on, and to maintain a relationship with the person who would eventually become queen.

Each step of the story continues to show that despite Israel’s inability to stay faithful to their God and the covenant cut between them, such is not the case with the Lord. He is there, tending to His promises, and ensuring that His chosen people would not be destroyed by a wicked plot against them. They had been exiled, some had returned and begun life in Israel again, but there were still many scattered throughout the nations. And soon, all of them would be threatened by the evil intent of one man.

But God has a greater plan that is being worked out in the background. Like a meticulous clock that strikes the seconds, and then the minutes, and then the hours, ever faithful to

proclaim the march of time, the Lord is there, silently moving circumstances as He sees fit to faithfully proclaim the cycle of redemption from beginning to end.

He took Enoch away, for His purposes. He saved Noah through the flood, to continue them on. He called Abraham, He chose Isaac, and He faithfully led Jacob. His favor went toward Rahab, a harlot, and He called Ruth, a young Gentile widow to be His own. Here in Esther, this beautifully woven tapestry is continuing on – for Israel, in anticipation of Christ, and to secure a people from the Gentiles.

He is never distant or uninterested. Though we normally don't see it until after the fact, He is working to bring all things to a good end for those who trust Him. This must be true. What would God merit in stepping out of the eternal realm, uniting with humanity, and dying on a cross, if it wasn't for a very good end. If nothing else, the cross of Christ shows us that God is completely interested in every one of us. So be of good cheer, do the right thing, and call out to Jesus. As caring as the Lord is about what occurred in the palace at Shushan, He is just as caring about what occurs with you.

**Closing Verse:** *“Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me. <sup>2</sup> For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. <sup>3</sup> But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!”*  
2 Corinthians 11:1-4

**Next Week:** Esther 2:12-23 *What will be the outcome of this thing?* (A Night With the King) (4<sup>th</sup> Esther Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. At times, you might feel as if he has no great design for you in life, but he has brought you to this moment to reveal His glory in and through you. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **In Search of a Queen**

After these things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus subsided  
He remembered Vashti, what she had done  
And what had been decreed against her

After the course of his wrath had run

Then the king's servants who attended him said

-----with a notable ring

“Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king

And let the king appoint officers

In all the provinces of his kingdom, so to you we tell

That they may gather all the beautiful young virgins

To Shushan the citadel

Into the women's quarters

Under the custody of Hegai

The king's eunuch, custodian of the women

Whom on the virgins he keeps his eye

And let beauty preparations be given them

Then let the young woman who pleases the king

Be queen instead of Vashti

This thing pleased the king, and he did so; yes he did this thing

In Shushan the citadel there was a certain Jew

Whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair

The son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite

More of Modecai, you can bet we will hear

Kish had been carried away from Jerusalem

With the captives who had been captured in the fray

With Jeconiah, king of Judah

Whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away

And Mordecai had brought up Hadassah

That is, Esther, his uncle's daughter; so they were related

For she had neither father nor mother

As the Bible to us has stated

The young woman was lovely and beautiful

When her father and mother died

Mordecai took her as his own daughter

Parenting skills to her he applied

So it was, when the king's command and decree were heard  
And when many young women were gathered  
-----at Shushan the citadel  
Under the custody of Hegai  
As the story does tell

That Esther also was taken to the king's palace, there and then  
Into the care of Hegai the custodian of the women  
Now the young woman pleased him  
And she obtained his favor, so we know  
So he readily gave beauty preparations to her  
Besides her allowance, to her he did bestow  
Then seven choice maidservants  
Were provided for her from the palace of the king  
And he moved her and her maidservants  
To the best place in the house of the women  
-----so for her he did this thing

Esther had not revealed her people or family one little bit  
For Mordecai had charged her not to reveal it  
And every day Mordecai paced  
In front of the court of the women's quarters  
To learn of Esther's welfare  
And what was happening to her from any passing reporters

Lord God, thank You for Your presence that is with us  
Even when we don't realize that You are there  
Because You sent Your own Son Jesus  
We can know that You truly do care

And so Lord, be real to us in a wonderful new way  
Open our minds and our hearts to seeing You always  
Through every step we take, and throughout every day  
Be real to us, O God, and to You will shall give all of our praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

## ESTHER 2:12-23 (A NIGHT WITH THE KING)

*\*To watch the video of this study, select from the following: [YouTube](#) or [Sermon Audio](#)*

Where does satisfaction come from? And can we, at any time, say that we are completely satisfied? Abraham Maslow's pyramid was taught to us when I was in school. He developed it to show that basic needs had to be met before a person could attain a higher level of satisfaction. As I was taught it, each step up would bring us closer to a marvelous high point where we would be truly satisfied.

His levels started with Physiological needs – food, water, warmth, and rest. If you were deprived one of these things, you couldn't get beyond that point. It kept you down, and you would stay down. After that were Safety needs – security and safety from harm. From there, you progressed to Love and Belonging needs – intimate relationships, friendships, and the like.

After meeting those needs, up the pointy hill you climbed to Esteem needs – you would meet your desire for prestige and feelings of accomplishment and self-worth. Whoo hoo. And finally, yes! After a long trek of meeting all of these other needs, you could finally self-actualize. There you could find your true full potential, including any creative activities that would allow you to express yourself in a complete way.

Unfortunately, you could drop from one point back to a lower point. If you went bankrupt, you might wind up going from self-actualization to physiological needs overnight.

Even as a kid, I questioned the stupidity of this way of looking at life. Almost every moment of our life, we are facing any and all of these needs. Just because you're hungry and can't buy lunch, it doesn't mean that you also don't want to have close and intimate friendships. Maslow's pyramid was taught because teachers needed something to tell us during the long hours of each school day, and someone came up with a diagram. That was more than they had done, and so people ran with it.

There is no time when we can't fully actualize, and that actualization is never, no not ever, found in self. The concept of self-actualization is so ridiculous that it has ruined an entire generation of people who were taught it was possible. To find the most neurotic, self-consumed, lives-out-of-control people on the planet, all you need to do is pick up a magazine and read about the latest problems with the Hollywood crowd.

The people who have every one of Maslow's levels met and exceeded, right up to the pointy top of it, are also the ones who are drunks, adulterers, drug addicts, liars, hate-filled... shall I go on? And we want to emulate them?

Actualization comes from one place, and one place alone. It comes from a personal relationship with the Lord. It comes from standing approved in Him. When we cannot find approval from any other place, including self, we can – and do – find it in Him.

**Text Verse:** *“As the deer pants for the water brooks,  
So pants my soul for You, O God.  
² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When shall I come and appear before God?” Psalm 42:1*

King Ahasuerus is looking for a queen. Whoo hoo! Let's hope he finds a good one. Well, we know he did. We read the sermon text for the day. Her name is Esther. But by the end of our verses today, we find that he didn't delight in the queen completely. In fact, he failed in Maslow's pyramid there and in other areas.

He is the king. He has all the money and power he could ever want. He could pursue whatever avenue of life he wanted to. Self actualization? He should be the epitome of it. But he failed to find joy in his queen, and he failed to find security in his life.

Actualization apart from intimacy with the Lord is impossible. He alone is the Source of all things, and therefore He alone can meet our needs and desires fully and completely. And He can (and will!) do so to the point that we will never drop down a level on that crummy pyramid again. As long as we fix our eyes on Jesus, we have the full and complete actualization to carry us throughout the endless ages of eternity. This is a truth which can only be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. Myrrh and Perfumes (verses 12-14)**

#### **<sup>12</sup> Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus**

Eventually each of the virgin's selection would finally result in the purpose of their selection, a night with the king and a chance at being made queen. The word *tor*, or turn, is introduced. It will be seen here and in verse 15, and then twice in the Song of

Solomon. It comes from the word *tur* which signifies to spy something out. That in turn comes from a root meaning to meander about.

In the Song of Solomon, the word is used to describe rows of ornaments, such as jewels on a necklace. Together they are beautiful, and yet they are individual, radiant, jewels. In this then, we can see that it is as if the king here is winding his way through a process, spying out that which will bring him to his final result, the selection of a queen. Thus, each virgin's turn is a guided process, while the king's is a meandering one.

Like slavery in the Bible, our modern sensibilities do not always coincide with what occurs in these stories. We may think of what is happening as brutish, sexist, or whatever other label we wish to pin on the event, but this was the standard of the times, and these things were common, accepted, and normative for the age. It is certain that those of this period would look at our lives, such as wearing bikinis at the beach, and find us to be out of proper moral bounds.

**12 (con't) after she had completed twelve months' preparation, according to the regulations for the women,**

There were set laws for the virgin's preparation. This was not a willy-nilly process of taking beautiful women from the provinces and then sending them arbitrarily to the king for his pleasure, but a refined process which was intended for the safety of the king, the honor of the office, and also for the king's delight.

An entire year of beauty preparations was called for to ensure that nothing of her old life remained. First, such a period would ensure that she didn't come pregnant, and thus defiled. That would quickly become noticeable. Further, if she was from a land of garlic, they would want that to be purged from her system so she only smelled delightful for the king.

If she had spent her days outdoors, her skin would be tanned, and not whatever natural color she would be in the royal residence. And moral or physical flaw would have a chance to be revealed before she could either harm, or disgrace, the royal office. For these, or any other reasons, the time of her preparation lasted a full year.

The number twelve in the Bible signifies governmental perfection, and so we could infer that this is stated as well to indicate that any candidate for being queen was properly evaluated to ensure she met the necessary qualifications for holding such a position within the government as well.

**12 (con't) for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh,**

The word “preparation,” or *maruq*, here is closely associated with the word *tamruq*, which has already been seen, and which is also used in this verse. It give the sense of beautifying through rubbing with perfumery for purification. For six months, each virgin would be rubbed down with oil of myrrh.

This first spice, *mor*, or *myrrh*, comes from *marar*, or “bitter.” The name gives the sense of “distilling in drops.” It has only been seen so far in Exodus 30 in the making of the special incense for burning in the tabernacle.

Myrrh comes from a shrub and can be obtained in one of two ways. The first is the purest form where it naturally exudes from the plant. This is the “myrrh of freedom,” or “free flowing myrrh.” Inferior myrrh comes from the bark when incisions are made in it. Myrrh is fragrant to smell, but bitter to the taste. Looking at the uses of myrrh in the Old Testament, the prominent idea which it symbolizes is love, but more especially, love in intimate union, but not necessarily sexual in nature.

Myrrh was presented to Christ at both His birth by the Magi, and at his death when mixed in wine to deaden His pain, something He refused.

**12 (con't) and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women.**

The second six-month period is dedicated to rubbing her down with *bosem*, or balsam. The word signifies fragrance, and can be any of various balsam spices, thus the word in Hebrew is plural. The modern words in English for both of these words have retained their Hebrew origin quite well – *mor* is myrrh, and *bosem* is balsam. After twelve months of such rubbing, the woman would be as sweet smelling as she could possibly be, ready for the night of her calling...

**13 Thus prepared, each young woman went to the king,**

The idea here was that there was only a presentation of the woman after this full treatment had been rendered. Once the time of purification and beautification had been met, she would await her turn for a chance to be elevated to the position of queen, or to become a permanent concubine of him, living out her life among the other concubines. In order to give her the best chances in her own mind of obtaining the former, she was given a special honor...

**13 (con't) and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the women's quarters to the king's palace.**

The idea here is that her presentation was whatever she thought would be most pleasing or enticing to the king. If she wanted a certain dress, a particular necklace, a given bit of make up or eye liner, and so on, then it would be provided. This was her one big night, and it was her final chance to change her destiny, possibly going from provincial girl to royal queen. Whatever was kept in the women's quarters was allotted to her for her special night.

**14 In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned to the second house of the women,**

The translation here is correct concerning evening and morning. Some translations will incorrectly say, "on the morrow." The account is written by a Hebrew. The Hebrew day began in the evening, not the morning. Thus it is the same day. To say, "on the morrow," is a technical error as much as a poor paraphrase. The virgin would go into the king in the evening, and when her night was completed, she would be directed to a new residence called the second house of the women.

It is a house specifically maintained for the king's concubines. They would never be permitted to lay with any other man, nor could they ever seek marriage. It is said that Darius, who was conquered by Alexander, had three hundred and sixty concubines. In 1 Kings, Solomon is said to have had a similar number –

"And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart." 1 Kings 11:3

These women who had gone into Ahasuerus were forever the king's property. They would remain that way for the rest of their lives. Their time would be filled with the enjoyments of the royal house and food, but there would be no contact for them with the outside world. There, they would have a new custodian to watch over them...

**14 (con't) to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who kept the concubines.**

The king's eunuch, specially chosen for this particular duty, is Shaashgaz. This is the only time he is mentioned in Scripture. Albert Barnes identifies the name with either *sheshkhunj*, meaning beardless, or *sestgunj*, meaning weak of loins. Either Persian word would be a fitting epithet for a eunuch. In essence then, he is named by his state. It

would be like someone calling me Beardy, or Mr. Muscle. Either way, the epithet would be fitting of the state in which I exist.

**14 (con't) She would not go in to the king again unless the king delighted in her and called for her by name.**

Under the care of Shaashgaz, the now-defiled concubine would never leave the care of the king's eunuch again, unless the king was enamored with her, and if his memory called her to mind. If so, she would be called for by name, and would again be brought to him. It would not be hard for a woman who loathed her calling to simply make herself displeasing to the king on the first night. After this, she would forever be free from being forced to come to him again, but it would also mean that she would be barren and unloved for the rest of her life as well.

*My night with the king; how will it be?  
Will he find delight and joy as I to him submit?  
Is there possibly royalty awaiting me?  
Will he to me the royal crown commit?*

*How my heart trembles, and my body shakes  
To step into his presence, and to him submit  
My head it spins; my constitution quakes  
Will he to me the royal crown commit?*

*One night with the king; can it be true?  
Will there be many more as queen after I so submit?  
I am ready to present myself through and through  
Will the king to me the royal crown commit?*

## **II. The Feast of Esther (verses 15-18)**

**15 Now when the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai,**

Here we learn the name of Esther's father, *Abikhayil*, or Father of Might. The term "father" is to be taken in the sense of possession, and so he would be the "Possessor of might." Here he is also noted as the *dod*, or uncle, of Mordecai. The word *dod* means uncle, but it also means "beloved." Here we have Mordecai in a beloved relationship with the Father of Might.

**15 (con't) who had taken her as his daughter, to go in to the king,**

It is Mordecai who had taken Esther to be his daughter. Now this same Esther is about to have her chance to attain royal status, like all the other women before her were given. There can be only one, and so she will do as she is instructed, trusting in the word of another instead of her own futile attempt at attaining the kings' approval...

**15 (con't) she requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised.**

Instead of trusting in her own ability to discern what would be most pleasing to the king, she wisely takes the advice of the king's eunuch. As the king's eunuch, he would know exactly what was pleasing to him, and he would impart that knowledge to whoever he felt was worthy of receiving that inside information. It shows that he favored her, just as was seen in verse 9.

In this, we could infer a picture of being chosen for the king by grace through faith. The grace is imparted by Hegai, the faith is seen in her acknowledging his instruction. As the appointed trustee of the king, he would bear word from him to the women under his charge. He now exits the narrative and the Bible. Goodbye Hegai.

**15 (con't) And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her.**

The word for "favor" is *khen*. It means grace, favor, and the like. A literal translation here would be, "...and Esther received grace in the eyes of all seeing her." She was obviously beautiful to behold, and when adorned with only those things recommended by the bearer of the king's word to the virgins, she received grace from all eyes which alighted upon her.

**16 So 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.**

As it is the seventh year of the reign of Ahasuerus, and as it is the tenth month, the time of this union is placed at either Dec/Jan 479/478 BC. The extended time between the events of chapter 1 and the events now is explained by the king's absence while waging war against Greece, a time in which he was defeated and suffered disgrace for his losses. Now, in order to redirect his mind away from that sad event, he is working on choosing a queen for the realm. This is the only mention of the month of Tebeth in Scripture. The name corresponds to the tenth month of the Egyptian calendar known as Tubi.

**17 The king loved Esther more than all the *other* women,**

The list includes both his lesser wives, and his concubines. In other words, there is a type of hierarchy among the king's women. There is the chosen queen. After her would be his chosen wives. They would pay respect to the queen, but they were also given certain privileges as wives, such as special quarters, a set revenue from taxes, and the like. And below them would be the concubines. Esther was loved more than all of these. Therefore...

**17 (con't) and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins;**

*va'tisa khen va'khesed lepanav* – And obtained grace and lovingkindness before him. The addition of the words “more than all the virgins” repeats what we have already deduced. None of the secondary wives who were below Vashti were desired by him in making one of them a queen. Instead, virgins were sought out, among whom Esther prevailed, being the fairest virgin of them all.

These words now close out one of our sets of twos. In verse 9, Esther found *khesed lepanav*, or “lovingkindness before” Hegai. Here, she finds *khen va'khesed lepanav* – grace and lovingkindness before the king. There it was favor of the keeper of the women, here it concerns the love of the king. They contrast, and yet they confirm that she was pleasing in all ways as a refined and beautiful woman.

In Hegai is seen a parallel to the work of the Spirit who searches out and prepares those circumcised in heart to be pleasing to God. Through Him grace is found, and after that, grace and lovingkindness is displayed towards God's people.

**17 (con't) so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.**

The setting of the crown is the conferral of the position. In this act, she was raised from concubine to queen, and from unwed to wife. It was now her position to fill in the place of the vanquished Vashti, who is mentioned for the last time in Scripture. We can wave goodbye to her.

**18 Then the king made a great feast, the Feast of Esther, for all his officials and servants;**

This is, like the other feasts mentioned, a banqueting feast. This one is, however, termed a *mishteh gadol*, or a great banquet. Whether this was the customary type of feast for a

newly appointed queen, or whether it is because of the exceptional beauty and grace found in Esther, either way it would have been a magnificent ordeal. It was one to which all of those in high positions would have been invited, and all would be careful to heap high praises upon his choice for queen.

**18 (con't) and he proclaimed a holiday in the provinces and gave gifts according to the generosity of a king.**

Here is a word found only this once in the Bible, *hanakhah*, translated as “holiday.” The word comes from *nuakh*, meaning “rest.” And so “holiday” is not a bad guess. However, some translations will say, “a release.” Others say, “remission of taxes.” This would then give the sense of rest from taxes. It could even be that the queen’s gold is what is being referred to.

As I said earlier, a certain portion was collected from various cities which was given as a revenue to the wives of the king. Adam Clarke thinks that in this, Esther may have petitioned the king to give a rest from this particular tax, thus it would make her a very popular queen. The people would be freed from this obligation for a certain amount of time, or even during the entire time of her filling the position. Whatever the case, it is best to not get dogmatic and stick with any one translation, which could be entirely wrong. Along with this release, gifts were extended to those who found favor in the king’s eyes during this happy celebration.

*I have found favor before the king  
And in his eyes I am highly esteemed  
The honor bestowed upon me makes my heart sing  
What chance was there? None, so it seemed*

*But in the eyes of the king, I found grace and favor  
And so before him now as his bride I stand  
Rejoicing in this moment: one I will forever savor  
When the king extended to me his loving hand*

*And upon my head, the royal crown has been set  
As the queen, I shall be near to him, just at his side  
But from where I came, I shall never forget  
Never shall my heart be filled with pride  
Instead, I will be grateful for the position given to me  
A queen to the king! Oh, how can it be!*

### III. A Plot Against the King (verses 19-23)

#### **<sup>19</sup> When virgins were gathered together a second time,**

This is now the second noted gathering of virgins. The first was in 2:8. The first gathering was to find a queen, the second gathering is after a queen has been selected. The first gathering was for the king to find sufficiency in a queen, the second is to fill a void in the king's desired harem. One meant a good life for Esther, the second could mean death for her. They contrast, and yet they confirm that the king was always on the lookout for others to find pleasure in.

The translation of the NKJV is correct. Many versions say, "And when **the** virgins were gathered **the** second time." There is no definite article in front of either "virgins" or "second." Adding in a definite article in either place leads to a false idea of what is being said. These are not the same group of virgins, and there is no subsequent gathering of them. Instead, this is a new group of virgins, and it is a stand-alone occurrence. One must ask, "Why is this mentioned at all?" What difference does it make in placing this statement here, instead of just not mentioning it at all? These questions have plagued scholars for eons.

Some see this as going back to what happened before Esther's marriage and reliving an event which took place then. That is disproved in the second clause of this verse. Some insert a plot by the royal officials to supplant Esther. Nothing indicates that. It is forced and incorrect. No commentary really gives a suitable reason for the inclusion of these words. But to understand them merely takes looking ahead to what Esther says in chapter 4 –

"Then Esther spoke to Hathach, and gave him a command for Mordecai: <sup>11</sup> "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, *he has* but one law: put *all* to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days.'" Esther 4:10-11

Chapter 3 shows that this was after the start of the twelfth year of the king's reign; or five years later. It was apparent that despite Esther finding favor in the king's eyes, even enough to be made queen, he still was enjoying the privilege of being king by bringing in another group of virgins. After five years of being queen, he was still more interested in what is new and exciting than he was in her. Because he was enjoying this avenue, she

had not been called to be with the king. If she were out of his favor because he found a virgin he favored more, entering his presence without permission would mean her death. Though she was queen, it did not permit her to approach his throne without first being called. This is the reason for including this seemingly irrelevant note about a second gathering of virgins.

<sup>19</sup> (con't) **Mordecai sat within the king's gate.**

These words show that the previous clause was not referring back to before she was made queen. At that time, he is said to have paced in front of the women's quarters. Now he sits within the king's gate. He was then, and is now, where she can be most easily contacted. Due to her occupying the queen's residence, the nearest place that he could be to obtain news about her was at this spot. Each word and clause is carefully selected to show a logical progression of the story, while at the same time showing that God is in the background directing the events despite the choices and decisions of man.

<sup>20</sup> **Now Esther had not revealed her family and her people, just as Mordecai had charged her,**

Verse 20 is parenthetical between verses 19 and 21. It is providing information necessary to develop the theme which is continuing on in the story. The primary placement of the word "family" here is notable in the Hebrew. As John Lange says of it, "This is here placed first, because the relation of Esther to Mordecai is under consideration."

The fact that she was Jewish has nothing to do with her hiding the matter, as if she was ashamed of it, or as if it could have, or could still, harm her in the eyes of the king. That is entirely unfounded, and by the end of the story that will be seen wrong. It is Mordecai who has instructed her, and that is all that matters. He is concerned about her and other's perception of her relation to him. Their nationality is of secondary concern.

This is now the ending of another set of twos. She was shown to have concealed her identity in verse 2:10, and the same is said of her now in this verse. The first was at the command of Mordecai, and the second is in obedience to his command. They contrast, and yet they confirm the obedience of Esther to her adopted father. In this, no faithlessness to the king or anyone else can be noted, but a great faithfulness to Mordecai is seen. This is substantiated by the next words...

<sup>20</sup> (con't) **for Esther obeyed the command of Mordecai as when she was brought up by him.**

The inclusion of these words shows the faithfulness of Esther to Mordecai. Her royal position, and whatever wealth and honor she possessed was seen as secondary to her faithful allegiance to the one who raised her and nurtured her. This may also show a humility in Mordecai. With her advancement to queen, he also could have risen in the royal court. But by keeping their family unit a secret, Mordecai would retain his particular position without any additional pomp and favor being bestowed to him. The intimate family connection between the two is what is highlighted. In this, the word *omnah*, or “being brought up,” is given. This is the only time it is found in the Bible, and it gives the sense of training, or tutelage. His raising of her resulted in a faithful, obedient step- daughter.

**<sup>21</sup> In those days, while Mordecai sat within the king’s gate, two of the king’s eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, doorkeepers, became furious and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.**

The story now proceeds from verse 19, after the parenthetical insert. It is possible that Bigthan is the same person as Bigtha in verse 1:10. This is not improbable because the name changes a third time in verse 6:2 to Bigthana. If this is the same person, he was high in the king’s court. Teresh may have been elevated to that same rank at some point in the intervening years. Together, they were considered doorkeepers.

The Hebrew word for “door” here is one which is translated also as a bowl, basin, or cup. Thus, this is a door where there is a curved-in threshold, and probably then, the very entrance way to the king’s bedroom. This would have been a position of the highest trust, because of it would also be the position easiest to rush upon and kill the king. Somehow, Mordecai learned that they had evil intent for the king. Any speculation about why they were angry, or how Mordecai found out is irrelevant, and so it goes unstated.

What is rather unusual is that eventually, history records that this same king, Xerxes, would eventually be murdered by Artabanus, the captain of the guard, and Aspamitras, a chamberlain and eunuch. One plot against him was foiled, but another would eventually see his end.

This verse introduces a set of two’s. Here the words of the deeds of Bigthan and Teresh, the doorkeepers of Ahasuerus, are reported by Mordecai. The same words – Mordecai, Bigthan, Teresh, doorkeepers, and Ahasuerus – are all repeated in verse 6:2. The two accounts differ as one is occurring, and one has occurred, but they confirm that what has occurred is crucial to the unfolding events in the lives of all concerned.

**<sup>22</sup> So the matter became known to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name.**

As speculated in the previous sermon, Mordecai was possibly a eunuch or a doorkeeper of some level within the royal compound. This makes it not at all improbable that he could have heard of the plot against the king. However the word came to him, he passed it on to Esther, and from there it was passed on to the king in Mordecai's name.

This would have two positive results. First, it would vouch for the truthfulness of the information, and secondly, it would hopefully benefit Mordecai in a time of future need. It is a note of wisdom on the part of Esther to thus pass on the information in this manner. It would also directly lead to the salvation of the Jews, as well as the exaltation of Mordecai.

**<sup>23</sup> And when an inquiry was made into the matter, it was confirmed, and both were hanged on a gallows;**

The inquiry was certainly one which involved torture. Anyone who threatened the king would face death, and so a denial would be expected. Eventually, a confession would be gathered concerning the matter, and then the execution would be handed down. In this case, the word is *talah*, or hanging. However, it doesn't necessarily mean hanging by a rope. In Deuteronomy 21, it says –

“If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, <sup>23</sup> his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the Lord your God is giving you *as* an inheritance; for he who is hanged *is* accursed of God.” Deuteronomy 21:22, 23

Paul then cites that verse in Galatians 3:13 to indicate crucifixion. This was known to be common in Persia at the time, and so they may have been hung to a tree by crucifixion. The word translated as “gallows” here simply means wood from a tree. However they departed, it would have been an “ouchy” way to go.

**\*<sup>23</sup> (fin) and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.**

We finish with words that would otherwise be unimportant except for the continuance of the narrative. It is these words here which will bring about another chain of events which will lead to Jewish salvation when it seemed they were to be destroyed. Like other courts of the ancient Middle East, the Persians had scribes who sat before the king and recorded what he did. They would move with him, and keep a constant record of events. For the king, it would be like a careful diary that he could refer to anytime in order to bring back to memory things that he may have let slip during the busy hours of his daily life.

At times during the narrative of these verses, it seems hard to grasp why certain things are mentioned. As I said, a couple verses in particular have left scholars scratching their heads and reaching out for explanations which have failed to sufficiently answer the situation or circumstance.

But because this is the word of God, each word is carefully selected, and even carefully placed within the Hebrew, in order to show us a marvelously unfolding tapestry of God's wisdom concerning how to resolve a matter which seems out of control, as well as His never-ending watch over, and care for, His people.

Nothing is superfluous, nothing is left out, and each detail shows meticulous attention. As we continue on, it will appear that the Jews will be destroyed. This would include those back in the land after return from exile. There would be nothing left of them because of the hatred of one man, soon to be introduced. However, God promised in the Law of Moses that they would always be kept as a people. Esther will show how this promise continued to be kept. But it is the little details now that are getting us to that point.

Again, we can look to these things, and we can insert ourselves right into them as far as God's faithfulness is concerned. Once He speaks, that word is stronger than iron. When it is recorded, it is to be considered an everlasting surety that we can cling to. Christ Jesus has established His church, and His church is made up of individuals. As carefully as He watched over Mordecai and Esther, He is watching over us. Both Mordecai and Esther are going to face stress and trouble, but both of them – along with their people – will also be delivered.

No matter what we face, the Lord has said that because of our faith in Christ Jesus, we are sealed with a guarantee – the greatest guarantee of all – the Holy Spirit. Our salvation is set. To question it after God has sealed us, is to question God's integrity. Let

us not waiver in our conviction, and let us stand fast on the truth of His word. In the end, we will stand approved not because of our reliability, but because of His.

**Closing Verse:** *"I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, <sup>5</sup> that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, <sup>6</sup> even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, <sup>7</sup> so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>8</sup> who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."* 1 Corinthians 1:4-9

**Next Week:** Esther 3:1-15 *Whether Jew under a star, or the church under a steeple...*  
(There is a Certain People) (5<sup>th</sup> Esther Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. At times, you might feel as if he has no great design for you in life, but he has brought you to this moment to reveal His glory in and through you. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

## **A Night With the King**

Each young woman's turn came  
To go in to King Ahasuerus, it was when  
After she had completed twelve months' preparation  
According to the regulations for the women

For thus were the days of their preparation apportioned:  
Six months with oil of myrrh, for a really good smell  
And six months with perfumes and preparations  
For beautifying women as well

Thus prepared, each young woman went to the king  
And she was given whatever she desired  
To take with her from the women's quarters  
To the king's palace; as she was so inspired

In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned  
To the second house of the women; her new confines  
To the custody of Shaashgaz

The king's eunuch who kept the concubines

She would not go in to the king again, for sure  
Unless the king delighted in her, and by name called for her

Now when the turn came for Esther  
The daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai  
Who had taken her as his daughter  
To go in to the king, by and by

She requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch  
The custodian of the women, advised  
And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her  
With her beauty everyone was hypnotized

So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus  
Into his royal palace, in the tenth month, we know  
Which is the month of Tebeth  
In the seventh year of his reign it was so

The king loved Esther more than all the other women  
And she obtained grace and favor in his sight  
More than all the virgins  
Esther pleased the king on that night

So he set the royal crown upon her head  
And made her queen; replacing Vashti instead

Then the king made a great feast, the Feast of Esther  
For all his officials and servants he did this thing  
And he proclaimed a holiday in the provinces and gave gifts According to the generosity  
of a king

When virgins were gathered together a second time, on that date  
Mordecai sat within the king's gate

Now Esther had not revealed her family and her people  
Just as Mordecai had charged her, so she did

For Esther obeyed the command of Mordecai  
As when she was brought up by him, even as a kid

In those days, while Mordecai sat  
Within the king's gate, two of the king's eunuchs  
----- they were treasonous  
Bigthan and Teresh, doorkeepers  
Became furious and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus

So the matter became known to Mordecai  
Who told Queen Esther, just the same  
And Esther informed the king  
Yes, she informed the king in Mordecai's name

And when an inquiry was made into the matter, it was confirmed And both were hanged  
on a gallows; so they were dangling  
And it was written in the book of the chronicles  
In the presence of the king

Lord God, thank You for Your presence that is with us  
Even when we don't realize that You are there  
Because You sent Your own Son Jesus  
We can know that You truly do care

And so Lord, be real to us in a wonderful new way  
Open our minds and our hearts to seeing You always  
Through every step we take, and throughout every day  
Be real to us, O God, and to You will shall give all of our praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

## ESTHER 3:1-15 (THERE IS A CERTAIN PEOPLE)

*\*To watch the video of this study, select from the following: [YouTube](#) or [Sermon Audio](#)*

The Jewish people are facing real trouble in today's verses. It seems like a truly calamitous affair as to where they are with the verses we just read. And indeed, for anyone who was to stop at this point in the story, it would seem like a sad end for them.

But they were selected by God, and he made great and sure promises to them. What they need now is not a drop into the pit of despair, but a reminder of the covenant promises made to them, and faith that those promises are true.

And this is true with every person now who is one of the redeemed of the Lord. For the person who has called on Christ, there is no situation too hopeless, no disaster too great, and no loss so complete that good will not come out of it. When one thing is lost, another thing is provided. When one door is shut, another one will open up. When a child dies, someone affected by that death calls on Christ and is born again.

What we think of as impossible, God uses as the perfect opportunity. When we can't see how things will ever be right again, God has already straightened out that which was broken. I'm not saying this to be cliché; it is simply true. Because of Jesus Christ in the believer's life, the worst possible thing we could imagine is just a step to something better. Got cancer and are dying? Heaven is waiting. Bad cannot outdo good, and joy lies ahead for those who wait on the Lord.

**Text Verse:** *"I will go before you  
And make the crooked places straight;  
I will break in pieces the gates of bronze  
And cut the bars of iron.  
<sup>3</sup>I will give you the treasures of darkness  
And hidden riches of secret places,  
That you may know that I, the Lord,  
Who call you by your name,  
Am the God of Israel." Isaiah 45:2, 3*

Long before Israel was in exile, the Lord had already called Cyrus by name to release Israel from captivity. Everything is already known in the Lord's mind. There is no thing that can thwart His will, and the disasters of exile for disobedience were overcome by favor and restoration for those who wished to return home.

But some Jews stayed in the land of their exile. One might call this disobedience, but God used it as opportunity. That will be seen in the chapters ahead. Many Jews died in the Holocaust, but that set the stage for their reestablishment as a nation. There are still Jews in the dispersion today, but they are being used to both bless and protect Israel that has returned.

God is using all of these things for a good end for them. Though they are not right with Him at this time, He is looking forward... ahead to when they will be. If you look at the world from a biblical perspective, it doesn't matter how bad things seem, there is always, always something positive ahead. And so as we look into the verses today, and as we end on an otherwise sad note, let us remember that the book is written, the story is complete, good things are ahead, and we are just in the process of getting there.

It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

## **I. The Agagite (verses 1-7)**

### **<sup>1</sup>After these things**

The words are speaking of the events at the end of Chapter 2 where Mordecai uncovered a plot to harm the king. This was subsequently passed on to the king who had the conspirators hung. It is after these things that the story brings in the next relevant events to be detailed. The timing of them is between the seventh and the twelfth year of the reign of Ahasuerus. The seventh year is mentioned in verse 2:16, and the twelfth will be seen in verse 3:7.

### **<sup>1 (con't)</sup> King Ahasuerus promoted Haman,**

*gidal ha'melekh akhashverosh eth haman* – “made large Ahasuerus, Haman.” The words are actually explained in the final clause of the verse, but the promotion is stated here in this abrupt way to form a contrasting parallel in the narrative between the exaltation of Esther in the previous chapter, and that of Haman here. One has found the favor of the king's heart, and the other has found the favor of his throne.

The actual meaning of the name Haman is debated. Some tie it to various Persian words, but the true meaning appears lost to history. From a Hebrew perspective, it is closely associated with the verb *aman*, which means to confirm or be truthful. If so, then his

name might mean “Certainty,” but we can’t say this with certainty. The name of one of the seven eunuchs in verse 1:10, Mehuman, is derived from the Aramaic version of that same verb. And so some have tied Haman in as the same person who is now promoted above the others.

As noted in the first sermon, Esther is a book which is read annually at the Jewish feast of Purim. As the book is read, every time the name Haman is read, all of the people shout and rattle noise-making toys to drown out his name. He is identified then as the epitome of the enemy of the Jews, a title he is actually given four times in Esther, beginning in verse 3:10.

One can almost taste what lies ahead because of the sudden introduction of this vile person. Understanding biblical history, one could then find a reason for what will come about in the story. That begins to be revealed in the next words...

<sup>1</sup> (con’t) **the son of Hammedatha the Agagite,**

The name Hammedatha is almost ignored by scholars as to any known meaning. The closest attempt at explaining it is that it is tied to the word Mahadata, meaning “given by the moon.” And thus it might be inferred that he would be “The son of the one who works in darkness.” The designation Agagite is also of singular note and importance. The name Agag is connected to the word *gag*, or roof. It thus signifies that which is the highest. This name is directly connected to the names Gog and Magog. Magog goes back to Genesis 10:2 as a son of Japheth. Gog and Magog are found as the great enemies who will come against Israel as noted in Ezekiel 38 and Revelation 20. Agag is first seen in Numbers 24:7 in an oracle given by Balaam the prophet. In his oracle, he blesses Israel with these words –

“How lovely are your tents, O Jacob!

Your dwellings, O Israel!

<sup>6</sup> Like valleys that stretch out,

Like gardens by the riverside,

Like aloes planted by the Lord,

Like cedars beside the waters.

<sup>7</sup> He shall pour water from his buckets,

And his seed *shall be* in many waters.

“His king shall be higher than Agag,

And his kingdom shall be exalted.” Numbers 24:5-7

After this, Agag is mentioned again in 1 Samuel 15. There he is known as Agag, king of the Amalekites. The Amalekites were most notably mentioned in Exodus 17. It is a passage which must be repeated to gain a fuller understanding of the narrative –

“Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. <sup>9</sup> And Moses said to Joshua, “Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand.” <sup>10</sup> So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. <sup>11</sup> And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. <sup>12</sup> But Moses’ hands *became* heavy; so they took a stone and put *it* under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. <sup>13</sup> So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. <sup>14</sup> Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write this *for* a memorial in the book and recount *it* in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.” <sup>15</sup> And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-Lord-Is-My-Banner; <sup>16</sup> for he said, “Because the Lord has sworn: the Lord *will have* war with Amalek from generation to generation.”” Exodus 17:8-16

The name Amalek is derived from the word *am*, or people, and from the word *malaq* which “means to nip or wring off the head of a bird with or without severing it from the body.” (Abarim) Thus, they are the “The People Who Wring Off.” They are those who are disconnected from the body and strive to disconnect the body. It is a fitting description of Haman and his coming actions.

The Amalekites attempted to wring off the Israelites in Exodus 17 and they were defeated, but the promise was that the Lord would have war with Amalek from generation to generation. There would be an end to this on-going war though. Again, in Balaam’s prophecy in Numbers 24, he pronounced these words –

“Amalek *was* first among the nations,  
But *shall be* last until he perishes.” Numbers 24:20

This same group came against Israel during the times of the Judges and into the times of the kings. It is in 1 Samuel 15 where the names Amalek and Agag are united, and which become a key to understanding what is going on here in Esther. The entire chapter needs to be read to get this. **(Stop and read 1 Samuel 15).**

After this story, the Amalekites continued to trouble Israel, including battles with King David. When Saul was injured in battle, he killed himself by falling on his own sword. However, an Amalekite came to David with Saul's crown and claimed to have been the one to kill him. In this, David had him executed. But the stain of the conflict between Saul and Amalek was deep. It is what is explicitly stated as having cost him his continuing right to the kingship of Israel.

With this understanding, we can now go back and see why the genealogy of Mordecai was so carefully noted in verse 2:5. His ancestors went back to Kish, a Benjamite. King Saul was a son of Kish, meaning that Mordecai and Esther were of the same family within Benjamin as Saul. But they were related to Kish through Saul's nephew Shimei, who is also listed in Esther 2:5.

As I said then, Shimei is recorded as having cursed King David in 2 Samuel 16:5. Eventually, this same person was executed by Solomon in 1 Kings 2:46.

It is Kish who is the tie between the two genealogies. It is from his house that both King Saul and Mordecai, through Shimei, come. They are both sons of Kish according to ancestry. This Kish is mentioned by Saul, or Paul, in Acts 13:21. The name of Kish is connected to the word *qush*, a verb meaning to ensnare. Thus it may mean "To Snare."

And so we can see now that Haman, the Agagite of Amalek is being set in opposition to Mordecai, who descends from Kish, the Benjamite. A double disgrace fell upon this line. First, Saul was ensnared in his failure to destroy Amalek as ordered, and he lost the kingship. Secondly, Shimei was ensnared in his hatred of David who was chosen to replace Saul, cursing this new royal line. Both of these stains rested upon the line of Kish. The story in Esther shows a correction of these failures of the past. As a note, it is assumed that the name Agag is not necessarily the proper name of the person in 1 Samuel 15, but rather a royal title, just as Pharaoh is not a name, but a title. Either way, Haman is described as an Agagite, one who is of Amalek, and who is said to be at war with Israel from generation to generation, and whose name and clan will eventually perish.

<sup>1 (con't)</sup> **and advanced him and set his seat above all the princes who *were* with him.**

These words explain the first clause which said the king had promoted Haman. However, more is left out of what is said about the promotion than what is stated. We aren't told why he was promoted, from what position he was promoted, etc. The record simply and succinctly records his promotion above the others.

**<sup>2</sup> And all the king's servants who were within the king's gate bowed and paid homage to Haman,**

The term "servants" here gives the sense of those lower than the princes of the court. As they are said to be within the king's gate, then it would be the same level of servant as Mordecai who was said to sit within the king's gate in the previous chapter. This lower class of servants bowed and paid homage to Haman. The same word, *ebed*, servant, is used when speaking of Messiah in Isaiah 52:13.

The word translated as "bowed" comes from a root signifying, "to bend the knee." It is some sign of obeisance from a curtsy to a bow to even kneeling. The act then explains the second word translated as "paid homage." The sign of bowing is what then pays the homage. One can bow without paying homage, and one can pay homage without bowing. But here one is tied to the other.

**<sup>2 (con't)</sup> for so the king had commanded concerning him.**

This was the command of the king, just as it would be the command of the president, who commissions officers within the military, that the enlisted ranks are to salute officers. The salute is the act, and the homage is tied to the act. It is the same thought in a salute then, as is the thought in the bowing. As it is the king's command, then it is expected to be followed...

**<sup>2 (con't)</sup> But Mordecai would not bow or pay homage.**

It is generally assumed that this is tied in with the fact that he is a Jew, as is explicitly stated in verse 4. From this, it is held by most scholars that because he is a Jew, it would be inappropriate for him to bow in homage to a man, being a type of idolatry. This however, seems unlikely at best. The same word, *shakhah*, is used many times for a man bowing or prostrating before other men. Abraham did it before the sons of Heth. It is a regular occurrence before kings and others in the books of Samuel and Kings, and elsewhere.

To this day, Jews serve in governments around the world, and they give proper respect to their designated authorities. In the US military, they salute their superiors, and they salute the president and the flag. Further, if this type of salute was required for Haman, then it would certainly be required before the king. If Mordecai refused to honor the king, it would mean execution rather than being someone who sat in the king's gate.

It appears that as a Jew, Mordecai refused to bow to Haman because he was an Agagite, and thus an Amalekite. This is certainly what is the case. The ancient enmity between these rivals made Mordecai refuse to pay homage to the enemy of the Jews.

**<sup>3</sup> Then the king's servants who were within the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why do you transgress the king's command?"**

It is the same word for servants as in verse 2. In other words, those of the same rank as Mordecai were willing to pay homage to Haman, but they noticed that he was not. And so their question to him is obvious, "Why do you transgress the king's command?" The very nature of the question shows that this has nothing to do with him being a Jew who cannot pay homage based on religious grounds. If so, then they would have asked the same thing when he failed to honor the king in this way. Even more, he never would have become a servant of the king if he failed to pay him homage. They can tell that there is more involved between Mordecai and Haman, and that it caused Mordecai to refuse to bow to him.

**<sup>4</sup> Now it happened, when they spoke to him daily and he would not listen to them,**

There is the sense of frustration among the servants, as would be right under any normal circumstances. If a person were in the military, and someone refused to salute an officer because he was black, he would probably say to him over a period of days, "You're not being disobedient to that guy, you're being disobedient to the rank he possesses. Despite your hatred of him, you need to respect the position." Eventually, through continued refusal, the matter would have to be elevated. There is nothing wrong in what is happening here. There appears to be a violation of the king's command, and they are rightly questioning Mordecai's refusal to obey it. And so...

**<sup>4 (con't)</sup> that they told *it* to Haman, to see whether Mordecai's words would stand;**

It is Mordecai's words, not his actions, which are mentioned. Were his words sufficient to support his actions? They check with Haman. It is the logical and appropriate action to take. Mordecai has stated his reasons for not paying homage to Haman. With no other option, the servants then passed this on to Haman to see whether he would force Mordecai to obey, or whether Mordecai would prevail.

Again, the tenor of this matter isn't that of a Jew refusing to pay homage because of religion, but because of enmity. If it was religion, it would have been seen in any other person who was so designated to receive the same type of honor, including the king.

Rather, it is Haman who Mordecai will not bow to because of his genealogy. This continues to be seen with the words...

<sup>4</sup> (con't) **for *Mordecai* had told them that he *was* a Jew.**

Of this, John Gill, who is in agreement with almost all scholars, says, “He had told them that he was a Jew; and therefore did not deny this reverence to Haman out of pride, or any personal grudge against him, much less out of a rebellious mind and contempt of the king’s authority and command; but merely out of conscience, because he was a Jew, who was obliged to give this honour to none but to God only.” This is exactly the opposite of what is happening.

If this thought was correct, Haman’s response would have been much different. Rather, because Mordecai was a Jew, he refused Haman any sort of obeisance at all. The matter is personal, and its roots go back to the very Exodus of Israel from Egypt. The Amalekites were Israel’s sworn enemies, and it would be loathsome to give homage to one of the enemies of the people of the Lord. This is clearly seen in Haman’s response...

<sup>5</sup> **When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath.**

The words and actions are taken personally. It is not the king’s command which Haman is concerned about. Otherwise, it would have said that he was angry that he didn’t obey the king’s command. Instead, it is because Mordecai refused *him* homage.

The ancient enmity is herein brought to remembrance. “Those Jews who almost exterminated my people refuse to give me homage now that I am ruler over them.” The entire thought is that of ancient rivalry, rising to the surface, and then foaming from the heat boiling within. This is exactly what the word *khemah*, or wrath, signifies – heat boiling over in fury.

<sup>6</sup> **But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone,**

For Haman, it would not suffice to simply eradicate the offender. It would be too easy, too quickly forgotten, and it would not solve the root of the problem at all. There was a far larger issue that he was determined to deal with, and he was in the position which would allow him to do so with ease and finality. Therefore, instead of laying hands on his immediate enemy alone, he would have them grab and destroy all those associated with him...

<sup>6</sup> (con't) **for they had told him of the people of Mordecai.**

With Mordecai's nationality revealed as to the source of the enmity, there would have to be a cleansing of that very source in order for the enmity to cease. It is exactly the same thing which has been seen countless times throughout history, among many races, and even many times among the Jews in particular.

Even in the Persian Empire, it was only fifty years earlier that the historian Herodotus says that when Darius Hystaspes ascended to the throne, he massacred all of the Magi in the land. It was an event which was celebrated annually during Haman's time. With such a precedent still in commemoration, his desires would simply be another event for the empire to commemorate. Yes, rather than just killing just Mordecai...

<sup>6</sup> (con't) **Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who *were* throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus—the people of Mordecai.**

It is common for commentaries to say that the events of Esther occurred during the dispersion of the Jews from their homeland, because the events occur outside of Israel. And it is true, Mordecai and many other Jews were in dispersion throughout the known world at this time. However, it is not true that this was during the period of the exile. The exile had officially ended about 60 years before by the decree of Cyrus in 539BC.

As this is so, and as the land of Israel was now a province of the kingdom, it would mean that Israel would be completely eradicated. The ancient hatred would finally be ended through the annihilation of the Jewish people. Wherever they were, it was within the power of Haman to have them completely exterminated. Any outside of the kingdom itself would be so dispersed, and so few in number that they would never recover from the events he was to plan and execute.

<sup>7</sup> **In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that is, the lot), before Haman to determine the day and the month, until *it fell on the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar.***

Nisan is the first month of the redemptive calendar for the Jews. In Exodus, it is known as Aviv. However, the name Nisan was adopted after the Babylonian exile. The month corresponds to March/April on our calendar. As it is the twelfth year of Ahasuerus, this is the year 474BC. It is on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan that the Passover is commemorated. The Hebrew reads, "from day to day, and from month to month, twelfth." In other words, lots were cast for each successive month, and then each successive day within the

month. In doing this, they would determine the most propitious time of the year to bring about the plan. The twelfth month, Adar, is selected.

*When the wicked are in power  
The people mourn and are afraid  
Distress comes hour after hour  
Sadness in heart and soul is constantly displayed*

*But God's people should never bow to them  
We are to stand resolutely before our foes  
Though they may threaten, haw, and hem  
Let us stand unconcerned that this is how it goes*

*Because the Lord has a plan, good and upright  
For those who are His; it shall in time be revealed  
The wicked will perish forever from His people's sight  
Great is the plan that is at this time concealed*

## **II. If it Pleases the King (verses 8-15)**

**<sup>8</sup> Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom;**

The numbers of those who chose to return to the land with Zerubbabel are recorded in the book of Ezra. They numbered 42,360. Therefore, the majority of the Jews remained scattered throughout the empire. But he uses two words here to describe their scattering. First is a new word in Scripture, *pazar*, or scattered. It then says *parad*, or separated. Not only were they scattered throughout the empire, but they kept separated and aloof from the other peoples. Surely other groups were disobedient to the king, but with such a wide scattering, and with such an arrogance of attitude, great trouble was sure to arise in every place because...

**<sup>8 (con't)</sup> their laws are different from all other people's, and they do not keep the king's laws.**

It is true that the customs of the Jews were different, and that they had not assimilated into the surrounding peoples. Further, the laws stemming from Moses were also different for many aspects of life, but those laws dealt with religion rather than a conflict with the set laws of other lands. Further, the Jews are always known for obedience to

the laws of the lands they live in to the highest degree possible. This was explicitly one of the words from the Lord through Jeremiah. They were to seek the peace of the city where they dwelt. In doing so, they too would have peace. Haman, however, has found one act of disobedience to the king's laws to be reason to accuse all Jews of total disobedience. And so...

**8 (con't) Therefore it *is* not fitting for the king to let them remain.**

It is a statement of supposed piety. "I'm not doing this for my sake, but for your sake... in order to protect your kingdom."

**9 If it pleases the king, let *a decree* be written that they be destroyed,**

In having a royal edict, the matter would become official kingdom policy. Through this, any stink of the offense would be lifted off of himself, and it would be placed on the king and on his court. Regardless of who suggested the law, the king was demonstrating agreement with it, and full sanction for its execution. Haman would be completely off the hook when the matter was decreed.

**9 (con't) and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who do the work, to bring *it* into the king's treasuries."**

This is an immense amount of money being offered by Haman to accomplish the task. In essence, he has already said that keeping the Jews alive would be costly to the empire, but in destroying them, it would also be costly to the empire. And so to rectify the situation, he would pay for it himself. Some scholars question the accuracy of the amount because of its enormous size. But historical records show that other individuals had offered even greater amounts to kings for such purposes. One new word in Scripture here is *genez* or "treasuries." It is from a root meaning "to store" and thus it is a chest or coffer. It will be seen twice in Esther, and once in Ezekiel.

**10 So 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.**

This is the first of another set of twos. Here the king takes off his signet ring and gives it to Haman so that he will possess the king's authority, including the issuance and authentication of an edict in the king's name. This will be done again for Mordecai in verse 8:2. This first time, it is given to a Gentile, Haman the Amalekite. The next time it will be given to a Jew, Mordecai. This time it will be for the destruction of the Jews; next

it will be for their salvation. They contrast, but they confirm that God sets up rulers and he deposes rulers in order to accomplish His purposes.

The *tabaath*, or signet ring, comes from *taba*, meaning “down,” or “to sink.” Thus, it is a ring which is used to press down into wax or clay in order to impress a seal. It is that which speaks of authority. Haman is given the full authority to act on behalf of the king. The ring would act as a signet. When pressed into a wax seal, it would be equivalent to an issuance directly from the king. Thus, the king has agreed to the deed, and now the full authority of the Persian empire is to be directed against the Jews by the hereditary enemy of the Jews. The full name and lineage are given here to show the momentous nature of the event.

**<sup>11</sup> And the king said to Haman, “The money and the people *are* given to you, to do with them as seems good to you.”**

There are two varied explanations for these words. The first is a refusal of the money offered by Haman. The decree is allowed, and no expectation of payment is needed. The second is that the money being given to him is that of the plunder received from the killing of the Jews. Confiscation of property was always the result of capital punishment, and thus that would be received by the royal coffers. Either way, the king would benefit, and it would either cost Haman nothing, or he would also benefit monetarily.

**<sup>12</sup> Then the king’s scribes were called on the thirteenth day of the first month,**

This seems purposeful and calculated by Haman. This is the day prior to the Passover. Even if all the Jews of the empire would not hear of the edict at this time, those in Shushan would. Mordecai’s Passover remembrance of the Jew’s deliverance would be a mournful taste of future Jewish destruction.

It should be noted that an almost exact recurrence of this event happened just under 500 years later, when at this same time, the gospels record that the Jews themselves conspired together with the Gentiles and the powers of darkness to destroy the true Passover Lamb, Christ Jesus. But just as the Jews of this time were to be delivered by God who is working behind the scenes on their behalf, so Christ would be delivered from death by God who destroyed Satan’s power through the resurrection. In this, the Jews cut themselves off from His favor. Those who were friends became His enemies, and those who were far off, were brought near.

<sup>12</sup> (con't) **and a decree was written according to all that Haman commanded—to the king's satraps, to the governors who were over each province, to the officials of all people, to every province according to its script, and to every people in their language. In the name of King Ahasuerus it was written, and sealed with the king's signet ring.**

The decree went out to all officials throughout the empire 11 months prior to its execution. It would take some time for the messages to be received, but even if it was a couple weeks, there would still be many months of terror for the Jews. Those who could get up and flee very well might do so. For those who stayed, they only did so in anticipation of certain death. One new and rare word is used here, *akharshdarpan*, or satrap. It is a Persian loan word which will only be seen four times in Esther.

This now also introduces another set of two's. It is the actual issuance of a royal edict for the destruction of the Jews. This will be overwritten in chapter 8. One is for the Jew's destruction; one is for their salvation. They contrast, but they confirm God's overarching protection of the Jews despite the wicked plots against them. Man enacts, but God rules over man as absolute Sovereign.

<sup>13</sup> **And the letters were sent by couriers into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their possessions.**

The courier system of the empire is described by Xenophon. It was highly efficient, modeling our Pony Express. The verse here, citing the content of the letter, uses as many surplus words as a Dicken's novel – destroy, kill, annihilate; and young and old, little children, and women. The cruel passion of the overuse is to ensure that complete destruction of all Jews, without exception, is the ultimate goal. The timing of the mandate is for exactly 11 months from the date of issuance, or the 13<sup>th</sup> of the 12<sup>th</sup> month. Plundering of the possessions is mandated, and it would be assumed that the royal coffers would receive at least a portion of what was taken.

EW Bullinger defines the number thirteen as the number connected to rebellion, apostasy, defection, corruption, disintegration, revolution, or some kindred idea. Very fitting indeed.

<sup>14</sup> **A copy of the document was to be issued as law in every province, being published for all people, that they should be ready for that day.**

It was not sufficient for a letter to be sent to the governors with the instructions of what they were to do. Instead, a *pathshegen*, or an exact copy of the edict was to be made in the language of the people. The word is also Persian, showing the careful nature of the author to ensure that the details are exacting concerning the transcript to be made. It was to be posted so that all could see it, and to understand what the king had ordered. Thus, all people would be aware of, and ready for, the events of the chosen day.

**<sup>15</sup> The couriers went out, hastened by the king's command; and the decree was proclaimed in Shushan the citadel.**

As it is a royal edict, the message would impel the couriers to ensure it was transmitted as quickly as possible. The post would travel by day and by night until it reached its intended destination. Further, an immediately available copy was posted in Shushan itself. The joyous day of Passover would be turned to mourning and lamentation for the Jews of Shushan.

**\*<sup>15</sup> (fin) So the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Shushan was perplexed.**

Here is the first of another set of two's. In this verse, the city of Shusan is said to be perplexed. In verse 8:15, it will rejoice and be glad. They contrast certainly, but they confirm the wise proverb of Solomon –

“When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice;  
But when a wicked *man* rules, the people groan.” Proverbs 29:2

The contrasts are evident. The king and Haman sat down with purpose – to eat and drink, but the people of the city were *buk*, or perplexed. The word is used but three times in Scripture, and its meaning is “confusion,” but it gives the sense of wandering aimlessly. One could think of the guy who is fired, and who walks without purpose out of the building with the pink slip hanging in his limp hand and muttering, “What will I do? What will I do?”

So while they sat; the people wandered. While they ate and drank, the people's stomachs were turning. While they laughed; the people moaned in horror. While they were being filled; the people had been drained. While the destruction of the Jews was Haman's *delight*; sadness for them was the people's *plight*. The chapter ends on this troubling note. The enemies of God's people always rejoice when such things occur. Jesus Himself said this before His crucifixion –

“Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.”  
John 16:20

Mordecai here, representative of the Jewish people, is being used as a type of Christ to come. They were, for all intents and purposes, as good as dead. And yet, they would be restored to life, plus. And so it is with Christ. He truly was crucified and died, but He rose with all authority and power in heaven and earth granted to Him. The Bible says in Proverbs that the lot is cast into the lap, but it's every decision is from the Lord (16:33). In His control of even the *purim*, or lots, used by Haman, the Lord orchestrated it so that there would be almost 11 months for the decision to be overturned, and for the events to take a new and wonderful path.

This is true with every moment of our life. We are stuck in time, and we can't see a moment ahead, but God is already at the very end of it all. He is working out our good, even during times which seem horribly bad. The Jews of Mordecai's day found this out, and we find it out each time the future unfolds in a positive way for us.

“I need a place to stay. I'm losing where I am.” Guess what, the Lord will provide. “I lost my job.” Don't worry, something better will come up. He may not provide for every want, but the Lord provides for every need. We keep getting proofs of this, and we keep forgetting it as soon as a new day begins.

Don't fret, don't be anxious, don't be disheartened. Destruction has been determined by man, but glorification has been decreed by God. For those in Christ Jesus, even death itself cannot destroy our hope. While Haman smugly thinks he's had the final say, the Lord is laughing louder, saying “No way.”

But all of the words of comfort about a good and final end are only true for those who are in Christ. You can only be assured of the Lord's blessings by being a child of the Lord. And there is only one way that can happen, and that is through receiving Jesus Christ and being one of His redeemed.

**Closing Verse:** *“Remember the former things of old,  
For I am God, and there is no other;  
I am God, and there is none like Me,  
<sup>10</sup> Declaring the end from the beginning,  
And from ancient times things that are not yet done,*

*Saying, 'My counsel shall stand,  
And I will do all My pleasure,'" Isaiah 46:9, 10*

**Next Week:** Esther 4:1-17 *In the omnipresence of the Lord we need to be schooled and colledged... (Unseen and Unacknowledged) (6<sup>th</sup> Esther Sermon)*

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. At times, you might feel as if he has no great design for you in life, but he has brought you to this moment to reveal His glory in and through you. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **There Is a Certain People**

After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman  
The son of Hammedatha the Agagite  
And advanced him and set his seat  
Above all the princes who were with him, as he deemed right

And all the king's servants  
Who were within the king's gate  
Bowed and paid homage to Haman  
For so the king had commanded concerning him  
-----so that they would get this straight

But Mordecai would not bow or pay homage  
Then the king's servants who were within the king's gate  
Said to Mordecai, "Why do you transgress the king's command?"  
Why can't you get this thing straight?  
Now it happened, when they spoke to him daily  
And he would not listen to them as planned  
That they told it to Haman  
To see whether Mordecai's words would stand

For Mordecai had told them that he was a Jew  
This is why this thing he wouldn't do  
When Haman saw that Mordecai  
Did not bow or pay him homage; this thing he wouldn't do  
Haman was filled with wrath  
And he was determined to do in this Jew

But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone  
For they had told him of the people of Mordecai  
-----to him this thing was shown

Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews  
Who throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus were  
The people of Mordecai  
He wanted them all done in for sure  
In the first month, which is the month of Nisan  
In the twelfth year of Ahasuerus the king  
They cast Pur (that is, the lot)  
Before Haman to determine the day and the month of this thing  
Until it fell on the twelfth month of the calendar  
Which is the month of Adar

Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus  
“There is a certain people scattered and dispersed  
Among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom  
Their laws are different from all other people’s  
-----I think they are accursed

And they do not keep the king’s laws; it’s crazy and insane  
Therefore it is not fitting for the king to let them remain

If it pleases the king, let a decree be written that they be destroyed  
And I will pay ten thousand talents of silver, so I shall do  
Into the hands of those who do the work  
To bring it into the king’s treasuries, if approved by you  
So 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  
Believing that what he was doing was good and right

And the king said to Haman  
“The money and the people are given to you  
To do with them as seems good to you  
So this thing you are instructed to do  
Then the king’s scribes were called on the thirteenth day  
Of the first month, when the year was new

And a decree was written  
According to all that Haman commanded to do

To the king's satraps  
To the governors who were over each province  
-----so they were equipped  
To the officials of all people  
To every province according to its script  
And to every people in their language  
In the name of King Ahasuerus it was written out  
And sealed with the king's signet ring  
So that there would be no doubt

And the letters were sent by couriers  
Into all the king's provinces  
-----to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews  
Both young and old, little children and women  
In one day was to be accomplished this terrible news  
On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, if you did wonder  
Which is the month of Adar, and to their possessions plunder

A copy of the document was to be issued  
As law in every province, as the law did say  
Being published for all people  
That they should be ready for that day

The couriers went out, hastened by the king's command  
And the decree was proclaimed in Shushan the citadel  
So the king and Haman sat down to drink  
But the city of Shushan was perplexed at this bombshell

Lord God, thank You for Your presence that is with us  
Even when we don't realize that You are there  
Because You sent Your own Son Jesus  
We can know that You truly do care

And so Lord, be real to us in a wonderful new way  
Open our minds and our hearts to seeing You always  
Through every step we take, and throughout every day

Be real to us, O God, and to You will shall give all of our praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

## ESTHER 4:1-17 (UNSEEN AND UNACKNOWLEDGED)

*\*To watch the video of this study, select from the following: [YouTube](#) or [Sermon Audio](#)*

One of the sub-disciplines of systematic theology is known as Theology Proper. This deals specifically with the being, attributes, and works of God. In the Trinitarian model, which true Christians hold to, this study includes pneumatology (the study of the Holy Spirit) and Christology (the study of Jesus Christ).

Concerning God, it is said that no one can see God. God is Spirit. However, though God is unseen, we also know that God is omnipresent. It is rather hard to imagine that God is everywhere, and yet we cannot see Him. But the two are not contradictory at all. As God is Spirit, then He can be everywhere, at all times, and still be unseen. He is of a completely different nature than we are. And yet, though He is unseen, His effects are not.

In creation, we can see and experience all the things that God has created... out of nothing. They are the evidence that God is. But evidences of God are not limited to the physical things we can see. They are also realized in how things come out. The process may be unseen, but the results are not. If we just pay attention to times and circumstances, we can in fact see the evidences of God in those things.

Israel is a perfect example of this. By all logical processes of thought, they should not even exist anymore. But not only do they exist, they exist exactly as Scripture said they would – as a people, with the language they speak, in the times things happen to them, in the places they happen, and in the results of where they are in connection to their surroundings.

All of these things show us evidences of God, being worked out in our world. We can ascribe to these things time and chance, or we can take them as God has intended for us to take them, and see that He is there, doing what He is doing, for our benefit and hopefully for our choosing to seek Him out. This is what faith is. This is what is pleasing to God. As far as God being unseen, this is how James describes Him in our text verse for today –

**Text Verse:** *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.” James 1:17*

The word James uses for “variation” is *parallagē*. It is a word unique in all of Scripture. James reached into the world of the scientific realm to attempt to reveal to us what God is like. The word indicates a parallax. A parallax is where an object appears to differ when viewed from different positions. It can be through the viewfinder on a camera, or it can be where you stand looking at a star from different points on the earth’s orbit.

But if you look at a star from even a millionth of an inch different than another spot, there will be a change, no matter how small it may appear. Nothing can truly be viewed in the same manner except in the exact same spot. However, God can be spiritually viewed from anywhere, at any time, and by any set of eyes... and He will never be different. If we all could look at an atom in the middle of this room, we would all see the atom and yet, we would all be seeing the atom from a different perspective. But when we look to God, we look to that which is completely unchanging.

Why is this important to know? Because God may be hidden from our eyes, but He is there, and He is without any change at all. When He speaks, it is a reflection of who He is. And thus His word IS. We cannot find anything other than the unchanging God in His word. Why is this important to know? Because His word before the book of Esther is confirmed in Esther. And Esther deals with Israel of the past, but God is still dealing with Israel of the present in the same manner. Well, unless you are a reformed theologian, a Mormon, a Jehovah’s Witness, or one of many other groups. Then He is supposedly dealing with them differently, and you are sitting in the wrong church.

And why is this important to know? Because the Lord is missing in Esther, and yet His presence is seen nonetheless. The question is, are you looking for the Lord where He is not to be seen? You should be. But at the same time, you need to not insert the Lord where He is not acknowledged. What does that mean? Keep listening, and we will get to that.

The Lord is there. Just remember that for now. He is there, and He is tending to His word in Chapter 4 of Esther. It’s all to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. A Time to Mourn (verses 1-9)**

**<sup>1</sup> When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he tore his clothes**

The words here take us back to the events of Chapter 3. Haman had plotted against the Jews, and King Ahasuerus had agreed to his scheme. A date for the destruction of the Jews was chosen, a decree was published, and the kingdom was made aware of what that decree contained. In learning of this, and of the behind-the-scenes details as verse 4:7 will show us, Mordecai then takes several very middle-eastern, and more specifically, very Jewish actions. In them, he identified himself openly and publicly as a Jew. He is said first to have torn his clothes.

This is a sign of great distress. A person's clothes are their outer protection, they are a covering of one's nakedness, they serve as an adornment, and so on. In tearing one's clothes, it is a rejection of each of these things in some measure. One's vulnerability is revealed, one's nakedness is exposed, and the adornment that was delighted in is rejected. The first time this was seen in Scripture was when Reuben found that Joseph was no longer in the pit that he and his brothers had cast him into. From there, this sign of great distress is seen again and again throughout the Bible. Next...

**1 (con't) and put on sackcloth and ashes,**

Sackcloth and ashes, as an external adornment, signifies extreme mourning. Instead of one's regular clothes, one would put on this coarse material made from hair which was used for sacks. The poor quality of the cloth would be itchy and unsightly. The garments would be both a physical reminder to the body, and to the eyes, of great mourning. It speaks of a state of humility, not arrogance, before God and man.

Ashes add in a second element to the state of mourning. Sitting in or wearing ashes implies that being reduced to ashes is one's just due. It is, in essence a petition for mercy. "I understand what I deserve, the fiery judgment of God, and I acknowledge that. Thine will be done." These external actions of of Mordecai are the greatest acts of humility that he could perform. From there...

**1 (con't) and went out into the midst of the city.**

One can sit in ashes, as the king of Nineveh did in Jonah; one can also roll in ashes as is noted in Jeremiah 6:26; or one can lay in them as will be seen in the next verse here in Esther. In Mordecai's case, he put on sackcloth and ashes and then went out into the midst of the city. This was to make his state known to all. Being covered in this way it would be a sign to all that great distress filled his soul. From there, others would hear and follow suit as...

<sup>1</sup> (con't) **He cried out with a loud and bitter cry.**

The words here are exceedingly similar to those found in Genesis 27:34. After Jacob stole Esau's blessing through deception, Esau went into his father to obtain the blessing he was promised. However, when it was discovered what had happened, we read –

“When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, ‘Bless me—me also, O my father!’”

There is only a very small change in the words between there and here, from *zaaq* to *tsaaq*. The verses are essentially identical. The only difference is the use of the letter *zayin* in place of a *tsadde*. The symbolism, then, shouldn't be missed. Esau was a hairy man who cried out in distress. Mordecai is covered in a hairy garment, crying out in distress. Esau, picturing Adam, had lost his blessing. Mordecai takes on the same picture – representative of Israel having lost their blessing, now facing a curse.

What is obvious however, is what is missing from this external display of mourning. Garments are torn, sackcloth and ashes are put on, and there is great wailing – all external signs – but there is no note of an internal turning to God through prayer and supplication. When priests and prophets such as Daniel, Ezekiel, and Ezra faced such trials, they are shown to have revealed their anguish both externally and through prayer and supplication. Whether Mordecai prayed or not, the Bible specifically maintains silence on the issue. Only the externals are noted here.

The Greek translation of the Old Testament adds at the end of this verse the words *Airetai ethnos meden edikekos* – “A people are going to be destroyed who have done no evil.” The additions to the Greek translation, of which there are others, do not appear to reflect the intent of the original at all. In fact, they harm the integrity of what the story is actually conveying. If Israel had done no evil, they would not have been sent into exile.

<sup>2</sup> **He went as far as the front of the king's gate, for no one *might* enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.**

The words reveal that a law must have existed which precluded anyone in mourning from entering near the king. This can also be inferred from Nehemiah's words. He was sad in the presence of the king, and when the king asked about it, it says that Nehemiah became dreadfully afraid. From these verses, it can be deduced that no mourning was to be displayed before the Persian kings.

Understanding this, we can see that Mordecai could not enter, or even sit in, the king's gate. Instead, he only went to the front of it. This would be as near as he could get in hopes of contacting Esther and relaying to her his message and hopes.

**<sup>3</sup> And in every province where the king's command and decree arrived, *there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.***

As the decree arrived and was posted throughout the provinces, the Jews followed the same pattern as Mordecai. They mourned, fasted, wept, and lamented, employing the same traditional signs of mourning. Here a new word is introduced, *yatsa*, to lay or spread. It will be seen only four times. It gives the sense of spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed to lie in. Still, there is no sign of praying to, or petitioning of, God in any of these words. The Lord is not mentioned at all. The words are purposeful. He may be there behind the scenes, but the word shows that it is self, and not God, who is the focus of the narrative.

This verse now introduces two sets of two's. First, there is fasting noted here, and then it will be seen again in verse 16. This is voluntary, but in distress. It is throughout the Jewish people, and it is in response to the king's troubling decree. The next will be mandated, but in hope. It is in Shushan alone, and it is at the queen's command, and for the queen's sake. Together they contrast, and yet they confirm fasting as a source of national identification of the Jews through this ancient rite.

The second set of two's concerns the attitude of the Jews after the giving of an edict. In this one, there is great mourning, fasting, weeping, and wailing, and many laying in sackcloth and ashes. In Chapter 8, after the next edict, there will be joy, gladness, honor, a feast, and a holiday. The two contrast, yes, but they also confirm the unity of the people in both distress and in exultation.

**<sup>4</sup> So Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her, and the queen was deeply distressed.**

It was already known to the royal court, as was seen in verse 2:11, that Mordecai had cared for Esther. It may be that all knew he raised her after her parents died, but didn't realize that she was related to him by blood. Or, those who attended to her may have known this, though it wasn't yet widely disseminated. No matter what though, they knew of the relationship between the two and when they saw Mordecai's distress, they passed this on to her.

When she heard this, it says that she was “deeply distressed.” The Hebrew word is in a passive intensive form, showing that this really troubled her immensely. It can be assumed then that Mordecai was otherwise an upbeat, amiable guy. But something had destroyed his normal demeanor. His misery now became hers.

**<sup>4</sup> (con’t) Then she sent garments to clothe Mordecai and take his sackcloth away from him, but he would not accept *them*.**

The reason for doing this is so that he would then be allowed into the gate. Once there, she then could meet him and find out what the problem was. But even this heartfelt invitation was rejected. This would then demonstrate to her the immense grief that he was facing. So much so that he was unwilling to take off his mourning clothes to let her know what had come about.

**<sup>5</sup> Then Esther called Hathach, *one* of the king’s eunuchs whom he had appointed to attend her, and she gave him a command concerning Mordecai, to learn what and why *this was*.**

It is said that one of the king’s personal eunuchs would be assigned to the queen. He would normally be an older man, of the highest reputation, and who had faithfully served. As her personal attendant, he would be the most logical choice to speak to Mordecai. He would be faithful to find out, and faithful to repeat exactly what he had learned.

**<sup>6</sup> So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square that *was* in front of the king’s gate.**

If your translation says “street” instead of “city square,” don’t panic. The word *rekhov* can mean either. It comes from a verb meaning “to widen.” Thus Mordecai is in a broad place before the king’s gate. It would be a place where many people passed, and so he is there making his mourning public. It is to this place that Hathach comes to find him.

**<sup>7</sup> And Mordecai told him all that had happened to him,**

This is Mordecai’s way of showing that what occurred to all of the Jews was a decision based solely on the actions of one Jew. “All that happened to him” then is referring to verses 3:1-3:6 where Mordecai refused to rise for Haman, and which culminated in the words, “But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai. Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who *were*

throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus—the people of Mordecai” (3:6). To support this, he then tells what more he learned of the matter with...

**<sup>7 (con't)</sup> and the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries to destroy the Jews.**

In passing this information on, it was intended to show how great was Haman's resentment at Mordecai's actions and the eagerness that then resulted in destroying all the Jews. In other words, it is to demonstrate that Haman wasn't just a narcissist, but that he was truly mentally unbalanced. If he was merely narcissistic, he would have had Mordecai alone punished – probably in a public and disgraceful way. But what has arisen shows the actions of a madman.

As side note, the word translated as “sum” is *parashah*. It will be used only here and in Esther 10:2 in the Bible. It signifies an exact amount, or a portion. Nowadays, it refers to a section of a biblical book, somewhat like our chapter divisions in the Bible. The *parashah* forms the basis for reading of Scripture in Jewish synagogues.

**<sup>8</sup> He also gave him a copy of the written decree for their destruction, which was given at Shushan,**

A written copy, or at least a written note with the substance of the decree, would validate his words, it would show the timing of the events to come, and it would convey to her that Haman's plan wasn't just a hopeful wish, but a now-issued decree which bore the king's approval.

**<sup>8 (con't)</sup> that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her, and that he might command her to go in to the king to make supplication to him and plead before him for her people.**

It has been noted that the Hebrew of these words is exceedingly strong. There is an urgency in accomplishing the task, and so whether Mordecai is either commanding her as his adopted daughter or charging her as a member of the Jewish people, he is now asking her to reveal her nationality to the king. She is of the same people as those who are set for destruction, and so her petition to the king is to be based on that premise.

The Greek translation of this verse adds in the following long sentence which is not supported by any other text, nor is it supported by the tenor of the book of Esther as well –

"Remember the time of your low estate, and in what manner you have been nourished, and carried in my arms; and that Haman, who is next to the king, has got a decree for our destruction. Pray, therefore, to the Lord, and plead with the king, that we may be delivered from death."

The theme of Esther is that of the Lord being unacknowledged by the people, and yet still working in the background for them. The addition of these words in the Greek is surely a later fabrication.

**<sup>9</sup> So Hathach returned and told Esther the words of Mordecai.**

Now Esther has an understanding of the basis for Mordecai's lamentation, and she has all of the background information as well. It would be sufficient for her to grasp the magnitude of the situation, and to act in accord with Mordecai's pleas. However, instead of doing as charged, she follows another path...

*Woe to us for we have been sold to destruction  
Our hope is gone and we have met our end  
The empire will complete the king's instruction  
Death to our people, the royal decree does send*

*Our hope is lost; our life is dried up  
There is nothing but sadness till we meet our end  
No water for our lips, no wine in our cup  
Death to our people, the royal decree does send*

*If there is hope, from where will it come?  
It feels as if we as a people have finally met our end  
If there is hope, we need only a crumb  
Or death is assured, since the royal decree is penned*

## **II. A Time Such as This (verses 10-17)**

**<sup>10</sup> Then Esther spoke to Hathach, and gave him a command for Mordecai:**

The word "command" here is for Hathach to transfer her words to Mordecai, not for him to transfer a command to him. As far as Hathach, he entered the narrative in verse 5. Now he is mentioned here for the last time in the Bible. So long Hathach.

**<sup>11</sup> “All the king’s servants and the people of the king’s provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, *he has* but one law: put *all* to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live.**

A law already in place, and fully known to all people, was that no person could ever enter into the inner court where the king sat without being called. This could be in response to a request, approving it and allowing entrance, or it could be from the throne commanding someone to be brought in. Either way, the approval had to come from the throne. Anyone who entered without approval was given one law – death. However, the king could hold out his scepter to the condemned person, granting pardon for the illegal intrusion. Two words found in this verse are unique to the book of Esther – *yashat*, or hold out, and *sharvit*, or scepter. They will be used in three verses of Esther and nowhere else.

**<sup>11</sup> (con’t) Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days.”**

Even the queen fell under the law of entry, and she had not been summoned for a full month. She, therefore, may have felt that the king was no longer interested in her. If she petitioned to the king to enter, he may deny her request. If this was the case, then she could not, under any circumstance, come forward and expect to live. However, if she petitioned him to enter and he approved, then she would be compelled to explain herself immediately, even if Haman was present.

Either way, going forward based on a request would possibly be ineffective in resolving the matter. But going in without being requested would potentially be suicidal. The amount of time that had gone by made this a definite possibility. However, the number thirty in Scripture signifies “in a higher degree the perfection of Divine order, as marking the right moment” (EW Bullinger). Rather than being an inopportune time, it is the perfect time to begin a process to bring about a change in the direction of events.

**<sup>12</sup> So they told Mordecai Esther’s words.**

*v’yagidu l’maredokay eth divre esther* - “And they told to Mordecai words Esther.” The only logical question for me, and which I now ask of you, concerning this is, “Who are ‘they?’” Hathach is the only person who has been mentioned and spoken to since verse 5. In verse 10, Esther spoke to him again to give a command for Mordecai. The Hebrew is 3<sup>rd</sup> person, masculine, plural. Hathach disappears from the narrative, and in comes a plural verb. Whoever “they” are, they passed on her words to Mordecai.

**<sup>13</sup> And Mordecai told *them* to answer Esther: “Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king’s palace any more than all the other Jews.**

There is no “them” in this verse. That is inserted. It simply says, “Then said Mordecai to answer unto Esther.” It makes the “they” in the previous verse that much more perplexing. Despite this puzzling linguistic difficulty, Mordecai’s words are somber indeed. It may be that he suspected Haman knew Esther’s nationality. Whether this is the case or not, the servants, including Hathach now did. With her identity known, it could not be withheld from the king’s knowledge without jeopardizing their own lives. Therefore, she would not escape, even being in the king’s palace, and even being the queen. She was Jewish and her position could no longer protect her.

**<sup>14</sup> For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place,**

Almost every scholar who comments on these words attributes the words of Mordecai to a strong faith in the belief that God will personally interpose and ensure that things will come out right. This is entirely incorrect. If he believed this, he would have said it, or the author would have stated it for him. But both God, and the Lord, are completely left out of the book – highlighting the fact that He is not on their minds at all.

A knowledge of God’s presence cannot be assumed or inserted into the narrative. It can only be assumed by the reader of the narrative. It is the reader’s job to see that God, despite having been rejected by the Jews, has not rejected them. This takes us back to Leviticus 26 where the Lord stated this –

<sup>44</sup> “Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, nor shall I abhor them, to utterly destroy them and break My covenant with them; for I *am* the Lord their God.

<sup>45</sup> But for their sake I will remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I *am* the Lord.” Leviticus 26:44, 45

It is for the sake of the covenant to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that the Lord made this statement. Though the people are dispersed because of their rejection of Him, including remaining in dispersion voluntarily, He is working to preserve the Jews according to His word to the patriarchs.

Whether Mordecai even knew of this promise at all or not cannot be determined. But as a Jew, he knew that his people would find deliverance in some way. This is the same thought of secular Jews to this day. They are sure they will stand as a people, it is practically a national motto. But they do not attribute this to God. Rather, they attribute it to their own ability to preserve their heritage and culture. It is not the Lord, but their Jewishness which continues to drive their overall ideology as a people.

In the words of this clause are two very rare words. The first, *revakh*, is translated as “relief.” It was seen in Genesis 32:16, translated as “distance.” With a distance, one has an interval, and thus respite or relief. It carries the idea of a breathing space. There, it was used as a picture of an interval between the dispensations of time in redemptive history. Now it is seen for the second and last time. The second word is found only here in the Bible, *hatstsalah*, or deliverance. Mordecai is trusting in deliverance, but he is not trusting in the Deliverer. Time and chance alone are on his mind.

<sup>14</sup> (con’t) **but you and your father’s house will perish.**

The words here strongly suggest that Mordecai was certain Haman knew of the Jewish ancestry of Esther, or that at least Esther’s ancestry – previously revealed to Hathach and others – would be her demise. She would not escape, and her father’s house – meaning his line – would perish with her.

<sup>14</sup> (con’t) **Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?”**

Again, these words cannot be attributed to the workings of the Lord. They are words of time, chance, luck, and fortune. If Mordecai accepted the Lord’s divine hand of Jewish protection, he would have stated it – clearly and unambiguously – just as King David did numerous times in his life, such as in Psalm 18 –

“I will love You, O Lord, my strength.

<sup>2</sup>The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;

My God, my strength, in whom I will trust;

My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

<sup>3</sup>I will call upon the Lord, *who is worthy* to be praised;

So shall I be saved from my enemies.” Psalm 18:1-3

David knew the Lord, he loved the Lord, he trusted the Lord, and he called out to the Lord. This is left entirely out of the words of Mordecai. As words reflect the man, so

Mordecai trusted, but not in the Lord. And yet, the Lord included this book in His word to demonstrate that He, while being neglected by His people, remained faithful to them.

When the world looks at Israel today, and while the Jews of today continue to trust in their own might and prowess, the Lord sits unchanged in His being, and thus unchanged in His promises to the patriarchs. Israel will stand because of the word of Lord, and because of that alone.

Despite the attitude presented, the words of this clause are as hopeful as any found in Scripture. They are memorable simply for the truth that they reveal, *umi yodea im l'eth kazot higaat la'malkut* “and who knows whether for a time as this you have come to the kingdom.” Mordecai sees an opportunity, and he sees that it is about as good as any could ever get. Esther may die coming before the king, or she may be the means by which they are saved, but the opportunity outweighs the risk on all levels. As John Gill states it, “It is better to perish in a good cause than in a bad one.”

**<sup>15</sup> Then Esther told *them* to reply to Mordecai:**

Again, “them” is inserted here. It simply says, “And said Esther to return unto Mordecai.” Who “them” is goes unstated, but them folks, whoever them might be, sure make a great mystery.

**<sup>16</sup> “Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me;**

Esther’s reply of verse 16 is one of resigned submission. Her words are first for the Jews of Shushan to hold a fast. However, unlike many other fasts in the Bible, this one says nothing about it being to the Lord, or to God. On other occasions when fasting is noted, the same verse, or the context of the verse often includes God as the object of the fast. This is seen, for example, in Ezra 8:23 –

“So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer.”

Here, the object is Esther – “fast for me.” Again, scholars force God into this verse, stating that He is the object of the petition, and that He is the One for whom the fast is made. This cannot be assumed. In Zechariah 7, we read –

“Say to all the people of the land, and to the priests: ‘When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh *months* during those seventy years, did you really fast for Me—for Me? <sup>6</sup>When you eat and when you drink, do you not eat

and drink *for yourselves?* <sup>7</sup> *Should you not have obeyed* the words which the Lord proclaimed through the former prophets when Jerusalem and the cities around it were inhabited and prosperous, and the South and the Lowland were inhabited?” Zechariah 7:5-7

When Jesus spoke to the leaders of Israel in Matthew 6, He corrected them on misdirected fasting as well. People all over the world fast, for a multitude of reasons, and few of them are directed at petitioning God. It very well may be that His divine intervention is what they are seeking, but the *author* does not indicate it, and the words of Esther do not either. The words leave the Lord out entirely. We cannot place Him there after the fact.

<sup>16</sup> (con't) **neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day.**

The words here are helpful to understanding what the term, “three days, night or day,” means. Jesus uses similar terminology in Matthew 12 concerning His time in the grave. And yet, the timeline for His crucifixion and resurrection is a total of three days – from Friday to Sunday. This is later confirmed thirteen times when it says that He rose “on the third day.” Such is the case here as well. In Esther 5:1, we will read the words, *v’hi b’yom ha’shelishi*, “Now it happened on the third day...” Thus, the time-frame here, and in Matthew, means three days, up to the third day.

<sup>16</sup> (con't) **My maids and I will fast likewise.**

These words show that the fast was one *for* Esther, not *to* the Lord. Her maids are not Jewish. If they were, it would indicate this. Instead, she is asking for a fast as a sign of solidarity with her people and among those she is in charge of. This is similar to what Jephthah’s daughter asked for prior to her death –

“Then she said to her father, “Let this thing be done for me: let me alone for two months, that I may go and wander on the mountains and bewail my virginity, my friends and I.” Judges 11:37

These words close out the set of twos concerning two fasts being held. The first was voluntary, but in distress. It was throughout the Jewish people, and it was in response to the king’s troubling decree. This one is mandated, but in hope. It is in Shushan alone, and it is at the queen’s command, and for the queen’s sake. Together they contrast, and yet they confirm fasting as a source of national identification.

<sup>16</sup> (con't) **And so I will go to the king, which is against the law;**

After the sign of solidarity and identification is complete, Esther will be encouraged enough to enter the king's presence without first asking, or being requested, and without first being approved. It may mean her death, but it is the only logical way to conduct what needs to be done.

<sup>16</sup> (con't) **and if I perish, I perish!"**

Her words are not words of faith. When faced with the fiery furnace, Daniel's three friends did acknowledge that they might die, but before doing so, they acknowledge, in faith, that the Lord would deliver them –

"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If that *is the case*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver *us* from your hand, O king. <sup>18</sup> But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.'" Daniel 3:16-18

The story of Esther is about the Lord, but it is not about the Lord being the object and adoration of the people. It is about the Lord being faithful to a people who have failed to acknowledge Him. They are to be saved despite themselves. They were given the chance to return to Him, and they did not. They remained in exile. By not acknowledging Him in their words and actions in Esther 4, they are profaning Him. There can be no other way of looking at this without abusing what is presented. Thus, what is going to occur in the pages ahead is reflective of the words of Ezekiel 36 –

"When they came to the nations, wherever they went, they profaned My holy name—when they said of them, 'These *are* the people of the Lord, *and* yet they have gone out of His land.' <sup>21</sup> But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations wherever they went."  
Ezekiel 36:20-21

**\*<sup>17</sup> So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded him.**

The chapter, though 17 verses long, has gone quickly. The words of quite a few of the verses are generally easy to follow, simple, and without a lot of explanation. Such is the case with this final verse. Mordecai felt that the agreement was sufficient and

reasonable. From this point, he would pass the information on, and trust that things might turn out as they should.

Again, it must be stressed that forcing the Lord into the verses of this chapter – although it is that which is almost universally done by scholars – is wholly inappropriate. The words of Mordecai and Esther are completely void of any acknowledgment of the Lord at all, as are the words of the author, who could have supplied them. This often happens elsewhere, such as “But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God” (1 Samuel 30:6). The author notes what is occurring inside of David’s mind for our benefit. Such is not the case here.

For this reason, the book of Esther is one which highlights, and even magnifies, the work of the Lord in a unique way. He is there, faithfully tending to His people, while they are as faithfully unfaithful as ever. As I said in the last sermon, Mordecai is representative of the Jewish people, but he is also a type of Christ. Just as Christ is concealed in the Old Testament, Mordecai had concealed his nationality. However, Mordecai eventually revealed his national ties, just as Jesus came and walked among His people. In this story, Mordecai and Esther are relying on their Jewishness, not the Lord, to save them. Jesus, as a Jew, and who is the Lord, came to save His people. We are seeing types and shadows to help us understand God’s unfolding plan of redemption.

When we come to stories like Esther, we know – without a doubt – that the Lord is there, and yet He is unseen. Unless you were told about the acrostics of His name interspersed throughout the story, you would still know that He is there. It is as obvious as the nose on one’s face. But in order to actually find Him, He needs to be searched out.

This is the lesson we should glean from what we have seen, and what we will continue to see. But that lesson isn’t just for, “Oooh, let’s look for secrets in the Bible that will show us the Lord.” Instead, it is a lesson for our daily lives. His care for us is evident with every step we take, every meal we eat, and every flower we smell. We just have to stop... and look for His hand in these things. This week, don’t rush through life in such a hurry that you miss the Lord who is right there with you. Instead,

- ✓ -take the time to talk to Him,
- ✓ -think about His care,
- ✓ -trust in His provision,
- ✓ -and know that He is there.

**Closing Verse:** *“Seek the Lord while He may be found,  
Call upon Him while He is near.” Isaiah 55:6*

**Next Week:** Esther 5:1-14 *Will he be an executor, or will he be an accepter?* (The Golden Scepter) (7<sup>th</sup> Esther Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. At times, you might feel as if he has no great design for you in life, but he has brought you to this moment to reveal His glory in and through you. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **Unseen and Unacknowledged**

When Mordecai learned all that had happened  
He tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, by and by  
And went out into the midst of the city  
He cried out with a loud and bitter cry

He went as far as the front of the king’s gate, so we read  
For no one might enter the king’s gate clothed with sackcloth  
-----no one could do such a deed

And in every province where the king’s command and decree arrived  
There was great mourning among the Jews  
With fasting, weeping, and wailing  
And many lay in sackcloth and ashes  
-----such mourning they did choose

So Esther’s maids and eunuchs came and told her  
And the queen was deeply distressed  
Then she sent garments to clothe Mordecai  
-----and take his sackcloth away from him  
But he would not accept them; he refused to be so dressed

Then Esther called Hathach  
One of the king’s eunuchs whom he had appointed to attend her  
And she gave him a command concerning Mordecai  
To learn what and why this was, for sure

So Hathach went out to Mordecai; Esther's words to state  
In the city square that was in front of the king's gate

And Mordecai told him all that had happened to him  
And the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay  
Into the king's treasuries to destroy the Jews  
These things to him he did relay  
He also gave him a copy  
Of the written decree for their destruction, so crazy and insane  
Which was given at Shushan  
That he might show it to Esther and to her it explain

And that he might command her to go in to the king  
To make to him supplication  
And plead before him for her people  
Yes, to plead for her sentenced nation

So Hathach returned and told Esther  
The words of Mordecai, he told to her

Then Esther spoke to Hathach, giving a reply  
And gave him a command for Mordecai

"All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces  
Know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court  
To the king, who has not been called  
He has but one law: put all to death, cutting that life short

Except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter  
That he may live, and not die  
Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king  
These thirty days, and I know not why

So they told Mordecai Esther's words  
And Mordecai told them to answer Esther with his views  
"Do not think in your heart that you will escape  
In the king's palace any more than all the other Jews

For if you remain completely silent at this time  
Relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place  
-----this point do not miss  
But you and your father's house will perish  
Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom  
-----for such a time as this?"

Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai:  
"Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan  
And fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day  
And then with your plan I will proceed on

My maids and I will fast likewise  
And which is against the law, so I will go to the king  
And if I perish, I perish!"  
So Mordecai went his way and to all that Esther commanded him  
-----so he did this thing

Lord God, thank You for Your presence that is with us  
Even when we don't realize that You are there  
Because You sent Your own Son Jesus  
We can know that You truly do care

And so Lord, be real to us in a wonderful new way  
Open our minds and our hearts to seeing You always  
Through every step we take, and throughout every day  
Be real to us, O God, and to You will shall give all of our praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

## ESTHER 5:1-14 (THE GOLDEN SCEPTER)

*\*To watch the video of this study, select from the following: [YouTube](#) or [Sermon Audio](#)*

I am guessing that only a complete psychopath goes to bed and sleeps well night after night without ever losing any sleep. We all seem to lose sleep for one reason or another. At times, we might lose sleep over anticipation of something exciting which lies ahead for us. We might lose sleep over a family feud. Maybe we lose sleep over an argument with a close friend.

A guilty conscience will rob us of sleep. A sick baby will too. Like Mordecai, we might lose sleep over an imperial edict that says that our people group is set to be destroyed. Or, like Esther, we might lose sleep over being married to the king and finding out that he has authorized this to be done.

A complete jerk like Haman might lose sleep over pride because he was not being honored by Mordecai. Or, he might lose sleep over the joyous prospect of having him hung on a tree to writhe until dead. The Jewish people are already marked out for destruction. Their time is set, and they will be eliminated. But Haman can no longer stand the punishing embarrassment of being snubbed by Mordecai, and so he miserably looks for comfort with his friends. He has a hope deferred, and the Bible tells us what that means...

**Text Verse:** *“Hope deferred makes the heart sick,  
But when the desire comes, it is a tree of life.” Proverbs 13:12*

Taking the passage that we will look at today, it’s almost ironic that the desire-fulfilled is compared to “a tree of life.” One person is supposed to be hung on a tree, and that is intended to give life, at least quality of life, back to another. But in the Bible, concepts such as life and death are often so intermingled that we think we have one, and then we find that we actually have the other.

Haman thinks he will find life through death, but that will be turned upside down. And the opposite will then be true. But if we think that one through (as we will at the end of our time together today) we will find that the life that is granted ends up in death once again, and that death leads to life... once again.

The mysteries of the Bible are so vast, and deep, and rich, that it is hard to get them all straight in our heads. How much worse for us when we get them wrong in our doctrine.

Paul alludes to that in Romans with the words, “Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.”

If that sounds complicated, it is. But with a little thought, or with a bit of paying attention in Bible class, it becomes clear. The point is that we need to be careful as we think through the larger issues found in the Bible. If not, we can go from one small error into many larger errors very quickly. That is why we need to carefully, systematically, and faithfully evaluate the word of God.

It may be tough, it may be mind numbing at times, but it will always prove to be the most sound and reasonable path to follow in looking into this magnificent gift of God. Yes, it’s all to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. She Found Favor in His Sight (verses 1-7)**

#### **<sup>1</sup> Now it happened on the third day**

This is now the third day as was recorded in verse 4:16 –

“Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which *is* against the law; and if I perish, I perish!” Esther 4:16

It is to be noted again that the term, “three days, night or day,” is to be taken idiomatically. It is actually not the fourth day now, but the third. The Hebrew says *b’yom ha’shelishi*, or “on the third day,” not “after three days.” It is an important clue when referring to Jesus’ words of His being “three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” It is an idiom referring to a period inclusive of, but not necessarily wholly, three days. It is on the third day then...

#### **<sup>1</sup> (con’t) that Esther put on *her* royal robes**

*va’tilbash esther malkut* – it literally says, “that put on Esther royalty.” She had been in mourning garments, indicating woe, affliction, and misery. She could not come before the king in this manner, and so she put on her royalty – meaning the garments and crown of royalty, but also the airs of royalty. She changed her countenance, she lifted

herself up from her state of lowliness, and she walked in confidence instead of mourning in misery. Everything needed to enter the presence of the king was put on in order to come before him in an acceptable manner.

**1 (con't) and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, across from the king's house,**

These words introduce another set of two's. Queen Esther will appear before the king in an unauthorized manner twice. The first is now, and the second will be in verse 8:3. The two contrast. Here, she will bravely stand before the king's presence without approval in order to begin the petition to save her people. In the second, she will mourn with tears before the king, which is not authorized, in order to have the decree of destruction revoked. The two accounts contrast, but they are both confirmed in the action of the king extending to her the royal scepter, signifying his favor. In this verse, the wording is specific. She has placed herself in a position of the inner court of the palace where she would be directly in front of the king's house in order to attract his attention...

**1 (con't) while the king sat on his royal throne**

Of this throne, Jamieson-Fausset-Brown states –

“The seat he occupied was not a throne, according to our ideas of one, but simply a chair, and so high that it required a footstool. It was made of gold, or, at least, inlaid with that metal, and covered with splendid tapestry, and no one save the king might sit down on it under pain of death.”

**1 (con't) in the royal house, facing the entrance of the house.**

The king is in the royal house. It would be a hall with pillars with the throne at the end of the hall at the far end, centered between the pillars. From this vantage point, he could look out of the house and see anyone standing in the inner court. There would be a sight for his eyes to behold on this most momentous morning...

**<sup>2</sup>So it was, when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, *that* she found favor in his sight,**

Proverbs 21:1 says –

“The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord,  
*Like* the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.”

This is a true statement, seen throughout Scripture, and also seen here. We could question if this is active or passive, but there is no need. The Lord doesn't need to actively change the heart of the king. We learned this in Exodus with the process used to harden Pharaoh's heart. The Lord sets the stage for the turning of the king's heart. It is passive, and it brings about the intended outcome. The beauty of Esther, the amount of time the king has been without her, the disposition of the court on this particular day, the time and moment of her appearance... all of it has been used to bring *khen*, or gracious favor, out of the king and direct it towards his queen...

<sup>2 (con't)</sup> **and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand.**

Here two words introduced in verse 4:11 are brought into the scene again. She had told Mordecai that unless the golden *sharvit*, or scepter, was *yashat*, or extended, the penalty would be death. With the Lord directing the king's heart towards his chosen queen, the scepter is extended, and both pardon and favor are granted. Of this golden scepter, we again turn again to Jamieson-Fausset-Brown –

“This golden scepter receives an interesting illustration from the sculptured monuments of Persia and Assyria. In the bas-reliefs of Persepolis, copied by Sir Robert Ker Porter, we see King Darius enthroned in the midst of his court, and walking abroad in equal state; in either case he carries in his right hand a slender rod or wand, about equal in length to his own height, ornamented with a small knob at the summit.” Jamieson-Fausset-Brown

What is recorded in the Bible is supported by various monuments of antiquity, verifying that the story is reliable.

<sup>2 (con't)</sup> **Then Esther went near and touched the top of the scepter.**

It is this act by which the thankfulness is demonstrated, and in which the pardon is received. And yes, a pardon is something which can be turned down, both by man towards God in Christ, and by man towards the governing power. The touching of the scepter is as much a part of the process as is the extending of the scepter in the first place. Before going on, it would be good to remind you that a pardon has been secured for you through Christ, but it must be received. Have you touched the relief extended to you by God through confession that Jesus Christ is Lord?

Of this verse, the Latin Vulgate translation signifies that the touching of the scepter occurred through kissing the orb. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Psalm admonishes God's people to “Kiss the

Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way.” Should we not heed the call of God in Christ, and kiss the Son while the time allows His favor?

Finally, if you are the studious sort, you might have noticed that the footnotes in your Bible say that the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, adds many extra details into verses 1 & 2. It appears as if they have been added in by some overzealous scribe at some point after the original writing.

### **<sup>3</sup> And the king said to her, “What do you wish, Queen Esther?”**

There is an understanding that Esther didn’t just come before the king to see how his day was going. Rather, she came with purposeful intent, and placed herself in a dangerous position to do so. Understanding this, he makes what might otherwise seem like a foolish or unwise statement...

### **<sup>3 (con’t)</sup> What is your request? It shall be given to you—up to half the kingdom!”**

The word “request” here has been seen only once in the Bible, in Ezra 7. It will now be seen seven times in Esther, and never again. It signifies a petition or entreaty. The king is obviously aware that a great need exists, or the queen would in no wise have dreamed of coming before the throne unannounced. Especially after a full month of time had passed. Understanding this, he not only asks what she wants, but he follows up his words with a most liberal statement indicating she has received his complete favor...

### **<sup>3 (con’t)</sup> It shall be given to you—up to half the kingdom!”**

Some scholars chide the statement of the king, including its repetition, but the king already knows she has something on her mind. She did not come before him to ask for half the kingdom. She came for something specific which could still be refused if it had nothing to do with half the kingdom. Further, the statement is to be taken as hyperbole. It is the king’s court, and it is his way of showing the liberality of the court. Such is seen again in Mark 6 at the time of Herod –

“Then an opportune day came when Herod on his birthday gave a feast for his nobles, the high officers, and the chief *men* of Galilee. <sup>22</sup> And when Herodias’ daughter herself came in and danced, and pleased Herod and those who sat with him, the king said to the girl, “Ask me whatever you want, and I will give *it* to you.” <sup>23</sup> He also swore to her, “Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half my kingdom.”” Mark 6:21-23

Unfortunately for Herod, his promise was in the presence of people whose value of life was wanting, and so a magnificent bestowal of a request would cover what the girl then asked for, the head of John the Baptist. It was a request that could not be refused. As for Ahasuerus, what grand thing would Queen Esther now ask for?

**<sup>4</sup>So Esther answered, “If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared for him.”**

Esther speaks to the king in the third person, “If it pleases the king,” and “let the king.” She will continue to speak to him this way until her actual appeal is made in Chapter 7. Her words, *im al ha'melekh tov*, or “if to the king good,” are identical to the words of Memucan in verse 1:19. She has placed herself in a position as if one of the king’s advisers, making a recommendation for his benefit, as much as a petition for his approval.

Further, this is the first time she has spoken Haman’s name, and it is also in the third person. For both, she speaks of having a banquet and desiring them to be in attendance. Instead of stating what she actually desires, she finds an excuse to delay the request. However, the king immediately knows that the banquet is not the request. This can be determined because in verse 6, he will again make the same offer of half his kingdom that he just made.

The word used here is the same as several times previously, *mishteh*, or a banquet, rather than merely a feast. It implies it will be centered on the wine rather than the food. It is a wise choice on her part, understanding the effects of wine, and having those effects displayed at a time when she had Haman alone with him.

Further, it is known that the king and queen normally dined and banqueted separately. To call the king for a banquet would then be a special occasion. For a third person, not even a relation, to be invited would then be considered the highest of honor. It was honoring of the king who had placed Haman in his high position, and it was honoring of Haman who is acknowledged as such by the queen. But higher honor now will lead to greater dishonor ahead.

In this verse is contained the second acrostic bearing the Divine Name, Yehovah. It is formed by the initial letters of the words *yavow ha'melekh v'haman ha'yom*, or “come the king and Haman this day.” The initial letters reading, YHVH.

Using the initial letters while going forward indicates the action is being initiated by the Lord through His chosen servant, Esther, and that He is the determining force which is resulting in Esther's actions. It is the first movement, leading towards the final, marvelous, result. Though the banquet will be held by Esther, and though two men have been invited, making three, a fourth Presence will be at this banquet as well. The unseen, but ever-present Lord, is secretly, and yet visibly, acknowledged as such in this verse.

**<sup>5</sup> Then the king said, "Bring Haman quickly, that he may do as Esther has said."**

We cannot know if Haman actually knew of Esther's lineage at this point or not, but she couldn't take that chance. In inviting him, she would prevent any suspicion on his behalf, and he could not openly accuse her before the king when she had placed him in such an honorable position. And now that the king has accepted the date, and included Haman in his acceptance, the matter is all but settled in regards to her chance of success in the mission set before her.

**<sup>5 (con't)</sup> So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther had prepared.**

The two went together based on the invitation of Esther, but there could be no doubt that the banquet was not the intent of her petition. Instead, it is the means to bring her to stating her intent. This is without a doubt based on the next words...

**<sup>6</sup> At the banquet of wine the king said to Esther, "What *is* your petition? It shall be granted you. What *is* your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!"**

Here, *yayin*, or wine, is specifically mentioned. Esther would have known what happened to Vashti, and how the king made his decision while at a banqueting feast of wine. She is using wine as the Bible uses it in symbolism. Wine symbolizes the merging of cultural expressions into a result. The thing that ought to happen can happen, symbolized by wine. It is as if an act of reasoning is occurring, and an intended result is realized. Solomon uses wine in Proverbs 9 as a result of the workings of Wisdom. Wine represents our reasoning and that which will change our mind. This is exactly what Esther is intending to do; change the mind of the king.

And it appears that her perfect time has come to do so from the repeated words of the king, her petition is promised to be granted, even up to half the kingdom, so it shall be done. But instead of stating it immediately, she once again delays the effort in order to come to the perfect time and occasion...

**<sup>7</sup> Then Esther answered and said, “My petition and request *is this*:**

The unseen Lord’s direction is evident in the room at this point. Instead of coming out with an answer, another delay is brought forward. It will be a delay which will, literally, change the entire course of what might otherwise have occurred if she had stated her petition now, as requested by the king. And so, instead of answering, she once again defers the answer...

**<sup>8</sup> If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, then let the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said.”**

It’s hard to imagine all the things on her mind at this time, but we can suppose that she was not yet sure of the success of her request based on a single meeting. To ask for another banquet would give her more standing to state what was on her mind. And more, in promising that she would respond to the king in the next meeting, it would make the anticipation even greater for him, as he would now wonder what great thing would cause her first to appear before him unannounced, and then cause her to delay revealing it twice.

Such a scenario might even keep him from sleeping, something which will actually take place, as verse 6:1 notes. Her desire to keep him in anticipation for one reason, will lead to his heightened state of anticipation being used by the Lord for another, related reason. The remarkable events which lie ahead are all perfectly timed and orchestrated by the Lord who knows both the mind of man, and the tendency of those who are affected by various circumstances they face. In the case of Haman, who is being invited for a second time, she will be in a greater position to charge him before the king, and he will be all the more overthrown by the charges so leveled against him. This is evidenced by the words of verse 9...

*What is your request, precious queen?  
What is your petition that it might be granted you?  
Would you like this half, or this half of my kingdom  
-----or something in between?  
Tell me my queen what for you am I to do?*

*My king, if it is pleasing in your eyes  
And if it sounds right for you to join in a banquet with me  
Come with Haman, to the banquet; my surprise*

*We can eat and drink, everything is set, and all is tasty*

*And then, if it is pleasing to the king*

*And if I have found favor in my king's eyes*

*Then come to another banquet tomorrow; if you will do this thing*

*Then I will reveal to you my heart; my petition I will apprise*

## **II. Filled with Indignation (verses 9-14)**

**<sup>9</sup> So Haman went out that day joyful and with a glad heart;**

One can almost imagine Haman walking along whistling the tune, “Top of the World” by the Carpenters at this point. He was only behind the king in importance in the realm, he was the only one invited to the banquet held by Esther, he had certainly enjoyed himself at the banquet, and he was invited to another one the next day. Everything was blue sky and bright. Except...

**<sup>9</sup> (con't) but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate,**

The words here are important. Mordecai is once again in the king's gate. He had obviously set aside his garments of mourning, and he had once again donned the garments of normal life which allowed him to sit in the king's gate. This would have galled Haman. How could he be so content when the edict was written, and his people were yet awaiting destruction? But there was more...

**<sup>9</sup> (con't) and that he did not stand or tremble before him,**

This was mandated by the king, as noted in verse 3:2. They were a sign of respect for the office held by Haman, but Mordecai refused to grant them to him. He would not stand, acknowledging his presence, and he would not tremble, acknowledging his greatness. The word *zua*, or tremble, is new and rare. Here, it is intended to convey “showing fear in the presence of a superior.”

**<sup>9</sup> (con't) he was filled with indignation against Mordecai.**

Because of Mordecai's lack of respect for Haman, and the position he held, he was simply consumed with his hatred of the man. This is shown to be in contrast to the king, whose wrath is noted as rising twice in the book of Esther, but then whose wrath is appeased. Instead, Haman's wrath was raised first in verse 3:5, and it continued to be

raised, and intensified, here in this verse. It shows the depth of the ancient hatred which dwelt within him, and which, perversely, would not subside.

**<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless Haman restrained himself and went home, and he sent and called for his friends and his wife Zeresh.**

It's the object of much speculation as to why he specifically restrained himself. The Jewish nation was set to be destroyed, and so punishing or killing one Jew would hardly matter at all. It may be that he relished in the thought of Mordecai's misery in the months to come, as the day of their destruction drew near. Or, he may have been concerned that by violating the *purim*, or lots which had been drawn, he might negatively affect the outcome of the Jews' destruction. Numerous other explanations have been given, but the Bible focuses on his purposeful restraint. Instead, he returned home and called for his friends and wife. This was ostensibly to boast, but it will become apparent that more so, he needs consolation.

As far as his wife, she is introduced here. The name Zeresh has no meaning in Hebrew. It may be derived from a Persian word for gold, and thus it may mean "Golden."

This verse introduces another set of two's. Here and in verse 6:13, he will consult his friends. The two contrast. Here, he is consulting them to brag and to seek consoling. His friends will counsel him in how to destroy Mordecai. In the second of the two, he will call them for mourning and they will reveal that it is Mordecai who will destroy him. The two accounts contrast, and yet they confirm that the enmity between the two will end in destruction.

**<sup>11</sup> Then Haman told them of his great riches, the multitude of his children, everything in which the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the officials and servants of the king.**

The word translated as "told" here is *saphar*. It comes from a root meaning to mark as a tally or record; thus to count. In this then, he is recounting all of his achievements and his accumulations. He first speaks of his great wealth, showing that his love of money came first, before all other things. This alone shows his immense hatred of the Jews. He was willing to deposit an extraordinary amount into the hands of those who would carry out the slaughter of the Jews in order to eliminate them.

He next notes the multitude of his children, there being ten recorded in Chapter 9. Herodotus says that next to prowess in arms, the greatest proof of a man's excellence in Persia was to have many sons. It is something the Bible also speaks highly of –

Behold, children *are* a heritage from the Lord,  
The fruit of the womb *is* a reward.  
<sup>4</sup> Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,  
So *are* the children of one's youth.  
<sup>5</sup> Happy *is* the man who has his quiver full of them;  
They shall not be ashamed,  
But shall speak with their enemies in the gate. Psalm 127:4, 5

After his sons, he mentions his promotion, even above the other officials and servants. The king favored him, and thus he was highly favored. What other man had such marvelous esteem, possession, position, and wealth? But such bragging inevitably leads to pride. And from there...

"Pride *goes* before destruction,  
And a haughty spirit before a fall." Proverbs 16:18

Haman's priorities were wrong, and the things he boasted in were mere vapor, ready to vanish from his grasp as his feet dangled in the Persian sunlight. But he couldn't imagine that, and so the boasting continued...

**<sup>12</sup> Moreover Haman said, "Besides, Queen Esther invited no one but me to come in with the king to the banquet that she prepared; and tomorrow I am again invited by her, along with the king."**

Here the word *aph* is translated as "moreover." It is a word which signifies accession as one thing leads to something more elevated. In this, he is noting that all of the greatness he possessed and attained had led to his invitation to the banquet of the queen. She (and therefore certainly everyone else!) had acknowledged that he alone was worthy of such honor after the king himself.

The author is setting up the very concept of the notion, "The greater the ascent, the greater the fall." Haman assumes that he will continue to rise, even to unsurpassed greatness. But the author shows that he will fall, even to everlasting shame and derision. And with the irony of the ages, the very cause of his downfall is mentioned as the only source of his present unhappiness...

**13 Yet all this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."**

A single bitter herb, buried in a plate full of tasty pleasantries, robbed Haman of any delight of soul. He had no joy while Mordecai was present in his daily life. He had to pass him anytime he ventured through the king's gate. But more than just being one loathsome individual, he was a Jew. The hatred of the man led to hatred of the people. It possessed him and consumed him, stealing his joy, and robbing any sweetness from entering his soul. Everything else was unbalanced and maladjusted because of the presence of Mordecai.

And what a perfect verse this then makes for the third acrostic of the Divine Name to be hidden. The name is spelled backwards, and it is spelled with the final letters of each word, *zeh enenu shoveh li*, or "this nothing avails to me." It had just said in verse 9 that he was joyful and with a glad heart. The Lord is overruling his gladness. Further, though not yet known to him, the Lord is turning back his counsel upon himself. These things are expressed by the backward spelling of the name, and the use of the final letter in each word. The Lord is there, and He is attentive to working for His people and against the wicked.

**14 Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him,**

The verb is singular, and so it more accurately says, "And Zeresh his wife said to him, and all his friends..." It is his wife who leads the advice of what is to be done. One can infer from this that she held sway over him to some extent. What is ironic is that in the garden, the devil had gone to the woman in order to deceive the man. He listened and it led to the fall of man. In Esther, Haman listened to his wife and it led to his own downfall. The lesson isn't that women give bad advice. The lesson is that we are to obey the law, especially God's revealed law, above all else.

**14 (con't) "Let a gallows be made,**

The word is *ets*, a tree. Saying "gallows" implies hanging by the neck, which is probably not the case. It is the same word used in Esther 2:23 and which probably signifies hanging by crucifixion. The Greek translation uses the word, *xulon*, which is used in Acts 5:30 & 10:39 when speaking of Jesus being hung on a tree.

**14 (con't) fifty cubits high,**

Fifty cubits is about 75 feet high. This may be a form of hyperbole to signify “way up there.” However, the number 50 in Scripture has its own meaning. Bullinger defines it as “the number of jubilee or deliverance. It is the *issue* of  $7 \times 7$  ( $7^2$ ), and points to deliverance and rest following on as the result of the perfect consummation of time.” Haman is looking for deliverance and rest from Mordecai. Despite the casting of the *purim*, they are indicating that this is the perfect consummation of time for his enemy to be destroyed.

Regardless of the actual height, in an exceptionally high hanging of Mordecai, it would make the punishment more conspicuous, and stand as a warning to anyone else who challenged him. It would also increase the disgrace of Mordecai, and thus it is assumed that Haman’s glory would be proportionately increased. In their next words, there is an urgency to the matter. And so the gallows should be erected this same day in anticipation of the approval of the king. It would be erected and waiting...

**14 (con’t) and in the morning suggest to the king that Mordecai be hanged on it;**

All that would be needed is the final approval of the king. By the time it came, it would simply be a matter of having the guards arrest Mordecai, and then hang him up on the tree. With that simple task completed, Haman could rejoice in his accomplishments without grieving over his wounded pride any longer. From there...

**14 (con’t) then go merrily with the king to the banquet.”**

With Mordecai alive, the meal would be bland, the fruit would be bitter, and the wine would be flavorless. His time at the banquet would be consumed with thoughts of rage at the wretched Jew who sat smugly at the king’s gate, waiting to torment him with his contemptible attitude. But with Mordecai hanging high, he would be filled with joy as he tasted the delights and drank the ambrosia of victory. The prospect was far too delightful to let pass by...

**\*14 (fin) And the thing pleased Haman; so he had the gallows made.**

The tree for hanging Mordecai was prepared because Haman rejoiced in the thought of the destruction of his enemy. The destruction of the Jews would soon follow, and he would be freed of this scourge which haunted him and robbed him of his contentment. Or so he thought. The very tree of his rejoicing would become the tree of his own execution.

Of this verse, Adam Clarke comments –

“In former times the Jews were accustomed to burn Haman in effigy; and with him a wooden cross, which they pretended to be in memory of that which he had erected for the suspension of Mordecai; but which was, in fact, to deride the Christian religion. The emperors, Justinian and Theodosius, abolished it by their edicts; and the practice has ceased from that time, though the principle from which it sprang still exists, with the same virulence against Christianity and its glorious Author.”

Isn't that interesting? There is in this, then, tastes of Messiah even though He is never alluded to in the book of Esther. It is through this people whom He would come, and it is to this people that He would return. But it is also this people who rejected Him in the interim. Mordecai is of the tribe of Benjamin, and was directly related to Saul, of whom the Bible records that he fell out of favor with the Lord. In fact, Samuel said to Saul –

“So why do you ask me, seeing the Lord has departed from you and has become your enemy? <sup>17</sup> And the Lord has done for Himself as He spoke by me. For the Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David. <sup>18</sup> Because you did not obey the voice of the Lord nor execute His fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore the Lord has done this thing to you this day.”  
1 Samuel 28-16:18

Saul had become the Lord's enemy because of his disobedience towards the command concerning Amelek. Now, a descendant of Amalek, the enemy of the Jews, was set to destroy Mordecai, Saul's relation. But the Lord will rescue him and his people, who would again become His enemy because of their rejection of Him. The tree for Mordecai, which became the tree of Haman – whose death resulted in the salvation of the Jews – symbolically became the tree of Christ. His death resulted in the salvation of the Jews, if they would receive it, but they did not. Instead, they continued to fight against Him, even trying to turn away those who had come to Christ. In Galatians 4, we read the amazing parallel –

“Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?”  
Galatians 4:16

Paul, the spokesman for the Lord, had become the enemy of the Lord's people in Galatia because the Jews had come in and demanded that they turn from the salvation of Christ, and back to the bondage of the law. But the ironic thing is that Paul is from Benjamin,

the same line and heritage as Mordecai. The ironies running through the Bible never seem to cease.

Saul became the Lord's enemy in order to maintain favor with his people. Paul became the people's enemy in order to maintain favor with the Lord. And in between them is Mordecai and Esther who are living out of favor with the Lord in Persia, and yet are being used by the Lord to save His people, the same people who would reject Him and do to Him what they asked to be done to Haman. If this isn't confusing, what is!

The point of what we are seeing is that despite unfaithfulness, the Lord may judge and pursue the individual, but He will never break His covenant with the collective. His judgments are intended to bring them back to Him, not utterly destroy them. In His workings, we see the most beneficial attitude towards the masses, while displaying His absolute righteousness and justice in the process.

And the highest marker of that truth is found in the cross of Jesus Christ. In Haman's coming death, there will be salvation for the Jews. In Christ's death, there will be salvation for those who receive what He has done, and condemnation for those who reject it. In the death of Haman, we see a good thing in that the enemy of the Jews will be destroyed, but his death is only a mere drop compared to that great enemy of all – Jew and Gentile – which is sin. In the death of Jesus, the true enemy is destroyed. The Bible says that Christ Jesus who knew no sin was made sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Let us remember that the story of Esther, though being dramatic, ironic, numerically complex, hidden with secrets, and delightful in its climax, is only a picture and part of what God is doing for the world in Christ Jesus. He is the center and focal point of all that we must focus on, or the story has no true final purpose and meaning. And the same is true with our lives. We need Christ. We all need Christ. In the end, it is all about Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Closing Verse:** *“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”),<sup>14</sup> that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” Galatians 3:13,14*

**Next Week:** Esther 6:1-14 *Haman thinks it is him, but it is someone else, and Haman will be a goner... (The Man in Whom the King Delights to Honor) (8<sup>th</sup> Esther Sermon)*

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. At times, you might feel as if he has no great design for you in life, but he has brought you to this moment to reveal His glory in and through you. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **The Golden Scepter**

Now it happened on the third day  
That Esther put on her royal robes, instead of some regular blouse  
And stood in the inner court of the king's palace  
Across from the king's house

While the king sat on his royal throne, not expecting his spouse  
In the royal house, facing the entrance of the house

So it was, when the king saw Queen Esther  
Standing in the court, that she found favor in his sight  
And the king held out to Esther the golden scepter  
-----that was in his hand  
Then Esther went near and touched the top of the scepter  
-----knowing that things would be alright  
And the king said to her  
“What do you wish, Queen Esther?

What is your request? A royal sum?  
It shall be given to you—up to half the kingdom!”

So Esther answered, “If it pleases the king  
Let the king and Haman come today  
To the banquet that I have prepared for him  
Please do this thing, I pray

Then the king said, “Bring Haman quickly  
That he may do as Esther has said  
So the king and Haman went to the banquet  
That Esther had prepar-ed.

At the banquet of wine the king said to Esther  
“What is your petition? It shall be granted you

What is your request, up to half the kingdom?  
It shall be done!" My word is true

Then Esther answered and said, not wishing her chance to miss  
"My petition and request is this:

If I have found favor in the sight of the king  
And if it pleases the king to grant my petition  
-----and fulfill my request in the hours ahead  
Then let the king and Haman come to the banquet  
Which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do  
-----as the king has said

So Haman went out that day joyful and with a glad heart  
But when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate  
And that he did not stand or tremble before him  
He was filled with indignation against Mordecai  
-----indignation and hate

Nevertheless Haman restrained himself and went home  
-----for a little family life  
And he sent and called for his friends and Zeresh his wife

Then Haman told them of his great riches  
The multitude of his children, which made his heart sing  
Everything in which the king had promoted him  
And how he had advanced him above the officials  
-----and servants of the king

Moreover Haman said  
"Besides, Queen Esther invited no one but me, a nifty thing!  
To come in with the king to the banquet that she prepared  
And tomorrow I am again invited by her along with the king

Yet all this avails me nothing; I am filled with hate  
So long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate

Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him  
"Let a gallows be made, fifty cubits high

And in the morning suggest to the king  
That be hanged on it Mordecai

Then go merrily with the king to the banquet, be not dismayed  
And the thing pleased Haman; so he had the gallows made

Lord God, thank You for Your presence that is with us  
Even when we don't realize that You are there  
Because You sent Your own Son Jesus  
We can know that You truly do care

And so Lord, be real to us in a wonderful new way  
Open our minds and our hearts to seeing You always  
Through every step we take, and throughout every day  
Be real to us, O God, and to You will shall give all of our praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

## ESTHER 6:1-14 (THE MAN WHOM THE KING DELIGHTS TO HONOR)

*\*To watch the video of this study, select from the following: [YouTube](#) or [Sermon Audio](#)*

By the end of the verses today, Mordecai is probably the most confused man on the planet. He and his people have been set for destruction, and yet, his mortal enemy has come to him with a royal robe, and the king's horse, and after placing the robe on him and placing him on the king's horse, he has conducted him through the city square honoring him as a town crier would – “Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.”

As soon as that was over, the robe was removed, the horse was led back to the royal stalls, and he went back to sit at the king's gate as if nothing ever happened. His people are still set for destruction, and yet the king honored him. It's hard to see how the king delighted to honor him while reveling in destroying him.

And many of us often feel the same way, or the opposite way, about the Lord, depending on our circumstances. We hear about the end which is anticipated, but we have frustrating events which inhibit our ability to be happy in the meantime. Why, if God wants us to have a good end, do we have such difficulties on the way there? Maybe we are just looking at things the wrong way. Yes, pain is real, trials are real, loss or conflict really affects us, but is that what we should be focusing on?

**Text Verse:** *“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,<sup>18</sup> while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”*

*2 Corinthians 4:17, 18*

The day before I typed this sermon was a Sunday. Sunday's are long, tiring, busy days. They are – from the moment I get up, until right before bed – filled with activity, some of which is exceedingly stressful, especially the video work for the updates and sermons. It is complicated, tedious work which requires complete attention and no distractions.

However, 15 April was not such a day. It was very, very windy and raining. This meant the dogs were not happy about going outside to do what dogs must do. It was rather hectic. “No hectic please, I am working on videos.” While still working on the update video, Hideko came up to me and said, “The hot water heater is leaking.” She said it with no urgency at all.

My thought, “It is dripping at a fitting, and I will tighten it when I get a chance. Maybe tomorrow.” After an hour or two, while working on the sermon, she came and said, “The hot water heater is really leaking now.” Well, that can’t be a fitting, unless it has been unscrewing itself.

Up and to the garage. Yes, it was leaking. The garage was flooded, and the sermon wasn’t getting edited. First to turn off the water, which wasn’t possible as there was no shut off valve. What idiot put in the hot water heater without a shutoff valve? Don’t answer that Charlie. Things took a while to get cleaned up, and the water was shut off at the meter. By now, I was questioning. But when I dumped out my old box of PVC parts, I realized that I could seal everything off with no problem at all. I had just what I needed.

Questioning turned into praise. Thank You Lord! I don’t need to go to the store, the sermon work will get done, dinner will be eaten, bed will be waiting. I could wait until Wednesday or Friday to put in a new hot water heater (with a shut-off valve this time!) and because dad had left for a few days on vacation, Hideko could still take a hot shower at his house. All worked out well.

Despite the troubles, if we can look for the good, it is enough to set our minds on a different, happier path. And more, if we can look as to why the troubles came about, and fit them into the bigger picture, then we can really place it all in the Lord’s hands without care or concern.

This is the kind of thing we can learn from Esther. Mordecai had temporary difficulties which seemed overwhelming, but when things turned around, he was able to look back on the troubles and fit them into a much larger picture of redemption and safety for his people. Though the book never gives the Lord the credit for these things, meaning Mordecai’s acknowledgment of Him, we can hope that he saw things in that light. Even if he didn’t, we certainly can. And we should. Each step of the story leads us to that much fuller understanding of the Lord’s tender care for Israel, and for us. This a truth which is to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. A Sleepless Night (verses 1-6)**

**<sup>1</sup> That night the king could not sleep.**

The Hebrew words here are more descriptive - "In night the that fled sleep *from* the king." It is purposefully showing us that the same specific night that Esther had brought him for the banquet, and then petitioned for a second banquet the next day, is when the king's sleep fled away.

What is important to understand is that the king's mind is consumed with Esther's petition. It is the only thing in the narrative that is recorded which could bring him to this state. It shows that he really is concerned about what she desires to reveal. The fact that she was willing to risk her life in coming to him unannounced demonstrated that it was a matter of the highest urgency and importance.

It is this which caused his sleep to fly away. There are nights when we can't sleep, and then there are nights when sleep flies away from us. The mind races, and the thoughts which consume the minutes away then lead to hours of turning. The chances of the mind slowing down are zero, and so there is nothing to do but either have the mind race while laying there, or find something to do to whittle away the remaining hours...

<sup>1</sup>(con't) **So one was commanded to bring the book of the records of the chronicles;**

The English here is fine, whereas the Hebrew is a little more lengthy. It says, "and spoke to bring book the memorials, words the days." The king knows that he will be unable to sleep, and so he decided to get a little work done. It is evident that he was a little behind on it too, because when he asks for the book, it is thumbed back to an earlier point. He isn't simply being read the events of the day, but is maybe catching up on events since his last sleepless night. It's speculation of course, but this is what one would do. Like reading a book, we will go to where the bookmark is and start reading once again. The result of this reading tends to show this is probably the case. He would listen until the sound of the words overwhelmed him and he fell back to sleep. From there, the bookmark would be replaced, awaiting his next sleepless night.

<sup>1</sup>(con't) **and they were read before the king.**

Some ancient commentators report that some of the kings of this time were illiterate. That may be true, but being king means that he had no need to read on his own. He could have someone do it for him. If compiled in a narrative or poetic form, such as has been seen in ancient records, the reading would be interesting, and it would calm his already-racing mind. Depending on the reader, it could also bring him to drowsiness.

**<sup>2</sup> And it was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, the doorkeepers who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.**

The events referred to now are recorded in Esther 2:23 which is summed up with the words, "and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king." The only difference here is that the name Bigthan of verse 2:23 is changed to Bigthana here.

The timing of the events now occurring clearly shows the presence of the Lord. The king's sleep fled away, the book of the chronicles was brought to him, and yet this reading contains the events concerning Mordecai, and Haman is expected to ask for Mordecai to be hanged on the next day. And more, Esther has a second banquet scheduled for the king and Haman in order to reveal what she did not reveal in the first meeting... On and on, the little details evolve into one grand theme – "The Lord is there, and He is directing the events for a determined outcome."

This verse finishes a set of two's. Here the words of the deeds of Bigthan and Teresh, the doorkeepers of Ahasuerus, are reported by Mordecai. The same words – Mordecai, Bigthan, Teresh, doorkeepers, and Ahasuerus – are all repeated in verse 2:21. The two accounts differ as one was recorded as it occurred, and one has been recorded concerning what occurred, but they confirm that what has occurred is crucial to the unfolding events in the lives of all concerned.

**<sup>3</sup> Then the king said, "What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?"**

The king has certainly not forgotten the deed of Mordecai. However, it was a reward for the deed that concerns him at this point. It is noted by Herodotus (Herod. viii. 85, 90) that in Persia there was a special list which was compiled and maintained of those who had done some special service for the king. It was considered a duty to acknowledge them for such things, and it would practically be a legal right for something noteworthy to be so conferred. The lack of any reward may have been that it was forgotten due to the development of other busy duties in the king's life, or it could be that the court simply didn't pursue reminding the king because Mordecai was a Jew. Whatever the reason, their response came back to the ears of the king...

**<sup>3 (con't)</sup> And the king's servants who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him."**

They would be the ones to know. As recorders of the chronicles, they would be responsible for knowing where such an act was recorded, and the exact details of what was done. Their response shows that the matter of recompense had not yet been completed. What is evident is that the king either decided to have the books read after much of a long sleepless night, or he had them read to him for many hours through the night. Probably the latter. Several scholars note that the Hebrew of verse 1 denotes that a lengthy period of reading is implied. Either way, morning arrived while the books were still being read...

#### **<sup>4</sup> So the king said, “Who is in the court?”**

From the question, one can assume that there would always be attendants in the court. Or at least this would be the case for anytime the king was awake. As the king wanted something read to him, then the scribe would have been awoken to read to him. As the two were in the palace awake, others would stand ready to meet whatever request may be made.

It's obvious from the previous verse that the king is looking to rectify the oversight of honoring Mordecai. It is on his mind, it is a new day, and whatever adviser or attendant was in the court could be inquired of, or directed, to attend to the matter. The circumstances which follow are more than ironic, but almost comical in how they play out. Man has a sense of humor, and man possesses nothing which God does not possess or understand. And so what follows, along with the exacting timing of all of the events, shows us that the Lord directed them for the sake of irony as much as anything else.

#### **<sup>4</sup> (con't) Now Haman had *just* entered the outer court of the king's palace**

One can sense the urgency of Haman's arrival at the palace. It is still early in the morning, and yet he has excitedly gone to the palace with all alacrity to have his plan executed at the earliest possible moment. He probably didn't sleep any more than the king did, tossing and turning at the delightful thought of fulfilling his plans of the previous evening, which was...

#### **<sup>4</sup> (con't) to suggest that the king hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.**

An unused gallows is a pointless gallows. The thing had been prepared, and Mordecai wasn't on it. All Haman needed was the king's approval, and that would be quickly

rectified. One can almost sense the eager anticipation which flowed through Haman's pulsing veins.

**<sup>5</sup> The king's servants said to him, "Haman is there, standing in the court."**

The NKJV unfortunately omits translating the word *hineh*, or "behold." It more literally says, "Behold, Haman stands in the court." Even though there were certainly other officers present, it seems that it was an unexpected surprise that Haman would be there at this time. Being the one who was granted the king's signet ring back in Chapter 3, it seems that the timing of his coming was quite propitious. He would certainly be well-suited to attending to such an important duty of kingly matters. The irony increases...

**<sup>5 (con't)</sup> And the king said, "Let him come in."**

Both men are, at this time, intimately interested in this single Jew. One desires to have him honored in order to fulfill a royal responsibility for having saved the king's life. One desired to have him executed to fulfill a personal vendetta which had become a kingly responsibility because of the edict concerning all the Jews. The irony is so heavy that it lays upon the royal court like a blanket of morning dew.

**<sup>6</sup> So Haman came in, and the king asked him,**

Though Haman is there to make his petition, he must defer to the king first, responding to any need or question. Only after this, could he then make his request. Had he come at any other time and sought the king's attention, he would have been the one to speak his desires first. "King Ahasuerus, Haman is seeking your presence." "Send him in." "Hey Haman, what's on your mind." The timing here is literally brought to the difference between one sentence – either initiated by the king, or initiated by Haman. The entire story pivots on the king's question in this one verse.

**<sup>6 (con't)</sup> "What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?"**

It is Mordecai who is on the king's mind. If the king had said, "Why are you up so early, what can I do for you there old boy?" the entire course of events may have taken a different turn. But the matter of Mordecai is preeminent on his mind, and therefore, pleasantries are dispensed with. The king feels a debt has been unfortunately left unpaid, and it must be dealt with first. The question is asked in a manner which seeks impartiality. No name is given, no circumstances are detailed. It could be for something small to something exceedingly great. However, it is really early in the morning, the royal

chronicles are laid out with someone reading them, and the king is asking a question, probably based on them. Haman not knowing this considers the question, possibly in light of his having “saved” the empire by recommending the removal of the Jews. Of course! That must be it...

*What honor has been bestowed upon this One?  
What has been granted for His noble deed?  
Surely something must have been done  
But if not, we must correct that, and do so with speed*

*How can He be repaid for the thing He has done?  
What He did was a noble thing indeed  
We need to faithfully reward this One  
What would bless him? What does he need?*

*What shall be done for the Man who has helped the King  
Tell me if you can suggest anything that will do  
What will to Him happiness bring  
This is what I am asking of you*

## **II. The Dog and His Bone (verses 6-9)**

**<sup>6</sup> (con't) Now Haman thought in his heart, “Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?”**

Well of course! He is called into the king’s presence without having first requested an audience. He had been the brilliant architect behind the removal of the Jews. He was the only one invited to Esther’s banquet yesterday, and he was the only one who was invited for the second banquet later on this same day. His skill of leadership, obviously noted even by the queen, meant that the king’s high approval of him is what was on the king’s mind. With this obviously his thoughts, he suggests something truly fitting for himself, the great and awesome Haman...

**<sup>7</sup> And Haman answered the king, “For the man whom the king delights to honor,**

If anyone else was on Haman’s mind as being a possibility to honor, he would have skipped these words entirely. However, he is thinking only of himself as the candidate for the honor to be presented, and so by repeating the words of the king, he is adding honor on top of honor. However, it simply says, “The man whom the king delights to

honor.” The word “for” is inserted for supposed clarity, but it is unnecessary. The broken nature of the sentence shows the excitement in Haman’s response.

Q: “What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?”

A: The man whom the kings delights to honor... well let me tell you!”

**<sup>8</sup> let a royal robe be brought which the king has worn,**

It is noted that wearing a kingly robe would be a breach of Persian law, but the king might allow it at his command. As it is a robe the king had worn, it is signifying a special robe, not necessarily the regular garments which he would wear from day to day. Here Haman is looking for the highest form of recognition, showing the king’s absolute favor of the individual by granting one of his own special robes to be placed upon the favored subject. This is similar to the bestowal of the garments by Pharaoh upon Joseph in Genesis 41, and the granting of Jonathan’s garment to David in 1 Samuel 18. It is also foreshadowing the laying of kingly attire upon Christ as is seen in the gospels.

**<sup>8 (con’t)</sup> and a horse on which the king has ridden,**

A royal horse carries much the same symbolism of wearing a royal robe. It would be evident to all that the one being carried was truly highly honored. In Genesis 41, Joseph was made to ride in Pharaoh’s second chariot. And when Solomon was to be ordained as king in David’s place, David directed that he be taken on his own mule to Gihon for the ceremony. This honor would be made all the more distinct by another symbol of kingly authority...

**<sup>8 (con’t)</sup> which has a royal crest placed on its head.**

It is argued whether this is a royal crown for the rider’s head, a royal crown from the king’s head, or a royal crown for the horse’s head. The Hebrew, however, is specific. It is for the horse. Ancient Assyrian monuments depict the king’s horse wearing a sort of crown. A special crown or crest is something that would identify it as the king’s own horse. The honor would be great. This verse contains the last use of this word *kether*, or crown, in the Bible. It was first seen in verse 1:11, and now we can bid it adieu.

**<sup>9</sup> Then let this robe and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king’s most noble princes,**

Not only does Haman suggest that the royal robe and horse be furnished, but that it be first delivered to one of the king's princes. It is the same word used to describe the nobles of the kingdom in verse 1:3, *ha'partemim*, or "the nobles." It is a Persian word brought into the Hebrew which literally means "first." In other words, Haman, thinking the king is speaking of honoring him, is looking to have some other noble act as his own footman. It is ironic that the noble prince selected for the task would, in fact, be him! This would include not only bringing the stated items, but actually placing them on the individual...

<sup>9 (con't)</sup> **that he may array the man whom the king delights to honor.**

The verb is actually third person plural – "that they may array the man." This is speaking of all involved in getting the things to him and ensuring he is attired in them. Haman is thinking of a fashion party, with himself being attended to by the king's own servants and even his own noblemen. He would be the cat's meow as others tended to him. As Adam Clarke says about these words, "Alas, Poor Haman! Never was the fable of the dog and shadow more literally fulfilled."

<sup>9 (con't)</sup> **Then parade him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him: 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!'"**

Being arrayed in royal splendor would do no good if nobody saw it. And it would only be partial joy if only those in the royal palace saw it. But it would be high honor indeed if all were to see it. The man so honored would be forever adored by the people of Shushan if he were so honored in public. Haman's greatest dreams were about to come true. He would be the hero of the common people among whom he passed. They would willingly bow to him and offer him praise and honor! These same types of honor were granted to Joseph in Genesis 41–

"And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, "Bow the knee!" So he set him over all the land of Egypt."  
Genesis 41:43

*Honors from the King for the Man  
This is what our King chose to do  
For the One who reported the treacherous plan  
The king is pleased with this Man through and through*

*Rewards are waiting for those who also assist the King  
His favor shall also be poured out on you  
Honor and blessings upon yourself you shall bring  
Yes, when you please the King, honors will ensue*

*Be pleased to know that your deeds will be seen  
Nothing will be forgotten for those who please the King  
From start to finish and all in between  
Your faithfulness will to you favor and honor bring*

### **III. The Fall of the Fallen (verses 10-14)**

**<sup>10</sup> Then the king said to Haman, “Hurry, take the robe and the horse, as you have suggested,**

The urgency of the command shows that the king felt as if a royal pardon for delaying such an honor would next be necessary. He had overlooked the saving of his own life by another, and he wanted that oversight rectified immediately. The advice given was appropriate to the situation, there was a noble ready and available to carry it out, and the implements were right there in the palace. In a short span of time, the debt to the throne would be repaid with honor to the subject who deserved his wages for his attentive care.

The words here tend to confirm that the crown, or crest, was for the horse and not for the rider. It was to accompany the horse. If it were otherwise, it would have been included in the list for the rider. Instead, it is simply a part of the words, “as you have suggested,” meaning that the horse would be so ornamented, and also conducted by a footman.

**<sup>10</sup> (con’t) and do so for Mordecai the Jew who sits within the king’s gate!**

To ensure exactly who would be granted the honor, he signifies the name, the race, and the position held. All of this would have been recorded for him in the chronicles, and he is simply repeating what was just then relayed to him.

Some call into question the historical truth of the account because of these words. They ask how it is possible that the king would have forgotten that he had consigned all of the Jews to death and so honor a Jew in this way. However, Haman’s words in Chapter 3 never said anything about the Jews.

All he said to the king was, “There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom.” With a little more talk about them, he offered to have them eliminated and to place the money in the king’s treasuries to do so. The subject of who these people were was never mentioned. For all the king knew, Haman was speaking of gypsies, tramps, and thieves. It was Haman who harbored the ill will, and the recompense for his wickedness towards the Jews was now coming back upon him.

**10 (con’t) Leave nothing undone of all that you have spoken.”**

The great honors which Haman had longed to be heaped upon him, would now be lavished by him upon his mortal enemy. The hatred between the Amalekites and the Jews was ancient. Within only moments, his first battle in the war which would lead to victory over them was about to commence. But instead, he was now within moments of the most humiliating defeat of all.

**11 So Haman took the robe and the horse, arrayed Mordecai and led him on horseback through the city square, and proclaimed before him, “Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!”**

Haman had arrogantly assumed he would be the recipient of the honors. By asking for a noble to attend to the task, he had unknowingly appointed himself to accomplish it. He could no more ask to be left off from attending to it as any other noble could for Haman. The decision was made, and the duty was to be carried out without complaint or comment.

It would be hard to fully imagine the mental state of either man as the events unfolded, but it would have been a highly sorrowful day for Haman, and a day of joy, even if temporary while still facing extermination, for Mordecai. It is possible that he may have now felt the first twinge of hope for his people since the issuance of the edict against them.

This verse introduces another set of twos. Mordecai is invested with special clothes and accompanying honors appropriate to his good deed toward the king. In verse 8:15, he will again be noted “in royal apparel of blue and white, with a great crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple.” They contrast in that here he is temporarily honored for a deed accomplished in the saving of the king. There it will be for a permanent appointment as a royal in the king’s palace. They contrast, and yet they confirm the honorable deeds and skill of Mordecai.

**<sup>12</sup> Afterward Mordecai went back to the king's gate.**

Since chapter two, it has been seen that Mordecai sat in the king's gate. Thus he is either a eunuch or he filled some other employ within the king's realm. The gate is from where he came when Haman came to collect him, and the gate is to where he returns upon the granting of his high honor. With that behind him, he now returns to his regular place of employ, seemingly not puffed up at all about what occurred. Instead, he quietly resumes his routine life, waiting to see if Esther will prevail in her own mission. On the other hand...

**<sup>12 (con't)</sup> But Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered.**

While Mordecai took his honors in stride, Haman has not fared so well. There is urgency in returning to his house, as if he needed to shut himself in from the outside world. And on the way there he both mourned, a sign of deep distress, and he covered his head, a sign of exceeding shame. When David was overthrown by his son Absalom, it says in 2 Samuel 15:30 that as he fled, he ascended the Mount of Olives weeping as he went, and he had his head covered and went barefoot. Likewise, it says this in Psalm 44 –

“My dishonor *is* continually before me,  
And the shame of my face has covered me,” Psalm 44:15

Jeremiah also speaks of the shame of drought, a sign of the Lord's displeasure –

“Because the ground is parched,  
For there was no rain in the land,  
The plowmen were ashamed;  
They covered their heads.” Jeremiah 14:4

This verse now introduces another set of two's. Here Haman's face is covered by himself at the beginning of his downfall as he flees to his house in shame, hoping for comfort. In verse 7:8, his face will be covered by others as he is led off to the gallows at his house in disgrace. They contrast in detail, but they confirm the full and final downfall of wicked Haman.

**<sup>13</sup> When Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him,**

Haman was not one to keep his emotions to himself. If he were alive today, his Facebook post would include all the sad details of the day. Instead, he told his wife, and all of his friends what had occurred, probably hoping for them to say, “Don’t worry about a thing, every little thing is going to be alright.” But that is not the response he receives. Here it uses the same word as it did in verse 5:11, translated as “told.” It means to recount. Before he recounted all of the great things which had occurred to him. Now he recounts all the miserable things which have come about. What a difference a day makes. He is now hoping for consolation. Instead...

**13 (con’t) his wise men and his wife Zeresh said to him, “If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish descent, you will not prevail against him**

Scholars have pondered over the words here, as if they are hard to explain. How could they know this? From there, commentaries go into detail about how it was understood that the Jews were under divine protection and that it was obvious that Haman has sealed his fate because of this. But they already knew he was a Jew when they recommended he be hung. That is seen in verse 5:13.

What has become obvious to them isn’t that there has been some sort of divine protection over the Jews that they knew about all along, but that there is the king’s favor resting on two of them. It is Haman who signed the decree and sealed it with the king’s signet. It is he who bore ill to an entire group of people because of his heritage and his hatred. But his hatred was directed at exterminating a group of people who had found the king’s favor, first through Esther the queen, and now through Mordecai who sat in the king’s gate.

Now, from this logical chain of events, they could then see that a divine force was at work. It was not before, but only after the event, that this was now evident. This is why they are termed “wise men.” They are able to discern the situation based on the observable facts which have led to where things are now. Because of this, they tell Haman that he will not succeed in his plans...

**13 (con’t) but will surely fall before him.”**

*ki naphol tipol l’panav* – “for falling you will fall before him.” The idea of these words is that “because of your fall, your total fall is assured.” What has begun will continue until it is completely finished. They are as certain of this as they are that honey is sweet.

This verse finishes a set of two's. Starting in verse 5:10, he began to consult his friends. The two contrast one another. There, he consulted them to brag and to seek counsel. His friends gave him counsel in how to destroy Mordecai. In this, he called them for mourning, and they have revealed that it is Mordecai who will destroy him. The two accounts contrast, and yet they confirm that the enmity between the two will end in destruction. In Haman, we can see the truth of the proverb –

“Whoever digs a pit will fall into it,  
And he who rolls a stone will have it roll back on him.” Proverbs 26:27

Haman had metaphorically dug a pit for Mordecai, and he will fall into it; and he had attempted to roll away Israel, but they will roll right back upon him.

**\*14 While they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs came, and hastened to bring Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared.**

There is a rapid succession of events which has come about in this chapter, culminating in this final verse. Whereas just one chapter before, he was bragging about being the only one invited to Esther's banquet, now he is fearful of having made the wrong decision concerning the Jews. He needs time to think through what to do, but time is not his friend. Instead, the royal court has come to gather Haman for the second banquet of Esther. What was a point of bragging and hoped-for joy, would now be a tasteless time of trial and trepidation. One can almost anticipate the outcome, if not the events themselves, of what lies ahead at Esther's banquet.

Again, as we have seen on numerous occasions already, the divine hand of the unseen Lord is directing the events for us to see and contemplate. If the account is true, and we can be assured it is, will we look at what has happened as random chance and dumb luck, or will we look at the events as marvelous markers of the Lord's guiding hand, leading Israel to a good end?

The reason this is important to contemplate in a story like Esther, is because the story is mirrored throughout history in the Jewish people. Is everything that has happened to them simply one long string of chances happening to turn out as was prophesied at Mount Sinai by the Lord through Moses? Or, is it more than chance?

As humans, we are saved by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. The record of His life is sufficient to bring anyone to salvation if they will simply respond to the call. But God hasn't just left that witness and said, "Take it or leave it." He has confirmed the

word which points to Christ not only in Christ, but in the people from whom Christ comes – and to whom He has promised to return.

Israel is more than a cosmic aberration. They are a divine marker of God's faithfulness to His word. He chose them to lead to the Incarnate Word, Jesus, and He has promised to keep them until the end despite their rejection of that same Divine Word. The story of Esther is a story of the unseen Lord's faithfulness. And it is a part of the greater, longer, and more intricate story which has been going on for thousands of years.

When your faith in the world around you is shaken, and if your own faith in the promises of the Lord are likewise shaken, take time to reflect on the *unbelievable* faithfulness of the Lord to His unfaithful people, Israel. They have been surrounded by so many enemies, and such great enemies, so often, that all reason should tell us they should be a long distant memory. But they are not.

And so, in His faithfulness to Israel, we can be encouraged of His faithfulness to us. Have faith in Christ, do not swerve in your love of His word as it applies to you, and be responsible to follow it, applying it to your life constantly. In this, your walk will be sound, and your days will be well spent.

**Closing Verse:** *"The king's favor is toward a wise servant,  
But his wrath is against him who causes shame." Proverbs 14:35*

**Next Week:** Esther 7:1-10 *It's a cursed way to die...* (Hang Him High) (9<sup>th</sup> Esther Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. At times, you might feel as if he has no great design for you in life, but he has brought you to this moment to reveal His glory in and through you. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **The Man Whom the King Delights to Honor**

That night the king could not sleep  
So one was commanded to bring  
The book of the records of the chronicles  
And they were read before the king

And it was found written that Mordecai  
Had told of Bigthana and Teresh, as he ought

Two of the king's eunuchs  
The doorkeepers who had, to lay hands on King Ahasuerus sought

Then the king said  
"What honor or dignity has been bestowed for this on Mordecai?"  
And the king's servants who attended him said  
"Nothing has been done for him." This was their reply

So the king said, "Who is in the court?"  
Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace  
To suggest that the king hang Mordecai  
On the gallows that he had prepared for him: such was his malice

The king's servants said to him  
"Haman is there, standing in the court"  
And the king said, "Let him come in"  
To me, have that guy Haman report  
So Haman came in, and the king asked him  
"What shall be done for the man  
-----whom the king delights to honor? Tell me plainly  
Now Haman thought in his heart  
"Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?"

And Haman answered the king  
"For the man whom the king delights to honor" Yes, he said  
Let a royal robe be brought which the king has worn  
And a horse on which the king has ridden  
-----which has a royal crest placed on its head

Then let this robe and horse be delivered  
To the hand of one of the most noble princes of the king  
That he may array the man whom the king delights to honor  
Yes, you should commit to do this thing

Then parade him on horseback through the city square  
And proclaim before him, you see:  
'Thus shall it be done to the man  
Whom the king delights to honor!" So should it be

Then the king said to Haman  
“Hurry, take the robe and the horse, as you have suggested  
And do so for Mordecai the Jew who sits within the king’s gate!  
Leave nothing undone of all that you have spoken  
-----as I have now attested

So Haman took the robe and the horse  
Arrayed Mordecai and led him on horseback  
-----through the city square  
And proclaimed before him  
“Thus shall it be done to the man  
-----whom the king delights to honor with fanfare

Afterward Mordecai went back to the king’s gate  
But Haman hurried to his house  
Mourning and with his head covered  
And feeling like a louse

When Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends  
Everything that had happened to him  
His wise men and his wife Zeresh said to him  
Words that were quite grim

“If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall  
Is of Jewish descent  
You will not prevail against him  
But will surely fall before him; a bad end you cannot prevent

While they were still talking with him  
The king’s eunuchs came, while he sat there scared  
And hastened to bring Haman to the banquet  
Which Esther had prepared

Lord God, thank You for Your presence that is with us  
Even when we don’t realize that You are there  
Because You sent Your own Son Jesus  
We can know that You truly do care

And so Lord, be real to us in a wonderful new way

Open our minds and our hearts to seeing You always  
Through every step we take, and throughout every day  
Be real to us, O God, and to You will shall give all of our praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

## ESTHER 7:1-10 (HANG HIM HIGH)

*\*To watch the video of this study, select from the following: [YouTube](#) or [Sermon Audio](#)*

The day I typed this sermon, I was actually giddy with anticipation. I was just five days away from the return of my cherished friends Sergio and Rhoda. It was a year before that they had departed my house for the last time and returned to Israel. My heart was broken, and there was a void in my life.

I've spoken with them almost daily, sometimes more often than that, as I pester them with questions that only they can answer concerning Hebrew, or problems that only Sergio can fix as I botch up something in my computer. But there I sat on Monday, typing the sermon and waiting for Friday when they would arrive once again to ease my longing for their company.

But I was also in high anticipation for another reason. Outside of an extremely limited number of people, and those only because it was absolutely necessary that they needed to know, or because they couldn't interfere with what was coming, nobody knew that they were headed to the US. I would depart just two days later to see a friend, Jon, in Washington state, and they would head to church, that same day, to take over for you all in my absence.

It was planned months in advance, and yet even my mother was not allowed in on it. Ha! As the military says, "There must be a need to know, and she didn't have one." Ha again! But the fact that nobody, except those who needed to know, had any idea that they were coming didn't change the fact that... they were coming.

**Text Verse:** *"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,  
For wisdom and might are His.*

*<sup>21</sup> And He changes the times and the seasons;*

*He removes kings and raises up kings;*

*He gives wisdom to the wise*

*And knowledge to those who have understanding.*

*<sup>22</sup> He reveals deep and secret things;*

*He knows what is in the darkness,*

*And light dwells with Him." Daniel 2:20-22*

Some things exist that we simply have no idea about. How many of you have read the book of Esther before? We're now in Chapter 7. Until going through these past Esther

sermons, were you aware of all of the interesting hidden patterns and parallels that we've seen? Surely not. But they have been there all along. And the frustrating thing for me is that there are countless others that I am (we are) still unaware of.

But it doesn't mean they aren't there. And it follows along exactly with the constant theme which I have talked about in each Esther sermon so far. We act in the same manner about the Lord. He is, as we say, out of sight, and thus out of mind. Problems creep up, and we get overwhelmed – "How will I ever get out of this?" Tragedy occurs, and we say, "Now where will things end up?" We fail to direct our words to Him, and we are tossed upon a sea of confusion when it is so.

But Sergio and Rhoda were on their way from Israel to America, to tend to you with their help, love, and instruction, and to help out the church with new equipment, even though you didn't know it was coming. And they came, and you all benefited from it. Your not knowing didn't stop what was known.

How much more true is that with the Lord. The Lord is both here now, and He is also coming. He IS. When The Lord said, I AM THAT I AM, He was telling us that He IS. No place is out of reach, no thing is unknown, and nothing can thwart what He wills. We walk blindly in our knowledge and uncaring about events as they unfold. But it doesn't mean He isn't there through the process.

Esther shows us this. The Lord, unacknowledged and unseen, is still there. Understanding this in Esther a little more with each sermon, let us then apply this truth to our lives concerning the Lord in our midst. The great I AM is. Let us remember this. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. The Adversary and Enemy (verses 1-6)**

**<sup>1</sup> So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther.**

*v'yabo ha'melekh v'haman lishtot im esther ha'malkah.* Being such a simple verse for us to start with, it seems as if there would be nothing difficult for the translators. But for the sake of it, less look at the variety of translations of these few words –

So the king and Haman went to Queen Esther's banquet. NIV

So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther. ESV

So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther. NKJV  
 So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen. KJV  
 So the king and Haman came to the banquet with Esther, the queen. Jubilee  
 So the king and Haman came to have dinner with Queen Esther. God's Word  
 So the king and Haman came to dine with Queen Esther. NET  
 So the king and Aman went in, to drink with the queen. Douay-Rheims (where is "Esther"?)  
 Now the king and Haman came to drink wine with Esther the queen. NASB  
 Now the king and Haman came to drink wine with Esther the queen. NAS  
 The king and Haman came to feast with Esther the queen. CSB  
 The king and Haman were dining with Esther. CEV (where is "queen"?)  
 The king and Haman went in to have a drink with Queen Esther. ISV  
 And so the king and Haman went to eat with Esther. GNT (where is "queen"?)  
 And the king and Haman came to drink with Esther the queen. Darby  
 And the king cometh in, and Haman, to drink with Esther the queen. Young's  
 And came the king, and Haman, to drink with Esther the queen. Charlie's LT  
 And came the king and Haman, to drink with Esther the queen. Sergio's LT

As you can see, some leave out important words, some add in words not in the text. Some interpret for us what a word means rather than literally translating it. And so on. If there is this much variance in a single, simple verse, just imagine how much variation there will be in much more complicated verses. This may seem like an unimportant exercise in "nitpickatory" nitpicking, but it isn't.

Translators are generally not scholars. They simply translate. However, unless they refer to scholars, or unless they have an exceptionally well-grounded understanding of context, they are bound to make errors in their translations. And so, this verse shows us how important a line by line, and even word by word study of the text really is. If we have such erroneous translations of this verse, we truly must study to show ourselves approved in all verses we come across.

For one small example, as far as the words, "to drink," some added in the word "wine," even though it isn't in the verse, but it is stated explicitly in verse 2. Is it wrong to add it in here? No, but it should be italicized or bracketed if it is. Some, such as the KJV, used the word "banquet" rather than to drink, and they are using it as a verb. That would be fine, because it is a banqueting, but that causes confusion because they use the same word, in the same context, elsewhere as "to drink." And a different word is used in verse 2 where they also say "banquet," but which they then call a "feast" elsewhere, such as in chapter 1.

There is a lack of consistency in their translation. It should simply say here, “to drink.” The amount of care of translation shows the amount of respect for God’s word. It is a long, arduous task, which really necessitates us reading multiple translations in order to get a better perspective of actual intent.

**<sup>2</sup> And on the second day,**

The words here seem superfluous, but they are to remind us that there has already been one banquet, and that the extraordinary events which occurred after it came about. For whatever reason, the queen withheld her request at that time, and had asked for the king’s attendance of a second banquet when she would make her request known.

**<sup>2</sup> (con’t) at the banquet of wine,**

This explains the “to drink” of the previous verse. It isn’t just for them to come over and have a coke and some snacks. Instead, it is a *mishteh*, a banquet which consists of *yayin*, or wine – specifically fermented wine. Any food is secondary to the wine. Esther is the queen, she knows the king’s proclivities, and she has known how he has reacted with wine in the past.

It brings a passion on him which can be directed based on her submission, or lack of submission, to his will once he was under its influence. It happened with Vashti. As noted in the first Esther sermon, wine symbolizes the merging together of expressions into a result. The thing that ought to happen can happen, symbolized by wine. Whether she learned this through observation, or some other way, she is applying the truth to the situation.

Further, there was one banquet on the first day, and that is followed up by a second banquet the next day. Everything that happened between the two must be weighing very heavily on the mind of Haman as they sit there drinking.

**<sup>2</sup> (con’t) the king again said to Esther, “What *is* your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what *is* your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!”**

The words here are very similar to those of verse 5:6 –

At the banquet of wine the king said to Esther, “What *is* your petition? It shall be granted you. What *is* your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!”  
Esther 5:6

The only substantial difference between the two is that the king adds in the words *esther ha'malkah*, or “Esther, the Queen.” It shows us something important. He could not sleep the night before. The reason was because Esther had come before him, chancing her own life, in order to petition the king for something. He extended the scepter to her, and then asked in verse 5:3, “What do you wish, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given to you—up to half the kingdom!”

There he also called her Queen Esther, obviously indicating that she was accepted to come into his presence because she was queen. Her request seemed almost trivial for such a chance. She simply asked him and Haman to come to the banquet she had prepared. At that feast, he asked her again what she wanted, but didn't call her Queen Esther in front of Haman. However, she delayed her request for a second day. It was a request which would deprive him of sleep as the thoughts of what she desired spun through his head on a continuous loop.

Eventually, he rose and had the book of the records of the chronicles read to him. He knew that whatever she wished must be so important that she was willing to go through these events in order to come to stating her petition. She has proven herself not just a beauty, but a woman of perseverance and patience. Thus, he acknowledges her now, in Haman's presence, as Queen Esther; a title she has earned in her dealings of these two days.

**<sup>3</sup> Then Queen Esther answered and said, “If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request.**

Esther employs a rather amazing use of linguistics. First, there is an abruptness in her words which reflect the emotions she is relaying. Secondly, the king had asked, 1) What is your petition?, and, 2) What is your request? She accepts both *separately*. And so she divides her words into answering both *separately*.

When she answers, first her petition is made for herself – “my life.” And then her request is made for another – “my people.” One would assume the king was simply being verbose and offering the granting of one thing, not two. It would be like someone today saying, “What do you need? How can I help you?” They are uniting the two thoughts into one gracious offering.

Any normal answer would be, “I need fifty bucks.” But a person who was linguistically skilled might say, “Well, I need fifty dollars, and you can help by waxing my car.” How do

you turn down two requests when you made two offers? This is what Esther has done. And thirdly, she has done it in a marvelous way by first saying, “If I have found favor in your sight.”

Up until this point when speaking to him, the last time being in Chapter 5, she had spoken in the third person to the king – “If I have found favor in the sight of the king.” / “If it pleases the king.” Now, her first words in Chapter 7 to him are in the second person. Instead of “the king,” she says, “your sight.” She has worked her way up to meet him on a personal level.

These first words to him must have been as surprising to the king as if she had said, “I want to go on an elephant ride to India and back.” What she has spoken is probably so far from what he could have imagined that he must think she is making a joke. But, yet, she had come into his presence unannounced, and at the risk of her life. It could be no joke. Esther then continues...

**<sup>4</sup> For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated.**

Esther uses the same words found in the royal edict dispatched by Haman, which said, “And the letters were sent by couriers into all the king’s provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews.” She has identified with her people and their plight. They are united, and she has admitted that she cannot be exempted from what will come upon them. From this, she then follows up not with words which she would do, but what she would have done...

**<sup>4 (con’t)</sup> Had we been sold as male and female slaves, I would have held my tongue,**

The people, her people and herself, have been sold to destruction. Any person, be it a criminal or a foreigner, is normally allowed to petition for their life. She is exercising that right now, especially because she has been tied into an edict by default, being Jewish herself. They have had no chance to petition for their lives, but now she stands as their representative to do just that.

Had it been any other edict, such as being returned to the slavery they had lived under in Egypt, she would not feel it worthy of even speaking out, but the sentence of death necessitates that she cannot hold her tongue. It is too great of a thing to remain silent over.

<sup>4</sup> (con't) **although the enemy could never compensate for the king's loss."**

The words of this clause are most obscure, and translations vary widely. It is so difficult that scholars say that even the ancient translators are not much help in understanding the meaning. This is exacerbated by the fact that she uses two extremely rare words. The first is *v'ilu*, or "and though." *llu* is found only here and in Ecclesiastes 6 –

"Though it has not seen the sun or known *anything*, this has more rest than that man, <sup>6</sup> even if he lives a thousand years twice—but has not seen goodness. Do not all go to one place?" Ecclesiastes 6:5, 6

The second is a word found only here in the Bible, *nezeq*, meaning injury or damage. Further, with the word translated as "the enemy," it makes the entire clause literally read something like "even though the enemy is not equal to the king's hurt." One must then try to figure out what she is saying, and then paraphrase it into understandable words. Robert Young takes the word "enemy" and converts it to "adversity." It is used in a similar manner elsewhere, and so what may be the true meaning would be, "even though the adversity is not equal to the loss of the king.

In other words, if the Jews were simply sold into slavery, she would have kept quiet, even though what they would have to endure would not be equal to what the king, and his realm would suffer in loss. She is saying that as a people, their value as free citizens was worth much more to the empire than it would be if they were in bondage. And yet, it would not be worth bothering the king over. How much more then would the loss be to the empire when they were all destroyed! Her words, may be obscure to us, but they were not so to the king. His anger boils over them...

<sup>5</sup> **So King Ahasuerus answered and said to Queen Esther,**

*va'yomer ha'melekh akhasverosh va'yomer la'esther ha'malkah* - "And said the King Ahasuerus, and said to Esther the Queen." The words are to be taken as intended. The doubling of "said," is its own stress. One might paraphrase it, "And the king said in a stunned manner to the queen." He is the king; she is the queen – *his* queen. The unity of the bond is highlighted. The words are a foretaste of his allegiance to her throughout this ordeal.

<sup>5</sup> (con't) **"Who is he, and where is he, who would dare presume in his heart to do such a thing?"**

The Hebrew words here are short, abrupt, doubled, and even confused. Most are just two or three letters long, like someone stammering. They are a perfect example of what one would expect of a person who has been waylaid completely, and then who can hardly speak words at all, much less sufficient to convey all the thoughts which have flooded the mind. He says *mi hu zeh, v'ey zeh hu asher melato libo laasowt ken* – “Who he this? And where this he, that filled his heart to accomplish thus?”

These words, despite being broken and confused from a human standpoint, are intricately woven together and marvelous from a divine outlook. They bring in the only acrostic of the divine name *ehyeh*, or I AM, in the book of Esther.

Remarkably, it can be spelled either backwards or forwards using three of the same four words. First, it is spelled forward from the final letters of the words *hu zeh v'ey zeh*, or “he this, and where this.” Or, it can be spelled backwards from the final letters of *zeh v'ey ze hu*, or “this and where this he.” In both acrostics, only the first or last word is changed. However, all five words are palindromic. They read the same forward or backward – *hu zeh v'ey zeh hu* – “he this and where this he.” It really is remarkable.

Going forward, it signifies that the Lord, I AM, had determined the end which will occur, and He is bringing it about now. Going backward, it signifies that the end is approaching for the matter, but that I AM is overruling what had previously been determined. Both are occurring at the same time, as if a pivot in redemptive history has been met in the words “he this and where this he.”

The king has asked the question, but the answer to the enigmas is actually hidden in the short, broken words that he stutters out. There is a human agency which has determined evil for the people of God, intending to destroy them as they lead to the Messiah. But there is the divine wisdom of God, working out His plans, thwarting others plans, and effecting His purposes in a people who don't even know He is there. I AM THAT I AM delivered His people from the bondage of Egypt and the rule of Pharaoh, and that same I AM is there to deliver his people from the one determined to destroy that same group of people a thousand years later.

For the story itself, it is obvious at this point that the king knows the answer. He could not help but to have realized it with Esther's repeating the words of the very edict which Haman had authorized. He now realized why she appeared before his throne, even at the possibility of death. Also why she had invited Haman to a personal banquet, and even why she had delayed the matter for a second banquet.

But because it was his signet which sealed the matter, he was just as at fault as Haman. She could just as easily point her slender finger at him and say, “You are the man!” But he knew this wouldn’t happen. The invitation of Haman to the banquet brought out the inevitable answer to the enraged question...

**<sup>6</sup> And Esther said, “The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!”**

*Ish tsar v’oyev haman ha’ra ha’zeh* – “Man adversary and enemy, Haman the wicked the this. As confused and abrupt as the king’s words were, such is the exact opposite with the words of Esther. They are direct, purposeful, and pointed. In them, she leaves off any definite article concerning Haman in order to align him with what he is. Instead of “the adversary” and “the enemy,” she says, “adversary and enemy.” It is his nature; it is his filling.

There could be no mistaking her meaning, or the nature of her intended target. He was a diabolical schemer, and he was the enemy of her people and of his king and kingdom. She could not highlight the nature of Satan himself any better than she had highlighted that of Haman.

**<sup>6</sup> (con’t) So Haman was terrified before the king and queen.**

Ya think?

*We have been sold, my people and I  
To be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated  
We don’t even truly know the reason why  
But so has the decree been dictated*

*Were we merely sold as male and female slaves  
We would not fight the decree or question the law  
But we are destined for death and then to our graves  
In this there is no logic, only fatal flaw*

*And so we petition You, our great King  
To consider this thing, and then act against it  
Tell us that mercy to us You will bring  
And to Your will, we will humbly submit*

## II. Haman's Ballet (verses 7-10)

**<sup>7</sup> Then the king arose in his wrath from the banquet of wine *and went* into the palace garden;**

Scholars have universally missed the meaning of these words. Almost without exception, they say that he rose in his anger to go blow off steam in the palace garden, or thoughts similar to this. What is happening here is that Esther is having a banquet with the king and his first official. The three of them would be alone. There would be no need for royal guards, nor would their presence be welcome. Rather, his rising isn't to blow off steam, but to go get those same guards who are missing from the scene in order to resolve the matter which the king has already determined to correct. This is evident from the next words...

**<sup>7 (con't)</sup> but Haman stood before Queen Esther, pleading for his life,**

Haman knew what the departure of the king meant, and there was only one place that he could hope to receive mercy. From... the queen. Women are generally considered to be more tender of heart over such things, and so she was his only chance of hope. Unfortunately for him, he failed to realize that a woman's heart is as unforgiving as any man when a matter such as this is involved. He had brought misery to her family, to her people, and to her personally. But despite this, he still was hoping for mercy...

**<sup>7 (con't)</sup> for he saw that evil was determined against him by the king.**

There is an article in front of evil. It says, "the evil." Thus it signifies *doom*. It isn't just to be a bad day at the office, but *the Day* of disaster. Unless the queen intercedes, he has met his end.

This verse closes out a set of twos. In verse 1:12, the anger of the king burned against Vashti. Here it is said to burn against Haman. The two contrast, one was because of an offense by the queen. The second is because of an offense against the queen. One is towards a woman, the other is towards a man. One led to a new wife for the king, a Jewess; the other will lead to a new second-ruler for the kingdom, a Jew. Both, however, confirm royal authority.

This verse also brings in the fourth acrostic of the divine name, Yehovah. It is formed, just as the third was, from the final letters of the words *ki kaletah elav ha'raah*, or "for determined against the evil." Those final letters – Yod, He, Vav, He – spell out Yehovah.

They are the final letters, signifying the finality of the matter. Haman's end has come. However, they are spelled forward in the text like the first acrostic. This signifies that the Lord is sovereignly ruling and bringing about the end which He alone has determined.

While it seems as only two are in the room alone, a third – unseen and unacknowledged – is there as well. He is guiding His creation, revealing to them their destiny in short – second by second – intervals, and yet He already is where they are heading. How great and how remarkable is the scene for us to gaze upon and ponder. The unseen Lord is there, directing history to Himself.

**<sup>8</sup> When the king returned from the palace garden to the place of the banquet of wine, Haman had fallen across the couch where Esther was.**

Reclining on a sofa, or on the floor, was not an uncommon thing during a banquet or meal in the Middle East at this time. In Amos 6:7, this is noted –

“Therefore they shall now go captive as the first of the captives,  
And those who recline at banquets shall be removed.” Amos 6:7

Even at the time when Christ came, it was the customary way of dining. This is seen, for example, in Matthew 26 –

“Now when Jesus was in Bethany, at the home of Simon the leper, <sup>7</sup> a woman came to Him with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume, and she poured it on His head as He reclined *at the table*.” Matthew 26:6, 7

If you come to Charlie's house for dinner, you will find the same setup, because we eat on the floor at a low table. While the queen of our house would never think to recline, her lazy husband usually ends up doing so to her constant and continued dismay.

Anyway, the point is that Haman got up from his seat or couch and went forward to Esther. This act was one of submission to the one and only person that could save him from certain doom. However, the king used it as a final excuse to both embarrass and condemn him for his wickedness, and now also his irreverence – not just to the queen – but to him. For your notes, if you keep such things, this is the last use of the word *bitan*, or palace in the Bible. It was introduced in Esther 1:5, and it is now used up. We can say *hasta la vista* to it.

**<sup>8 (con't)</sup> Then the king said, “Will he also assault the queen while I *am* in the house?”**

It is likely not the case that he thought this is what was happening, but it probably brought him the greatest joy to say the words anyway, and he certainly would score points with his lovely wife in the process. It was evident that she detested Haman, and so in defending her honor, even as a show, it was a nice touch...

**<sup>8</sup> (con't) As the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.**

The act here is one of disgraceful excommunication. He was to never see the light of day, or the favor of the king, again. Further, neither king, nor queen, nor subject, would see the face of Haman again. He was cut off from the land of the living, even if he had not yet arrived at the land of death and decay.

This verse closes another set of two's. The first was in 6:12, where Haman covered his own face at the initiation of his downfall. There he was heading to his house looking for comfort. Here, his face is covered by others at the completion of it as he is led off to the gallows at his house in disgrace. They contrast in detail, but they confirm the full and final downfall of wicked Haman.

**<sup>9</sup> Now Harbonah, one of the eunuchs, said to the king,**

Harbonah is the only one of the seven eunuchs mentioned in Esther 1:10 who is mentioned again in a later verse. This is his second and final appearance in the book. He has an idea, a great one in fact, as can be seen in his expressive words...

**<sup>9</sup> (con't) "Look! The gallows, fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke good on the king's behalf, is standing at the house of Haman."**

There is almost a resounding joy in his words, *hinneh* – behold! Two things are apparent from what he says, Harbonah did not like Haman, and Harbonah did like Mordecai. He was aware of what Haman had purposed concerning the gallows for Mordecai, maybe even from Mordecai. He certainly didn't hear it from Haman. And he also knew of what Mordecai had done for the king and compliments him on it now in the presence of the king. Harbonah is a helpful soul for the Jewish cause which is looking a bit better, moment by moment. He obviously knew Mordecai's character, and he felt it was an excellent reflection on him and his people. Haman on the other hand, had fallen out of pretty much everyone's favor...

<sup>9</sup> (con't) **Then the king said, "Hang him on it!"**

Ha!

<sup>10</sup> **So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.**

Haman did his final ballet as his legs twitched upon the pole he had erected for another. The evil that he intended for Mordecai was turned back upon himself, and he died in his own sin and wickedness. If the number of ironies in the Bible were recorded and then read out, it would be a long, long sermon. If they were placed in ascending order, this would be towards the top of them. God turns what is intended for evil into good, and He does it in a way that is astonishing. For now, the hanging of Haman had a rather calming effect on at least one weary soul. Unlike the previous night, his sleep would probably be sweet when the day closed out, because...

\*<sup>10</sup> (fin) **Then the king's wrath subsided.**

The wrath of the king was appeased through the death of the wicked. This closes out another set of twos. In verse 2:1, the king's wrath subsided against a woman, his queen, leading to his looking for a new wife. He found one, a Jewess to fit the role as his mate. After his wrath here in chapter 7 subsides against a man, his number 1, it will lead to looking for a new man to promote in Haman's place. He will find a Jew to fit the role. The two accounts contrast, and yet they confirm the hand of God in the appointment of two of His chosen people to fill the highest roles of the king's life and government.

Something I alluded to in a previous sermon, and that should be repeated now, is that Haman was a wicked man who died, thus ending the wrath of the king. But it is more than just a note to be inscribed in an old book and forgotten. It points to Christ Himself. We keep seeing two's, contrasting and confirming things. Here we have one in Haman and in Christ. Haman, the enemy of God's people, raised an *ets*, a tree, to hang Mordecai on. And yet he, the wicked one, was hanged on it instead. In that act, the wrath of the king subsided.

In Christ, we see that He, the Savior of God's people, allowed the raising of another *ets*, a tree, which rightfully belongs to us, God's enemy. And yet He, the Righteous One, was hanged on it instead. In that act, the wrath of God subsided. We cannot read the Bible and come to any other conclusion. God promised it in Genesis. In Revelation it says it was from the foundation of the world. In Numbers, the bronze serpent was placed on a pole, for the people to look at it and be saved. In John 3, Jesus said that He, like that

serpent, would be lifted up. The theme keeps repeating. There is good, and there is evil, but the good assumes the place *of* the evil in order to restore the good. Paul says it this way in 2 Corinthians –

“For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

Christ was made sin for us. He became the serpent on the pole. He became the Haman on the tree. The pictures keep repeating to show us the undeniable truth that God is angry at sin, but He loves us enough to remove that sin, by judging it in His own dearly Beloved.

The question in which *ehyeh*, or I AM, is hidden asks, “Who is he, and where is he?” The king was looking for an answer to who it was that would dare to destroy God’s people. The answer was revealed in Haman, but the answer as to who would save God’s people was right there in his own question. “Who is He, and where is He?” The answer is, “I AM THAT I AM.” I AM will save My people – I AM the Bread of life; I AM the Light of the world; I AM the Door; I AM the Good Shepherd; I AM the Resurrection and the Life; I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and I AM the Vine. I AM THAT I AM. I AM Jesus, the incarnate Word of God.

Haman was hung upon a tree, and salvation came to the Jews. Jesus was hung upon a tree, and salvation came to the world. Haman died *in* sin; Christ died *for* sin. It is the word of God, and it is astonishing.

**Closing Verse:** *“Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. <sup>32</sup> And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.”*

*John 12:31, 32*

**Next Week:** Esther 8:1-17 *From dreariness in mourning, to joy in garments with lovely sashes...* (Beauty for Ashes) (10<sup>th</sup> Esther Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. At times, you might feel as if he has no great design for you in life, but he has brought you to this moment to reveal His glory in and through you. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

## Hang Him High

So the king and Haman went to dine  
With Queen Esther  
And on the second day, at the banquet of wine  
The king again to Esther, said to her  
“What is your petition, Queen Esther?  
It shall be granted you  
And what is your request, up to half the kingdom?  
It shall be done!” My word is true

Then Queen Esther answered and said  
“If I have found favor in your sight, O king, I speak at your behest  
And if it pleases the king  
Let my life be given me at my petition  
-----and my people at my request

For we have been sold, my people and I  
To be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated  
Had we been sold as male and female slaves  
I would have held my tongue, leaving my pain unstated  
Although the enemy could never compensate for the king’s loss  
The difference is that of gold, compared to mere dross  
So King Ahasuerus answered and said to Queen Esther  
“Who is he, and where is he

Who would dare presume in his heart to do such a thing?”  
And Esther said, “This wicked Haman is the adversary and enemy  
So Haman was terrified before the king and queen  
Looks likely that his last day has been seen  
Then the king arose in his wrath from the banquet of wine  
And went into the palace garden, his head it did ring  
But Haman stood before Queen Esther, pleading for his life  
For he saw that evil was determined against him by the king

When the king returned from the palace garden  
To the place of the banquet of wine given by his spouse  
Haman had fallen across the couch where Esther was  
Then the king said, “Will he also assault the queen

-----while I am in the house?”

As the word left the king’s mouth, over this disgrace

They covered Haman’s face

Now Harbonah, one of the eunuchs, said to the king

“Look! The gallows, fifty cubits high

-----which Haman made for Mordecai

Who spoke good on the king’s behalf

Is standing at the house of Haman. Let’s use Haman to give it a try

Then the king said, “Hang him on it!”

So they hanged Haman on the gallows as the king decided

Those that he had prepared for Mordecai

Then the king’s wrath subsided

Lord God, thank You for Your presence that is with us

Even when we don’t realize that You are there

Because You sent Your own Son Jesus

We can know that You truly do care

And so Lord, be real to us in a wonderful new way

Open our minds and our hearts to seeing You always

Through every step we take, and throughout every day

Be real to us, O God, and to You will shall give all of our praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

## ESTHER 8:1-17 (BEAUTY FOR ASHES)

*\*To watch the video of this study, select from the following: [YouTube](#) or [Sermon Audio](#)*

The term “Beauty for Ashes” has almost become a cliché saying among Christians today. You hear it on the radio a lot, and pastors and teachers toss it around like it was a cheap five-cent phrase. But it is something that really applies to those who mourn, and yet who wait patiently on the Lord. There may be times of immeasurable sorrow and grief, such as the Jews of the Persian empire felt, but like them, there lies ahead something much better.

For Israel as a collective whole, they have frequently encountered times of national sadness. Yes, it has always been a self-inflicted wound, but it was also a temporary one. A time lies ahead when they will finally be right with the Lord, and the years of destruction will be replaced with exultation and joy. Unfortunately, this can’t be said for each and every Jew, but as a collective whole, it will be so.

For the struggling Christian, it is also a sure guarantee. We have what collective Israel has – a sure hope. No individual believer will be permanently left in a state of mourning, and the trials of this life will someday be replaced with an eternity of wonder and delight. It is coming, and so be comforted now, even if things are wholly miserable. It is coming.

**Text Verse:** *““And in that day you will say:  
“O Lord, I will praise You;  
Though You were angry with me,  
Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.  
<sup>2</sup> Behold, God is my salvation,  
I will trust and not be afraid;  
‘For Yah, the Lord, is my strength and song;  
He also has become my salvation.””* Isaiah 12:1, 2

It’s hard to acknowledge that the Lord really is angry with us. For Israel, they don’t want to admit that what has happened to them is a part of national guilt. In fact, it is considered an offense to them when it is suggested, but the same Lord who established them also told them what would keep them happy and prosperous, or what would bring them pain, suffering, and exile. It’s right there in black and white if they will just accept Him at His word.

For us, we were all enemies of God, and He was really and truly angry with us because of this. Like Israel, fallen man doesn't want to admit this. We place ourselves on a curve, we measure ourselves against others, we rationalize away our wrongdoings, and we justify ourselves through doing good things. But the Lord really remains angry with us while our sin-debt remains unpaid.

But when we realize that the payment has been rendered, when we accept by faith that it can be applied to our account, and when we reach out for the pardon which has already been purchased, then the words of Isaiah can be applied to us individually – “Yes, Lord! I will praise You. Certainly, You were angry with me. But now Your anger is turned away, and I am comforted. Thank God for Jesus Christ. My God is my salvation.. I will trust and not be afraid.”

When we call on Jesus, we may still be on a bed of ashes. The cancer may still be eating away at our bodies, the labors of our job may not meet our wants completely, and the house may burn down in the morning, but in Christ there is a hope of beauty ahead which cannot be taken away. Israel will find this out; each redeemed of the Lord has found it out. Let us rejoice in what lies ahead, just as Israel is to rejoice in our passage today. The Lord is good to His undeserving people. Yes, let us rejoice in this. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. Not Revoked, But Annulled (verses 1-8)**

**<sup>1</sup> On that day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews.**

The last verse of Chapter 7 said, “So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's wrath subsided.” It is on this same day that the house of Haman was confiscated, as was the custom for all executed criminals. Being the property of the royal crown, it was now granted to Esther by the king. The irony is almost palpable.

Haman had determined to destroy the Jews. In their destruction, the plunder of their property would come about. However, he himself was destroyed, and his property was plundered for the benefit of a Jewess. This would have included everything connected to the man such as servants, accumulated wealth, position, and so on. This is certain because no definite article is placed in front of the word “house.” Instead, it says, *beit haman*, or “house of Haman.” It is comparable to speaking of the house of David,

meaning not just a physical house, but everything associated with David. What belonged to Haman, all which made him who he was, transferred to Esther. This then is confirmed with the next words...

**<sup>1 (con't)</sup> And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told how he *was related* to her.**

The words are not just a form of introduction, such as, “Dear king, I want to introduce you to my cousin.” Rather, Mordecai is related to Esther. And more, he has proven himself a benefactor of the king. As the king has granted to Esther *beit haman*, or the “house of Haman,” there must be someone to fill the role of caring for what has been granted to her, including his position within the empire. As Haman was in royal authority, someone of the queen’s house will be chosen to fill that now-vacated position. How do we know this is correct? We simply continue with the narrative...

**<sup>2</sup> So the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman,**

The *tabaath*, or signet ring, of the king is removed. This is in anticipation of it being granted to another. As we saw before, the word comes from *taba*, meaning “down,” or “to sink.” Thus, it is a ring which is used to press down into wax or clay in order to impress a seal. It was given to Haman in verse 3:10. With his demise, it was reacquired by the king. However, the king will now pass it on to another.

**<sup>2 (con't)</sup> and gave it to Mordecai;**

This ends another set of two’s. In 3:10, the king took off his signet ring and gave it to Haman so that he possessed the king’s authority, including the issuance and authentication of an edict in the king’s name. There, it was given to a Gentile, Haman the Amalekite. Here it is given to a Jew, Mordecai. The first time it was for the destruction of the Jews; now, it will be for their salvation. They contrast, but they confirm that God sets up rulers and he deposes rulers in order to accomplish His purposes.

As a side note concerning this word; *tabaath* was first used in Genesis 41:42 concerning the signet ring of Pharaoh. That was taken from his hand and granted to Joseph. It was a marvelous picture of the authority of Christ. If you don’t remember that, go brush up. After that, the same word was used to describe the rings for carrying the Ark of the Testimony in Exodus 25. Those, if you remember, pictured the four gospels which reveal Christ. They are the link between the Old and New Testaments which speak of the

coming Christ and the Christ who has come. They reveal His authority. The power and authority is found in the *tabaath*, or ring.

<sup>2</sup> (con't) **and Esther appointed Mordecai over the house of Haman.**

These words clearly show that the “house of Haman” includes his position, and not just a physical building. The position of Haman has been granted to Esther as the queen, and she has appointed Mordecai over that which belonged to Haman. Mordecai has the signet of royal authority, thus he possesses the power of that same position, and he possesses it over what once belonged to Haman.

<sup>3</sup> **Now Esther spoke again to the king, fell down at his feet, and implored him with tears to counteract the evil of Haman the Agagite, and the scheme which he had devised against the Jews.**

Safety for Esther and Mordecai had been secured, but this was not the full scope of what was needed for their hearts to be pacified. Their people, the Jews, faced destruction still. Despite the fact that their enemy was dead, the decree he had secured against the Jews still stood. Mordecai had been exalted to the high office with royal power and authority. The law that condemned the Jews could no longer be brought against him, but it remained fully in effect over the rest of the Jewish people.

It is for this reason that she again does something which is not permitted. In these words another set of two's is now complete. Queen Esther appeared before the king in an unauthorized manner twice. The first was in Chapter 5 when she came before the king without being summoned. The second is here where she openly mourns in his presence. This was not allowed, and was even punishable by death. In doing this, she again risks her life. However, her life is not as important to her as is the plight of her people. It is reflective of Paul's words found in Romans 9 –

“I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, <sup>2</sup> that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. <sup>3</sup> For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, <sup>4</sup> who are Israelites, to whom *pertain* the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; <sup>5</sup> of whom *are* the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ *came*, who is over all, *the* eternally blessed God. Amen.” Romans 9:1-5

This is the state of Esther who, like Paul, was also of the tribe of Benjamin. She has a greater care for her people than her own life. Her two unauthorized actions before the king contrast. First, she bravely stood before the king's presence without approval in order to begin the petition to save her people. Now, she mourns with tears in order to have the decree of destruction revoked. The two accounts contrast, but they are both confirmed in the action of the king extending to her the royal scepter, signifying his favor. This is seen with the words...

**<sup>4</sup> And the king held out the golden scepter toward Esther.**

The transgression is forgiven, and pardon is granted in this act. This clause contains the last use of the word *yashat*, translated as "held out" in the Bible. It was introduced in verse 4:11, seen in verse 5:2, and now it is biblical history. It also is the last use of *sharbit*, or scepter. It was seen a total of four times in the exact same verses. It is now retired from biblical use. With this golden scepter having been held out, it is an indication of the king's favor. Therefore, Esther is free to now rise and face the king...

**<sup>4</sup> (con't) So Esther arose and stood before the king,**

With her heart opened and exposed before the king, she now stands to express her desire for her people without further fear...

**<sup>5</sup> and said, "If it pleases the king, and if I have found favor in his sight and the thing seems right to the king and I am pleasing in his eyes,**

Esther really heaps it on. First, she starts by speaking in the third person, demonstrating a formality about the matter at hand. Secondly, her words include four individual thoughts laid out in a parallelistic structure –

- 1) **A** "If it pleases the king;"
- 2) **B** "if I have found favor in his sight;"
- 3) **A** "and [if] the thing seems right to the king;" and
- 4) **B** [if] "I am pleasing in his eyes." The A/B structure however is inclusive of a bracketing thought – that of pleasing the king. It begins with, "If it pleases the king," and it ends with, "[if] I am pleasing in his eyes." It is a marvelously structured verse, spoken with the intent of completely convincing the king that he should accept the request as it will be made.

Within the clause is another new and rare verb in Scripture, *kasher*, translated as, “seems right.” It comes from a root meaning, “to be straight,” and thus to be acceptable. It will be seen here and twice in Ecclesiastes. Esther is essentially conveying to the king that she has a great desire, but it is the king’s ultimate decision to bring the matter about if it is agreeable to him. Despite this though, she is tying his favor of her into the accomplishment of her request. It would be like one of us saying, “If you really loved me, you would XXX, but only if you think it’s the right thing to do.” Women are generally great at this type of thing.

<sup>5 (con’t)</sup> **let it be written to revoke the letters**

*yikatev l’hashiv eth ha’sepharim* – The idea here is expressed by John Lange with the words, “to cause to change from the state of being to non-existence.” There is a royal edict which exists, and which cannot pass away, and yet Esther is requesting that letters be written to cause them to be annulled none-the-less.

<sup>5 (con’t)</sup> **devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite,**

It hardly seems necessary to include all of this detail. It would seem more likely that she would simply say, “devised by Haman.” But she doesn’t. Instead, the entire title is given. From the explanation of the names from Chapter 3, we could rewrite this sentence by saying, “devised by Certainty, the son of the one who works in darkness, the high one.” Remember, he is of the line of Amalek who is in perpetual conflict with Israel. Esther is asking that what he has wrought be revoked, lest the enemy win the battle over God’s people. This was found in the edict...

<sup>5 (con’t)</sup> **which he wrote to annihilate the Jews who *are* in all the king’s provinces.**

Wherever the Jews were within the empire, the edict was issued that all should be annihilated. Though Mordecai and Esther were no longer under the law, those of Israel were. Their sentence was one of death unless the law could be made to vanish away. (Heb 8:13)

<sup>6</sup> **For how can I endure to see the evil that will come to my people? Or how can I endure to see the destruction of my countrymen?”**

Esther, despite being freed from the law must still look at the effects of the law imposed upon her people. Her hope, request, and desire is to save them from what must occur if the law remains in effect. Evil will befall them, and destruction is set forth as long as the

law remains. Does this sound at all familiar to you in today's world? The book is detailing a scenario which continues to be repeated even now. For those of you who follow these things, she uses a word, *obdan*, which is found only here in the Bible. It means destruction, coming from *abad*, also meaning destruction.

**<sup>7</sup> Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, “Indeed, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows because he *tried to lay his hand on the Jews.*”**

The words of the king are to both Esther as Queen, and to Mordecai as his now-appointed royal official. And yet, they still identify Mordecai as “the Jew.” How can it be that he is a Jew, and yet he is no longer bound to the law to be destroyed as a Jew? And yet it is so. To them both, he in essence says, “Look at what I’ve done already. I’ve granted your requests and am willing to do more. However, there is a problem that will require your taking action...”

**<sup>8</sup> You yourselves write *a decree concerning the Jews, as you please, in the king’s name, and seal it with the king’s signet ring;***

The first decree cannot be undone, but a new decree can be written on behalf of the Jews. They are under the law of destruction, but a new law can be written in the king’s name, and sealed with his seal for their benefit. The full authority and power of the king can be used, and it will be confirmed with the signet’s seal.

**<sup>8 (con’t)</sup> for whatever is written in the king’s name and sealed with the king’s signet ring no one can revoke.”**

How do you circumvent a law which mandates destruction, and which must be allowed to continue to its fulfillment, and yet still save the people who are under that law from that same law? If you can understand the premise, then you can begin to see what the book of Esther is showing us, and what it is intended to reveal. The word is irrevocable, in this case a word which brings death. And yet, another word can be issued which will grant life. The king will not allow one word of reversal of the former command, but yet its power can be annulled through a new command. (Jer 31:31-34)

This verse now ends another use of two’s in the book. The irrevocability of a law was noted first in verse 1:19. It is then noted again here. They contrast as one was concerning the authority of man over woman in the realm, and this one concerns the protection of the Jew throughout the realm. But both confirm what God has ordained in

His word. Man is to have authority over the woman, and the Jew is to be preserved as a people forever.

*The signet of authority; the symbol of power  
Is granted to the Man who will rescue the Jews  
His authority extends by the mile and by the hour  
And in His decree, there is the most joyous of news*

*He is their Protector; their Defender is He  
His edict will bring them from certain death unto life  
The enemy may attack, but he will be defeated – certainly  
Through the edict will come victory; an ending of the strife*

*The first decree came, and with it came death, failure, and strife  
It is written and cannot be revoked, but there is good news yet  
The second decree is given, and with it comes life  
It will annul the first, and a joyous future will be set*

## **II. Light and Gladness; Joy and Honor (verses 9-17)**

**<sup>9</sup>So the king’s scribes were called at that time, in the third month, which is the month of Sivan, on the twenty-third day;**

Taking advantage of the allowances of the king, the scribes are called once again to write a new law. Instead of a law of death, a law of salvation and life will now be written. The specific day and month are given. It is the twenty-third of the third month, Sivan. This is the only time that Sivan is mentioned in the Bible. The day of the edict is two months and ten days after the writing of the original one from Haman. The time between the two edicts was long enough for the unseen Lord to teach them a lesson.

The Jews had failed to return to their homeland. They had stayed abroad and remained in their sins. They had neglected obedience to the Lord. They had ignored the religion which He had established and which was to be attended to by them in Jerusalem each year. And yet, they will be spared by Him nonetheless. The real question for them here, and for this same group of people today is, “Will they pay heed and learn their lesson?” Or maybe even better, “When will they pay heed and learn their lesson?”

<sup>9 (con't)</sup> **and it was written, according to all that Mordecai commanded, to the Jews, the satraps, the governors, and the princes of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, one hundred and twenty-seven provinces *in all*, to every province in its own script, to every people in their own language,**

This is an empire-wide edict which issued forth, directly from Mordecai, but with the full authority and approval of the king. Like Haman's law, it was written to all levels of authority, and even to the common person on the street. But in addition to what it said in that previous edict, this one adds in a special note...

<sup>9 (con't)</sup> **and to the Jews in their own script and language.**

Being a part of the Persian Empire, this would have been written directly to the Jews in their homeland, but what seems to be the case is that the edict was written to the Jews in their dispersion also. A separate translation, in Hebrew, would probably have accompanied all of the individually written edicts in the language of any particular land. As a note of trivia, verse 9 is the longest verse in the Old Testament and the longest in the Bible, consisting of 43 words of 192 letters.

<sup>10</sup> **And he wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, sealed *it* with the king's signet ring, and sent letters by couriers on horseback, riding on royal horses bred from swift steeds.**

It is Mordecai who wrote the edict, but it is with the authority of the king that it was sealed using the royal signet. From there it went out quickly throughout the empire. Two new foreign words are used here, and which are variously translated. So don't get upset if your translation reads differently. The first is *ha'akhashteranim*, which will be seen only here and in verse 14. The other is *bene ha'ramakim*, or sons of the *rammakim*, which is found only here. Some say fast horses, royal horses, camels, mules, and so on. Something like, "riders of the dromedary, the mules, sons of the mares," is probably close to correct. Different terrains would necessitate various animals in order to cross them.

<sup>11</sup> **By these letters the king permitted the Jews who *were* in every city to gather together and protect their lives—to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the forces of any people or province that would assault them, *both* little children and women, and to plunder their possessions,**

The words echo the first decree, and thus the Jews are given like authority to act against their enemies. It must be remembered that the first edict allowed the aggressors to lay hands on the plunder. Even if some didn't dislike the Jews, it was an incentive to kill them anyway. If the Jews of the Persian empire were as industrious as they have been throughout the rest of history, they had obtained wealth in abundance. Haman's order was one which would be especially enticing to take advantage of.

In the new edict, only defensive measures are authorized. Despite being allowed to defend themselves, if their wealth was great, a crowd would be expected to come and wipe them out in order to enrich themselves. However, with wealth comes the ability to purchase protection. A minor civil war could ensue.

But... the very fact that a new edict had been issued would mean that the king was now supportive of the Jews. And so there would be less chance of attack. Further, they were allowed to gather as a unit to defend themselves. And even more, verse 9:3 says that the fear of Mordecai came upon the leaders throughout the empire, and they in turn helped the Jews. And yet more, if the Jews prevailed, like the first edict, they were authorized to not only kill their enemies, but their enemies' wives and children as well. This would be a terrifying incentive to not harm the Jews. And then yet more, the Jews would be allowed to gather *their* possessions as plunder. And as if icing on the cake, verse 17 will show that the number of Jews will actually increase prior to the day of destruction. What was originally certain disaster for the Jews was now to be turned into a fight against them initiated only by the foolish.

**<sup>12</sup> on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month, which *is* the month of Adar.**

This verse corresponds to verse 3:13. It is the same day of the original edict that the Jews are now allowed to gather and defend themselves from the first law. A law of salvation has come to override the law of death.

**<sup>13</sup> A copy of the document was to be issued as a decree in every province and published for all people,**

These words correspond exactly to verse 3:14. The edict is all but identical to what Haman had ordered. The only exception is that this one is written on behalf of the Jews, as we still see...

<sup>13</sup> (con't) **so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.**

Rather than being helpless prey, they will now be ready defenders, and even aggressors if attacked. Once they are assaulted, they may in turn avenge themselves. The word for avenge here doesn't necessarily imply any hatred, but rather a just retribution based on offense. It is used of the Lord avenging Himself upon His enemies in a just and righteous manner. Unfortunately for Israel, it is at times used by the Lord to avenge Himself upon them for their own faithlessness. That is seen, for example in Jeremiah 5 –

'For among My people are found wicked *men*;

They lie in wait as one who sets snares;

They set a trap;

They catch men.

<sup>27</sup> As a cage is full of birds,

So their houses *are* full of deceit.

Therefore they have become great and grown rich.

<sup>28</sup> They have grown fat, they are sleek;

Yes, they surpass the deeds of the wicked;

They do not plead the cause,

The cause of the fatherless;

Yet they prosper,

And the right of the needy they do not defend.

<sup>29</sup> Shall I not punish *them* for these *things*?' says the Lord.

'Shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?' Jeremiah 5:26-29

<sup>14</sup> **The couriers who rode on royal horses went out, hastened and pressed on by the king's command. And the decree was issued in Shushan the citadel.**

The verse is a close repeat of the first half of 3:15. However, two verbs are used here, hastened and pressed on, in order to show the exceeding importance of the new decree. Despite being more than eight months until the day of the edict, this was probably to ensure nobody got ahead of the first decree and decided to start wiping out Jews early. Further, it would give all in the realm time to see and reflect on the newly exalted status of the Jews within the empire. Any doubts about the new edict could be referred back to Mordecai who would set straight any who misunderstood.

The variously translated word *akhashteran* was introduced into the Bible in verse 10. Now just a few verses later, we bid it adieu. Whatever it actually means, it is no longer a

word to fret over. This verse now closes out another set of two's. The first was in 3:10 and it was the issuance of a royal edict for the destruction of the Jews. That is now overwritten here. One is for the Jew's destruction; one is for their salvation. They contrast, but they confirm God's overarching protection of the Jews despite the wicked plots against them. Man enacts, but God rules over man as absolute Sovereign.

**<sup>15</sup> So Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, with a great crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple;**

Mordecai is granted royal honors, not just in the presence of the king, but as he went in and out from the king's presence. His garments and crown would be seen by any and all. The crown here is not the same word as for the crown used while being conducted on the horse by Haman. It is one fit for the office he holds. Surely the words of Isaiah were true of Mordecai. Isaiah, speaking of those in Israel who were set free by their Redeemer, said –

“To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,  
And the day of vengeance of our God;  
To comfort all who mourn,  
<sup>3</sup>To console those who mourn in Zion,  
To give them beauty for ashes,  
The oil of joy for mourning,  
The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;  
That they may be called trees of righteousness,  
The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.” Isaiah 61:2, 3

Mordecai had received joy instead of mourning, and beauty in place of his previous sackcloth and ashes. His spirit of heaviness was changed to a position of praise. To highlight this, the garment of fine linen mentioned here is described by a unique word in Scripture, *takrik*. It comes from an unused root meaning to encompass, thus it was a particular robe special to his office alone.

This verse now completes another set of two's. In 6:11, Mordecai was invested with special clothes and accompanying honors appropriate to his good deed towards the king. Here, he is again noted “in royal apparel of blue and white, with a great crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple.” The two contrast in that he was first temporarily honored for a deed accomplished in the saving of the king. Now it is for a permanent appointment as a royal in the king's palace. They contrast, and yet they confirm the honorable deeds and skill of Mordecai.

<sup>15</sup> (con't) **and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad.**

The word for “rejoiced” here is a new one in Scripture, *tsahal*. It signifies shouting out and crying aloud. The people literally bellow with joy. With these happy words, we close yet out another set of two’s. In verse 3:15, the city of Shusan was said to be perplexed. Here, it rejoices and is glad. They contrast certainly, but they confirm the wise proverb of Solomon –

“When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice;  
But when a wicked *man* rules, the people groan.” Proverbs 29:2

<sup>16</sup> **The Jews had light and gladness, joy and honor.**

The words here are reflective of a state of absolute elation of heart. Each signifies a type of joy. The first is *orah*, or light. Just as a person is said to beam with joy, so light is used in the Bible. It is reflective of Psalm 97:11 –

“Light is sown for the righteous,  
And gladness for the upright in heart.” Psalm 97:11

This light had come to replace the once-coming darkness. Next is *simkhah*, or mirth. It is a joy of rejoicing. This is followed by *sason*, a new word in the Bible signifying exultation. It is practically synonymous with the previous word – thus it is given to show the greatness of the joy. And finally is *yeqar*, or honor. This was introduced in Esther 1:4 and has now been used ten times in Esther. It gives the sense of dignity, or even pomp. The Jews have been elevated from the ash heap to the mountain top.

<sup>17</sup> **And in every province and city, wherever the king’s command and decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a holiday.**

The joy of Shushan eventually spread to every location where the decree was sent, so that the same superlative words of the previous verse are repeated here. There was joy upon joy, but even more there came a *mishteh*, or banqueting feast, and a *yom tov*, or a “good day.” One can see the partying going on and on as the Jews celebrated the wonderful news.

This verse closes out another set of twos. In Chapter 4, after the giving of the first edict, there is great mourning, fasting, weeping, and wailing, and many laying in sackcloth and ashes. Here, after this edict, there is joy, gladness, honor, a feast, and a holiday. The two

contrast, yes, but they also confirm the unity of the people in both distress and in exultation.

**17 (con't) Then many of the people of the land became Jews,**

The word *yahad* or, to become a Jew, is found only here in the Bible. The actual requirements for this are found in Exodus 12:48. The people were to be circumcised and then they could keep the Passover at the appropriate time of the year. With this done, they were to be considered as natives of the land. From there, they would be obligated to the same laws as the rest of the Jews. This conversion is also something which is prophesied in Zechariah for the people of the future –

“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard *that God is with you.*”’” Zechariah 8:23.

**\*17 (fin) because fear of the Jews fell upon them.**

There are verses which show that this would occur when Israel entered Canaan. One is found in Exodus 15, in the Song of Moses. The other is found in Deuteronomy 11. Both say that dread would fall on the inhabitants when Israel came to the land. The same is true now, even outside of the land of Canaan. Because of the Lord their God, and even when not openly recognized by them, it is still perceived that a Force greater than them was with them. The dread of the Jews fell upon the people, and those around them threw their lot in with them, joining to them in a permanent bond.

As we close, it should be noted that throughout history, people have united with the Jews in this same fashion. There are debates who the real Jews are. Are they the Sephardic Jews, the Ashkenazic Jews, the Ethiopian Jews, and so on. Many claim that the people in the land of Israel are not true Jews, or that only a portion of them are. Even Jews argue among themselves. The debate, at least from a biblical standpoint, is unsound. The requirements for being a Jew do not stem from the Talmud, nor do they stem from the practices of the various offshoots of Jews. They stem from the Bible, and they show that those who have met the requirements of compliance found in Scripture can become Jews, and thus are Jews.

What this means is that those who are in the land today, regardless of their background over the past 2000 years, are the real Jews who are set to see the fulfillment of the final plan that God has for them in redemptive history. Those who survive what lies ahead

will, at that time, become completed Jews. They will call out for their true Savior, whom they have missed for these past millennia, and they will be saved when He comes to deliver them.

The time is coming, and it probably is not far off. Esther is showing snapshots of the past which anticipate fulfillment of them in the future. Like all of the Bible, it is showing us what is, and what lies ahead, for those in Christ. It is all about Him, and the Jewish people are a great part of His unfolding plans. As we say our daily prayers, we should include them in what we pray about. The unseen Lord in Esther is the only hope for them. Without Him, they are as lost as the worst of pagans. But the same is also true with us.

We have a need, and that need is Jesus. He is the Lord directing the events of Esther, and He is the Lord directing the events of all of redemptive history, a history of which every soul is a part. The question for us is, "What side of the redemptive plans of God will we be on?" Will we come to Christ and be delivered? Or, will we refuse Him and be lost. The choice belongs to us; the salvation belongs to Him, and He grants it freely to those who choose wisely.

**Closing Verse:** *"Oh, sing to the Lord a new song!  
For He has done marvelous things;  
His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory.  
The Lord has made known His salvation;  
His righteousness He has revealed in the sight of the nations." Psalm 96:1, 2*

**Next Week:** Esther 9:1-17 *The Lord directed and provided the remedies...* (Rest From Their Enemies) (11<sup>th</sup> Esther Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. At times, you might feel as if he has no great design for you in life, but he has brought you to this moment to reveal His glory in and through you. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

## **Beauty for Ashes**

On that day King Ahasuerus  
Gave Queen Esther the house of Haman  
The enemy of the Jews  
There it was in Shushan, and not in Grand Cayman

And Mordecai came before the king  
For Esther had told how he was related to her  
-----she informed the king of this thing

So the king took off his signet ring  
Which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai  
And Esther appointed Mordecai over the house of Haman  
Because her cousin was a really good guy

Now Esther spoke again to the king  
Fell down at his feet, and implored him with tears  
-----she really had the blues  
To counteract the evil of Haman the Agagite  
And the scheme which he had devised against the Jews

And the king held out the golden scepter toward Esther  
-----for her he did this thing  
So Esther arose and stood before the king

And said, "If it pleases the king  
And if I have found favor in his sight  
And the thing seems right to the king  
And I am pleasing in his eyes, then relive our plight  
Let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman  
The son of Hammedatha the Agagite  
Which he wrote to annihilate the Jews  
Who are in all the king's provinces, to remove us from his sight  
For how can I endure to see the evil  
That will come to my people then  
Or how can I endure to see the destruction  
Of my countrymen

Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther  
And Mordecai the Jew, relaying this news  
"Indeed, I have given Esther the house of Haman  
-----And they have hanged him on the gallows  
Because he tried to lay his hand on the Jews

You yourselves write a decree concerning the Jews  
As you please, in the king's name  
And seal it with the king's signet ring  
Write it according to your desired aim

For whatever is written in the king's name  
-----Really it's not a joke!  
And sealed with the king's signet ring, no one can revoke

So the king's scribes were called at that time  
In the third month, which is the month of Sivan  
On the twenty-third day  
The task was taken on

And it was written, according to all that Mordecai commanded  
To the Jews, the satraps, the governors, and the princes too  
Of the provinces from India to Ethiopia  
One hundred and twenty-seven provinces in all  
-----A lot of writing they needed to do

To every province in its own script, so they did do  
To every people in their own language  
And to the Jews in their own script and language too

And he wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus  
Sealed it with the king's signet ring; from the throne it proceeds  
And sent letters by couriers on horseback  
Riding on royal horses bred from swift steeds

By these letters the king permitted the Jews  
Who were in every city to gather together and their lives protect  
To destroy, kill, and annihilate all the forces of any people  
Or province that would assault them  
-----if any harm they did detect

Both little children and women, and to plunder their possessions  
On one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, near and far  
On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month  
Which is the month of Adar

A copy of the document was to be issued  
As a decree in every province and published for all people too  
So that the Jews would be ready on that day  
To avenge themselves on their enemies; so they were to do

The couriers who rode on royal horses went out  
Hastened and pressed on by the king's command  
And the decree was issued in Shushan the citadel  
And throughout all the empire's land

So Mordecai went out from the presence of the king  
In royal apparel of blue and white  
With a great crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple  
He was a pretty dandy sight

And the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad  
Things had turned to good from what was once really bad

The Jews had light and gladness, joy and honor  
And in every province and city... hooray!  
Wherever the king's command and decree came  
The Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a holiday  
Then many of the people of the land became Jews  
Because fear of the Jews fell upon them by this royal news

Lord God, thank You for Your presence that is with us  
Even when we don't realize that You are there  
Because You sent Your own Son Jesus  
We can know that You truly do care

And so Lord, be real to us in a wonderful new way  
Open our minds and our hearts to seeing You always  
Through every step we take, and throughout every day  
Be real to us, O God, and to You will shall give all of our praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

## ESTHER 9:1-17 (REST FROM THEIR ENEMIES)

*\*To watch the video of this study, select from the following: [YouTube](#) or [Sermon Audio](#)*

The verses today speak of rest twice. But there is a difference in what they are saying, as you will see. There is a place of rest, and there is a state of rest. The two are not the same, but they can be united when the conditions are right.

I live in a really nice place because my grandfather moved to where we are 70 years ago. It was his place of rest, even though he continued to work for many years after arriving there. My dad found that it suited him well, and he stayed. Even though he also continued to work, he had a place of rest.

And now, I live on that same beautiful island. It is a place of rest, but I assure you that I don't get much rest. The mornings are early, the days are long, the dogs are many, and the grass never seems to stop growing. Add in four part time jobs and full time work for the church (times 27.3628) and rest, even when I'm asleep, isn't a state of rest.

And yet, I have the same place of rest that dad and grandpa enjoyed. I hope that each of you has a place that you can call your place of rest, even if you haven't yet begun to rest. But more than a house, I would hope you have found the true Place of rest...

**Text Verse:** *"For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. <sup>3</sup>For we who have believed do enter that rest." Hebrews 4:2, 3*

What does this have to do with the book of Esther? Well, there is rest, and then there is a place of rest. The Bible says that for those who have believed in the gospel, they have entered their rest. I'm guessing that most of you have done this thing. And yet, I'm pretty sure that most of you also have lots to do from day to day. Is your Place of rest in Christ a respite from your labors? Surely it is so. And yet you still have work to do in Christ. Paul speaks about that in his epistles. Ephesians 6 is a great place to see that even though we have entered our rest, there is on-going work to do, and it is more than just mowing the lawn, it is an on-going battle. Someday the battle will end.

Israel found that out for a short time during the reign of the Persian empire. They will find it out in a more complete way some wondrous day ahead. We already know it is true, and we are just waiting on the day it occurs. These are truths which are to be found

in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. The Fear of Mordecai (verses 1-5)**

**<sup>1</sup> Now in the twelfth month, that *is*, the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day, *the time* came for the king's command and his decree to be executed.**

As has been seen several other times with verses in the book of Esther, this opening verse of Chapter 9 is a long one. Several clauses preceded the actual narrative, thus setting up a suspenseful period of waiting between what occurred in Chapter 8, and what will occur in Chapter 9. Each additional word introduced adds to that suspense, and it makes the reader eagerly anticipate what will come about on the date set by the ruling edict.

This is especially suspenseful because nothing of the intervening months is spoken of. In verse 8:12, the giving of the date for the coming events was cited, and that was followed by a few verses concerning the transmission of the edict and the joy which accompanied it. Now, immediately after that, the date cited in the edict has arrived. It is the situation of this eagerly-anticipated date which is next described...

**<sup>1 (con't)</sup> On the day that the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them,**

The word translated as "hoped" is *sabar*. It is derived from a primitive root meaning "to scrutinize." Thus, by implication, it signifies "to wait expectantly." One can see the subjects of the kingdom who were hoping to enrich themselves off of the plunder of the Jews almost drooling at the chance to do so.

These Jews had moved into their area, established themselves, kept separate from them, and had probably become wealthy. Now, the people envied what they had not worked for, and they eagerly anticipated taking that which they had not earned. It is a story repeated often in the history of the Jewish people, and it is a story which is also often repeated in the history of the shiftless of many societies who desire to have what they are unwilling to earn.

In the case of these enemies of the Jews, the Bible next uses the word *shalat*, meaning "to domineer over" or "be empowered." They had a royal decree which allowed them to take by force from those who had earned, and they hungrily waited to do so. Again, it is no different than any governmental decree which would redistribute from those who

earn, to those who are unwilling to do so. The desire for unmerited gain leads to forceful seizure.

This is the state of things on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month of Adar. The Persian empire had been anticipating this day, wondering who would prevail. The day had arrived, and the outcome was finally realized with the words...

<sup>1 (con't)</sup> **the opposite occurred,**

The word is *haphak*. It means “to turn,” or “overturn.” Translations seem to revel in finding new ways of describing the marvelous turning of what was hoped for – the tables were turned; just the opposite happened; quite the opposite happened; but it turned out the opposite happened; the exact opposite happened; the reverse occurred; it was turned to the contrary; but instead, the Jews turned things around; things were turned around; contrary to expectations; the case being altered; and finally, “and it is turned.” The variety of translations shows the eager attempt by the translators to capture the epitome of the irony which occurred, which was...

<sup>1 (con't)</sup> **in that the Jews themselves overpowered those who hated them.**

The same word for “overpowered” which was just used of the hope of the enemies, *shalat*, is used again here. Those looking for a bunch of freebies at the Jews’ expense, wouldn’t find what they were hoping for. They were looking to overpower the Jews and profit off of labors which they had not earned, but instead they were overpowered by the Jews. The apple cart had been upturned, the dice had been rolled and come up amiss, and the trap they had set instead sprang up and ensnared them. And the reason was because of the allowances of Mordecai’s second edict...

<sup>2</sup> **The Jews gathered together in their cities**

This was exactly what was authorized in verse 8:11 – “...the king permitted the Jews who *were* in every city to gather together.” As a point of clarification, the term “their cities” means the cities wherever they lived, not cities which were Jewish cities.

<sup>2 (con't)</sup> **throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus**

The implication of the words here is that the Jews remained scattered, literally, throughout the entire kingdom. There were 127 provinces, and the wording points to a dispersion of the Jews throughout all of them. This then is one of the punishments

promised to the people of Israel for disobedience. In Deuteronomy 28:64, it says, “Then the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other.” The dispersion recorded here confirms the words of the Lord found in the books of Moses.

<sup>2</sup> (con’t) **to lay hands on those who sought their harm.**

It is debated among scholars whether this was defensive only, or offensive. The reason for this is that some scholars attempt to justify a more moral stand by the Jews by merely defending themselves and not being those who would take the offense in such matters. However, the wording of the edict, and the wording found later in this chapter, both allow and confirm offensive fighting on the part of the Jews once they are threatened.

It has been, and it continues to be a trait of the Jewish people to defend themselves as needed, but to also go on the offense as the situation demands. Nothing is wrong with this, and there is no reason to see this as wrongdoing. It is the standard practice of all wise people groups throughout history.

<sup>2</sup> (con’t) **And no one could withstand them, because fear of them fell upon all people.**

The scholar Brenz states of these words, “We have above such an example in Haman, who was himself hung on the cross which he had prepared for Mordecai. So the Egyptians were themselves overwhelmed in the sea to which they had driven the Israelites in order to overwhelm them. So also Saul, who had driven David over to the Philistines, that they might destroy him, was himself destroyed by the Philistines.”

He is correct. These, and numerous other such episodes are recorded in Scripture and in history. It is assured that the enemies of God who attempt to destroy His people are the ones who are ultimately converted, or they are destroyed in a manner similar to that in which they intended. This cannot be equated with karma, but with divine retribution in a like for like manner.

<sup>3</sup> **And all the officials of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, and all those doing the king’s work, helped the Jews, because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them.**

The list of these officials includes pretty much all of the government officials in the kingdom from the top all the way down. They are said to have “helped” the Jews, but the Hebrew word used is literally translated as “lifted up.” In other words, they would have given support as needed – be it encouragement, praise, government assistance as

necessary, material support, and so on. They had the backing of the regional and local officials in order to assure their success.

And the reason for this lifting up is explicitly stated in the words, *ki naphal pakhad mordecai alehem*, or “because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them.” This is the explicitly stated reason. He was the highest ruler in the land behind the king himself, and he held governmental authority over their jobs and their livelihood.

However, there are also two other reasons for this. The first is obviously that it has become known that Esther was Jewish. Though this is unstated, it would have not harmed their cause at all. And the second reason is just as certain. The Lord had directed the events to occur as they had. We have already been told in verse 8:17 that many became Jews because of the edict which was published by Mordecai. The fear of the unseen God who directed the affairs of the Jews would have been present in the people’s minds, even if it was a subliminal presence. The Lord has directed, and the people were affected by His guiding hand, whether they realized it or not.

As a squiggle for your brain, the words here include the last use of the word *akharshdarpan*, or satrap in the Bible. It was seen once in Ezra and three times here. Now it is toast. But as a great biblical fun-fact, it is spelled here with a connecting letter, *vav*, thus making it tied for the longest word in the Old Testament, containing eleven letters. Two others words are this long. One is found in Ezekiel 7, and the other is in Ezekiel 16. As far as the fear of Mordecai on these people, the next verse says...

**<sup>4</sup> For Mordecai was great in the king’s palace,**

Three clauses in this one verse show us the level of greatness which Mordecai had attained. First, he was “great in the king’s palace.” That is a note of distinguish, but it doesn’t necessarily signify anything more. There are people who are considered great in the president’s cabinet, but they remain obscure beyond that point. There were seven royal counselors to the king of Persia, but their names may not have been known outside of the citadel of Shushan. However, with Mordecai it says...

**<sup>4 (con’t)</sup> and his fame spread throughout all the provinces;**

Mordecai wasn’t just a powerful figure within the main government, but his authority, and certainly his leadership skills, caused his fame to spread throughout all of the provinces of the empire. The word “fame” here is the Hebrew *shoma*. It is rather rare, being seen just four times. It gives the sense of being known through having been heard

of. In other words, the fame of Mordecai came because of the words spoken of him. The very name when spoken was one which was esteemed. And as a result...

<sup>4</sup> (con't) **for this man Mordecai became increasingly prominent.**

The verse began with *ki gadol mordecai* – “for (was) great Mordecai. Now it ends with *ki ha’ish mordecai howlek v’gadol* – “for this man Mordecai went and great.” It is taking the words of the first clause and turning them into a superlative. He increased; he became greater and greater, even to great prominence. In America, he would be the person most likely to be nominated for the next president of the nation. It is because of the great prominence of Mordecai that...

<sup>5</sup> **Thus the Jews defeated all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, with slaughter and destruction, and did what they pleased with those who hated them.**

The verse consists solely of three verbs and eight nouns. Two words are used here for the first time. The first is the noun form, *hereg*, of a more familiar verb. It indicates “a slaughter.” The second word is *abdan*, found only here in the Bible. It is also a noun, signifying “a destruction.” One can hear its similarity to Abaddon, or the proper name of the place of destruction mentioned in Revelation 9.

In using these nouns, it shows that they did more than just strike, slaughter, and destroy. They accomplished a stroke, resulting in slaughter and destruction. Their work was complete in its intended scope. In this, they had complete control over the battle against those whom they fought.

This verse is also an implicit reference to the futility of divination in order to meet one’s goals. The entire premise of Haman’s casting of the *pur*, or lot, was to determine the most advantageous day for the destruction of the Jews. And yet, on that supposedly advantageous day, the Jews gained the victory. In this, the attempts of those who try to conjure up designs against the Lord and His plans are shown to be worthless.

This verse brings in another set of two’s in the book. It is the two times which are authorized for the Jews to take vengeance on their enemies in the citadel of Shushan. This one will go from here until verse 12, and then the next will go from verse 13 through verse 15. The two contrast, in that one was in response to a royal edict mandating the destruction of the Jews, and one was not, but the two confirm that the enemies of the Jews will be destroyed completely and sufficiently according to what God has ordained.

*He is great in the palace of the King  
And those He favors rejoice in His royal authority  
Peace and joy to those He favors does He bring  
He protects His people, even against an evil majority*

*His people shall prevail; they shall be set free  
And in freedom they shall find peace and rest  
None shall them assail; He will defend gloriously  
Even when His people are from all sides oppressed*

*Great is He in the palace of the King  
Great is His splendor and His royal authority  
Happiness and contentment to His people He shall bring  
And it is they who will forevermore be in the majority*

## **II. Victory Over the Enemy (verses 6-17)**

**<sup>6</sup>And in Shushan the citadel the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men.**

The word *birah*, or citadel, is used, but it certainly indicates the city in which the citadel resides. There would be no tolerance for bloodshed within the citadel, and with 500 killed, it means that more than double that would have been involved. Thus, it is expressive of the city proper, not merely the citadel.

Of this verse, Adam Clarke states, "It is strange that in this city, where the king's mind must have been so well known, there should be found five hundred persons to rise up in hostility against those whom they knew the king befriended!" This would only be strange if one assumes, as Adam Clarke does elsewhere, that these people first rose against the Jews, and that the Jews were not the aggressors. However, there is nothing to indicate this.

Haman was an Amalekite. It is to be presumed that throughout the empire, Amalekites were dispersed, just as the Jews were. The ancient enmity meant that on this day, it was kill or be killed. Both factions had every reason to use this day, authorized by the king in separate edicts, to destroy one another. The prophecy against Amalek would be fulfilled, and a part of that fulfillment was to come about through the events of the book of Esther.

The enemies of God, and the people of God, are in a great struggle until the end. Each will take every opportunity to destroy the other until the battle is complete. Thus, in Shushan alone, five hundred of the Jew's enemies were killed and destroyed. The number 500 is the product of 10 and 50. Ten is the perfection of Divine order, and 50 is the number of Jubilee, or deliverance. Thus we have in this a picture of God's Divine order being worked out in the deliverance of the Jews. This includes the destruction of an entire family of Amalekites...

**<sup>7</sup> Also Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha,**

The first three sons of Haman. All three are only named here. The only name that can be identified with a meaning is Dalphon. His name is possibly tied to the Hebrew *dalaph*, to weep or to drip.

**<sup>8</sup> Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha,**

The three names here are all found only this once in the Bible. They are of Persian origin, and their meanings are uncertain or dubious at best.

**<sup>9</sup> Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vajezatha—**

These final names are all found only this once in the Bible as well. Like the others, they are of Persian origin, and their meanings are uncertain, or dubious at best.

It should be noted that in the Hebrew Bible, the names of these ten sons are written not right to left as is normal, but each name is written one below the next vertically. It is an unusual occurrence and various reasons have been suggested for this. One is to give prominence to their names, thus facilitating their computation (Keil). Another is that it signifies that they were hanged on the one pole, one above another at fixed distances. This makes sense. Being written one on top of the other, as if arranged on a single pole, thus it gives special credence to the actual height of Haman's gallows, and that all ten could have been hung from it in this way.

Additionally, there are several unusually sized letters in their names. In the Masoretic Text, letters found in the second, seventh, and tenth names are made smaller than the others. And the first letter of the last name is written larger than the others. It is a curiosity that many have attempted to find secret meaning in.

The most common interpretation of this is that the small letters represent the year 707 (“tav shin zain” equals 707) of the sixth millennium (represented by the large “vav” which equals 6). Thus you have the Jewish date 5707, or 1946 by the civil calendar.

It is on 1 October, 1946 – 6 Tishrei 5707 on the Jewish calendar – that the Nuremberg Military Tribunal tried ten Nazis and sentenced them to death by hanging for their modern “Hamanism.” One of them, the notorious Julius Streicher, even is said to have cried “Purim-Fest 1946” as his cryptic last words. There are several problems with this. First, there are actually four small letters, including two small tav’s in the names, not one. Thus, this is a “choose what you want to make something that doesn’t actually exist” scenario. Secondly, various other manuscripts give different letters which are smaller. And thirdly, they were hung for more than just crimes against the Jews, but for all sorts of war crimes, and others from WWII were hung for war crimes as well. In this, we find the common error of people looking for the Bible to fit an account, rather than an account fitting the details of the Bible. I will explain the meaning of the hanging of these ten in our final sermon.

**<sup>10</sup> the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews—they killed;**

Here, the ten named individuals are noted for their connection to Haman, and Haman is noted with his connection to his own father, Hammedatha. The link between them is Haman, noted as “the enemy of the Jews. It can be surmised that the ten sons of Haman had attempted to take revenge for the death of their father, but that only turned back on their own heads as well.

All ten died in the process. As ten is the number of perfection of Divine order, there appears in this, the thought of the perfection of Divine order, even in the destruction of these sons of Haman. As hard as that may be for us to imagine, it appears that such is the case. Their destruction fit a particular part of God’s plan for the preservation of the Jews, a plan which went so far and no further. This is seen in the next words...

**<sup>10</sup> (con’t) but they did not lay a hand on the plunder.**

The Jews, according to the edict, had a right to plunder their enemies, but they chose to not exercise this right. They merely sought deliverance from their foes, and vengeance upon their enemies, nothing more. The battle was not one for profit or plunder, but for protection and self-preservation. In this, nobody could accuse them of profiting off of what had occurred. This precedent was seen in their forefather Abraham many centuries earlier –

“But Abram said to the king of Sodom, ‘I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, <sup>23</sup> that I *will take* nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that *is yours*, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich’— <sup>24</sup> except only what the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men who went with me: Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.’” Genesis 14:22-24

**<sup>11</sup> On that day the number of those who were killed in Shushan the citadel was brought to the king.**

The record of those lost in battle is normally meticulously recorded. Such is the case here. Despite being an internal war, the number of subjects lost would be important to the king to know the state of the empire, what type of animosity existed, and if something more was needed to correct the matter. What is striking, however, is that only the number of non-Jews is recorded. The number of Jews having died is not mentioned...

**<sup>12</sup> And the king said to Queen Esther, “The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the citadel, and the ten sons of Haman.**

After being informed of the scope of the slaughter in Shushan, the king passes the details on to Esther. As reports within the kingdom which stretched from India to Ethiopia would take up to even weeks to arrive, he can only mentally calculate what the total number of subjects who died would be. Assuming a similar amount in the other 127 provinces, and probably an even greater number in the land of Canaan, he then proceeds with...

**<sup>12 (con’t)</sup> What have they done in the rest of the king’s provinces?**

It is either a rhetorical question for Esther to ponder the magnitude of the slaughter, or it is an exclamatory statement to highlight the same. Either way, the king has shown the greatness of the engagement in the citadel alone before making an offering for even greater allowances for his queen and her people...

**<sup>12 (con’t)</sup> Now what *is* your petition? It shall be granted to you. Or what *is* your further request? It shall be done.”**

The king indicates that he has fully and sufficiently granted her request and given her all that she had hoped for, but he graciously then offers her even more with the words,

“what is your further request?” This offer of the desires of her heart, is because what had been determined by Haman was as much his fault as Haman’s. Now, with the first edict over and dispensed with, thus meeting his initial repentance through Mordecai’s edict, he offers her the granting of an altogether new request, not based on any type of retribution at all. Thus, the first grant to her was one of mercy, while this one is a grant of special favor, of grace.

The word *baqqashah*, or request has been seen eight times, once in Ezra and seven here in Esther. We will now retire it from the Bible with the playing of taps. Or rather, we will just bid it goodbye and go on to the next verse.

**13 Then Esther said, “If it pleases the king, let it be granted to the Jews who *are* in Shushan to do again tomorrow according to today’s decree,**

Some scholars are particularly horrified at Esther’s request, finding it hard to imagine that a woman would have such an attitude and such a strongly determined streak of violence within her. That is a complete misunderstanding of the situation, and it holds far too romantic of a view of human nature.

Esther and her people were threatened with extermination by Haman. The enemies of the Jews had plotted their demise and surely reveled in its coming to pass. With the advancement of a second edict, their designs were frustrated, and even went into retreat. It is not unlikely that those who had once thought to destroy the Jews, and who openly taunted them, had gone into hiding on the day of slaughter.

With the royal edict past, they could go about life happily hating the Jews once again, waiting for their moment to strike. However, this state of contentment would be foiled by the passing of a new edict, one to be so fresh that many would be unaware that it had even been published. But every Jew would be informed of it. Thus, it was an exceptional idea of Esther to put forth this request. It is comparable to what occurred with Josef Mengele, Adolf Eichmann, and others who fled to Argentina after WWII. When faced with their own destruction they went into hiding. Esther wanted to ensure that those in Shushan who spent the day hiding would be routed out and exterminated. But she had more on her mind...

**13 (con’t) and let Haman’s ten sons be hanged on the gallows.”**

This was one tradition of the Jews that would be universally known – hanging a person on a tree as a sign of a curse. It goes back to the book of Deuteronomy –

“If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, <sup>23</sup> his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the Lord your God is giving you *as* an inheritance; for he who is hanged *is* accursed of God.” Deuteronomy 21:22, 23

The law of removing the body from a tree only applied within Israel, their inherited land. The law says nothing of taking them down outside of the land. So they may have hung there one day, or until they were nothing but bones. However, their hanging would be a sign to the Jews of the curse upon their enemies, and it would be a sign to all others of the disgrace and the terror which would be meted out as punishment against such offenders in the future.

The punishment of the children for the iniquity of their fathers is prophesied in Isaiah 14. It is a warning against the king of Babylon, but many have taken the passage to refer to Satan himself. However, this is unlikely. Rather, it is more comparable to the one who epitomizes Satan on earth, the Antichrist. Thus what we are seeing here in Esther is a foreshadowing of what lies ahead for him. Isaiah’s words thus state –

“All the kings of the nations,  
All of them, sleep in glory,  
Everyone in his own house;  
<sup>19</sup> But you are cast out of your grave  
Like an abominable branch,  
*Like* the garment of those who are slain,  
Thrust through with a sword,  
Who go down to the stones of the pit,  
Like a corpse trodden underfoot.  
<sup>20</sup> You will not be joined with them in burial,  
Because you have destroyed your land  
*And* slain your people.  
The brood of evildoers shall never be named.  
<sup>21</sup> Prepare slaughter for his children  
Because of the iniquity of their fathers,  
Lest they rise up and possess the land,  
And fill the face of the world with cities.” Isaiah 14:18-21

This equating of what is occurring in Esther as a prophetic picture of the future is almost completely ignored by scholars, but John Lange had an inkling of it which is worthy of note –

“That the Jews really executed this climax of punishment, may indicate the especially severe judgment that will overtake those who are the principal agents of Antichrist on earth; and this illustrates the truth that opposition against whatever is antagonistic to goodness and piety, must rise till it reaches its overwhelming acme. This is a principle valid even for Christians, that they must be in a hostile attitude to evil to the last degree.” John Lange

**<sup>14</sup> So the king commanded this to be done; the decree was issued in Shushan, and they hanged Haman’s ten sons.**

The decree was for the additional day of slaughter, whereas the hanging would have come simply by the word of the king. The king agreed to Esther’s request, and granted it without amendment or protest. The victory over the foes of the Jews, particularly the Amalekites, would be effective and their disgrace would be seen by all. This continues to be seen with the next words...

**<sup>15</sup> And the Jews who were in Shushan gathered together again on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and killed three hundred men at Shushan;**

The number three hundred is not specifically defined by EW Bullinger, but its component parts are. Ten is the perfection of Divine order, whereas thirty is a higher degree of the same. Thus not only is there a sense of Jubilee and Divine perfection in the 500 killed, but there is a higher sense of that Divine perfection with the killing of these additional 300. In total 800 were killed in Shushan. Eight is the number of new beginnings, which is combined with Divine perfection squared. In what is pictured in Esther, it is an appropriate number to record what lies ahead for Israel.

**<sup>15</sup> (con’t) but they did not lay a hand on the plunder.**

Again, the words here reflect the Jew’s determination to not tie the death of their enemies in with profit or plunder, but for protection and self-preservation. This ends the set of twos which came earlier in this passage, the two times which are authorized for the Jews to take vengeance on their enemies in the citadel of Shushan. The two contrast, in that one was in response to a royal edict mandating the destruction of the Jews, and

one was not, but the two confirm that the enemies of the Jews will be destroyed completely and sufficiently according to what God has ordained.

**<sup>16</sup> The remainder of the Jews in the king's provinces gathered together and protected their lives, had rest from their enemies, and killed seventy-five thousand of their enemies;**

The verse appears highly unusual in its structure, and scholars struggle over why it is written as it is. It first notes that the Jews not in Shushan gathered together and protected their lives. This would have occurred on or before the thirteenth of the month. It then says that they had *rest* from their enemies, this seemingly would have occurred on and after the fourteenth of the month. It then seems to revert to the events of the thirteenth of the month by saying that they killed 75,000 in their slaughter.

However, the word “rest” is a noun, not a verb. It is used only twice in Scripture, once in 2 Chronicles 6:41 when speaking of the resting place of the Lord, and the other is here in Esther. What it appears to be saying is that in the gathering and slaughtering of their enemies, they had their rest.

The edict of Mordecai granted them the right to gather, provided them rest, and allowed them to kill their enemies. They had entered their rest even before their enemies were destroyed. It is reflective of the state of Christians today. Hebrews 4:3 says that for those who believe, we have entered our rest (a noun in the Greek), and yet, we are still actively engaged in a spiritual battle in this life.

**<sup>16</sup> (con't) but they did not lay a hand on the plunder.**

Again, like those Jews in Shushan, this exceptional note of restraint is stated. The Jews did not initiate the conflict, they did not ask for it, but they were willing to see it through and yet not profit off of it, even though they had a right to do so.

**<sup>17</sup> This was on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar.**

These words support the thoughts on the previous verse. They refer to the previous verse, all of which occurred on the thirteenth day, including the rest which the people had entered. This is then confirmed by the final words of today...

**\*<sup>17</sup> (fin) And on the fourteenth of *the month* they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness.**

There is a place of rest, and there is a state of rest. The Jews of the provinces entered a place of rest, even if they did not enter into a state of rest. They now unite the state with the place. It says that on the fourteenth of Adar, they rested (a verb). It says that in their rest, they then made it a day of feasting and gladness. However, as has been the case throughout Esther, the word “feast” is *mishteh*. It is a feast of drinking; a banquet. There would be immense joy, wine would flow freely, and the people would have the burdens of this life lifted off their shoulders as they finally were freed of the threat of the enemies which had haunted them for so very long.

With just two sermons left, we continue to see the hidden hand of the Lord working continuously behind the scenes in order to deliver His people. Esther has been chosen as the queen of the realm; Mordecai has been placed in an exalted position; Esther’s petition has been granted to work against the decree of Haman; and the enemies of the Jews have been brought to their end.

All of this could be chalked up to time and chance with the exception that it had already been said that these things would occur. Not the specific details, of course, but the overall promises of protection and life. And so, like always in Scripture, the result of what has come about is ultimately left up to one word for us to consider. That word is “faith.” God has done all of the things He has done in such a way that it takes faith to believe.

The earth looks old, but the Bible says it is young. Where is your faith? The Lord promises destruction by flood, but the skies are sunny. Where is your faith? The Lord says He is our Defender, but we are hemmed in by enemies? Where is your faith? The boat is sinking, but the Lord is right there with you. Where is your faith? The word is written, but the resurrection of a dead Man seems impossible. Where is your faith?

The Bible doesn’t say it is easy to believe, but it does ask us to do so. God looks for faith in His faithless creatures, and so a little bit will do. Will we chalk up the defeat of the enemy to our own goodness and skill? Or will we call out to the Lord in thanks and praise? In the end, the only thing that we can give God is our faith. Loving God requires faith that He exists. Praising God requires faith that He is listening. Praying to God through Jesus Christ implies that we believe in the Person and work of Jesus.

If you have never made the commitment of faith in Him that God is looking for, today is the day. Have faith, and be saved from the wrath which is sure to otherwise come. God would have you saved, and with Him, rather than lost and cast away. Call on Him. It is that simple.

**Closing Verse:** *“Ascribe strength to God;  
His excellence is over Israel,  
And His strength is in the clouds.*

*<sup>35</sup> O God, You are more awesome than Your holy places.  
The God of Israel is He who gives strength and power to His people.  
Blessed be God!” Psalm 68:34, 35*

**Next Week:** Esther 9:18-32 *The Jews prevailed though their chances looked slim, and so they call them...* (The Days of Purim) (12<sup>th</sup> Esther Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. At times, you might feel as if he has no great design for you in life, but he has brought you to this moment to reveal His glory in and through you. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **Rest From Their Enemies**

Now in the twelfth month, that is, the month of Adar  
On the thirteenth day; a date not disputed  
The time came for the king’s command  
And his decree to be executed

On the day that the enemies of the Jews  
Had hoped to overpower them, as is stated  
The opposite occurred  
In that the Jews themselves overpowered those  
-----who them had hated

The Jews gathered together in their cities  
Gathering even from field and farm  
Throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus  
To lay hands on those who sought their harm

And no one could withstand them, so the account does tell  
Because fear of them upon all people fell

And all the officials of the provinces  
The satraps, the governors as well  
And all those doing the king’s work helped the Jews

Because the fear of Mordecai upon them fell

For Mordecai was great in the king's palace  
And his fame spread throughout all the provinces  
For this man Mordecai became increasingly prominent  
So the account to us says

Thus the Jews defeated all their enemies  
With the stroke of the sword, as is stated  
With slaughter and destruction  
And did what they pleased with those who them had hated

And in Shushan the citadel, there and then  
The Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men

Also Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha  
Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha too  
Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vajezatha  
To them was bid tata and adieu

The ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha  
The enemy of the Jews—they killed  
But they did not lay a hand on the plunder  
It was enough that their blood was spilled

On that day the number of those who were killed  
-----in Shushan the citadel  
Was brought to the king; to him the stats they did tell

And the king said to Queen Esther  
“The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men  
In Shushan the citadel  
And the ten sons of Haman

What have they done in the rest of the king's provinces?  
Now what is your petition? It shall be granted to you  
Or what is your further request? It shall be done  
Speak as to what you desire me to do

Then Esther said, "If it pleases the king  
Let it be granted to the Jews who are in Shushan  
To do again tomorrow according to today's decree  
And let be hanged on the gallows the ten sons of Haman

So the king commanded this to be done  
The decree was issued in Shushan  
And they hanged Haman's ten sons, yes each and every one  
And the Jews who were in Shushan  
Gathered together again on  
The fourteenth day of the month of Adar  
And killed three hundred men at Shushan

But they did not lay on the plunder a hand  
They only killed their enemies; so we are to understand

The remainder of the Jews in the king's provinces  
Gathered together and protected their lives  
-----had rest from their enemies, truly a wonder  
And killed seventy-five thousand of their enemies  
But they did not lay a hand on the plunder

This was on the thirteenth day  
Of the month of Adar  
And on the fourteenth of the month they rested  
And made it a day of feasting and gladness, both near and far

Lord God, thank You for Your presence that is with us  
Even when we don't realize that You are there  
Because You sent Your own Son Jesus  
We can know that You truly do care

And so Lord, be real to us in a wonderful new way  
Open our minds and our hearts to seeing You always  
Through every step we take, and throughout every day  
Be real to us, O God, and to You will shall give all of our praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

## ESTHER 9:18-32 (THE DAYS OF PURIM)

*\*To watch the video of this study, select from the following: [YouTube](#) or [Sermon Audio](#)*

The 30<sup>th</sup> Psalm is one which could have been written specifically for the circumstances which surrounded the Jews during the time of Esther. Though it was written by David many centuries earlier, it fits their situation so very well. Other than the several references to the Lord, which are lacking in Esther, the contents reflect going from hopelessness to joy and from utter defeat, to triumph.

And then again, the words reflect the life and times of Joseph, David himself, and of course, Jesus. Yes, David may have been writing about his own terrible plight, but there is no doubt he was prophesying about events in the life of the Lord.

And yet, the parallels don't end there. The Jews endured many more such occasions in one form or another over the past 2000 years, culminating in the Holocaust, and followed by her reestablishment. But even that isn't the end of the story. The book is written, and we know what is coming upon Israel in the future. In fact, it will be worse than anything yet. But, there will be an end to that too. When all seems hopeless, the Lord will once again deliver them, and they will once again sing in elation...

**Text Verse:** *"I will extol You, O Lord, for You have lifted me up, And have not let my foes rejoice over me." Psalm 30:1*

It's a wonderful thing to contemplate, and yet its mournful to consider, what will lead up to their deliverance. How much better for them to just get on their knees and call out to the Lord now, before the times of real trouble arise. But, as I said, the book is written. What is coming must come and then Israel will be delivered. As Daniel says, "And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book."

All I can say is, "Thank God for Jesus." He has taken away the prospect of such a terror for us. This doesn't mean that we won't face our own horror. A million and a half Armenians were destroyed by the Turks in the early 1900s. Countless other Christians have faced the same end at the hands of their foes, but unlike those who don't know Christ, that isn't the end for us. It is simply a step into a new beginning.

The terror of dying for humanity is that of an end, followed by eternal separation. There is no hope, no second chance, and only eternity to contemplate what was lost. Again, thank God for Christ Jesus. In Him there is hope, and there is a new beginning. Someday

the whole world will find that out. For now, there are temporary victories leading to that final great Day when the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the oceans. It's all heading there, and it is all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. From Sorrow to Joy (verses 18-25)**

**<sup>18</sup> But the Jews who *were* at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth *day*, as well as on the fourteenth;**

Today we begin our verses with the word, "But." This then is showing us a contrast to the verse which we ended on in the last sermon. There it said, "*This was* on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar. And on the fourteenth of *the month* they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness." Those Jews who defended themselves from their enemies, and who lived in the provinces, had fought on the thirteenth of the month, and they rested on the fourteenth of the month.

In contrast to that, we saw Esther's petition to the king in verse 13, requesting that the Jews in Shushan be granted an additional day of fighting against their enemies. The king granted her petition, and so we now read of that to begin us today. Thus, the fighting was on both the thirteenth and the fourteenth of Adar. With that finished, they too, like those in the provinces, then celebrated the victory over their enemies by gathering together. It is the same verb as was used in verse 16. There is an assembly of the Jews, no longer to fight, but to rejoice...

**<sup>18</sup> (con't) and on the fifteenth of *the month* they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.**

They had rest from their enemies, and so now like those in the provinces, they enter into their rest, making it a day of *mishteh v'simkhah*, or "banqueting and joy." Being a banqueting feast, the people brought out wine and celebrated abundantly. Because of this occurring a day later than the rest of the provinces, we next read...

**<sup>19</sup> Therefore the Jews of the villages who dwelt in the unwalled towns celebrated the fourteenth day of the month of Adar**

The word "dwelt" should be in the present tense, "dwell." It is speaking of the custom which arose out of the events described. Two rather rare, but almost identical, words are

used here. The first is *perazi*, or “villages.” It is used only three times in the Bible, this being the last. The second is *perazah*, or “unwalled towns.” It also being used only three times, this being the first.

The first was used to speak of villages outside of Israel, specifically east of the Jordan, and then in the land of the Philistines, west of Israel proper. The second speaks of the land of Israel, and the city of Jerusalem of the distant future, our time now, when Israel would be a land of unwalled villages (Ezekiel 38), and Jerusalem would be likewise (Zechariah 2:4). For now, the Jews of the empire’s villages and unwalled towns celebrated on the fourteenth. In the apocryphal book of 2 Maccabees, it is recorded that this fourteenth day of Adar became known as “the day of Mordecai.” It is the main day on which the Jews celebrated...

<sup>19</sup> (con’t) **with gladness and feasting, as a holiday, and for sending presents to one another.**

Again as before, the time is described as one of joy and of banqueting. The term “holiday” doesn’t necessarily mean they took holidays. Rather, the Hebrew says, “and a good day.” Thus whether working or not, it is to be a day of celebration. On this day, they would send out *manah*, or portions, to one another, usually meaning sweet cakes and the like. In this verse, there is a complete contrast to that of verse 4:3, which said –

“And in every province where the king’s command and decree arrived, *there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.*”

The mourning had turned to joy, the weeping and wailing had turned into banqueting, and the sackcloth and ashes were replaced with the sending of gifts of food to one another. This then is similar to the response found in Revelation 11:10 after the killing of the two witnesses, where it says, “And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.” This remains the custom of those in the middle east today and it will, as you see, continue on in the end times.

<sup>20</sup> **And Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all the Jews, near and far, who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus,**

The verse begins with *va’yiktov mordecai eth ha’devarim he’elleh*, or “And wrote Mordecai the words, the these.” It seems straightforward enough, but scholars are at

war as to what “these things” refers to. Is it what has occurred, or what he will now convey. If it is what occurred, does it comprise the book of Esther up to this point, or the events of the past few days which will lead to what will next be stated? Whatever it is referring to, it is a letter by the second highest in the land to all of his people. As you can see, what seems obvious at first does get complicated with a bit of study. In the end, the result comes out the same, a commemoration is forthcoming...

**<sup>21</sup> to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar,**

The reason for this seems clear. The Jews in the provinces fought on one day and celebrated the next. On the other hand, the Jews in Shushan fought on two days and celebrated on the third. In order to bring conformity to annual celebrations of this day, Mordecai establishes two days of celebration. It seems, based on this, that the “these things” of the previous verse were the details of what had occurred. They are thus presented as justification to all who were unaware of the events in Shushan for holding a two-day festival.

**<sup>22</sup> as the days on which the Jews had rest from their enemies,**

It is not the days of fighting which are celebrated, but the days of resting. The Jews in the country rested on the 14<sup>th</sup>, and the Jews in Shushan rested on the 15<sup>th</sup>. These days of rest are combined into one celebration. It is a pattern set at creation. God labored and then rested, thus He sanctified the seventh day. Later, for Israel, the Sabbath was instituted as a day of rest in commemoration of that (Exodus 20:11). But it was also instituted as a day of rest based on their deliverance from Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15). The celebration of Purim follows both patterns, rest after labors, and rest after deliverance.

**<sup>22 (con't)</sup> as the month which was turned from sorrow to joy for them, and from mourning to a holiday;**

Again, we see in these words the stark contrast between the mourning and wailing in sackcloth and ashes of the initial announcement by Haman, and the joy and celebration of what finally occurred. God took that which was evil, and turned it around for good.

**<sup>22 (con't)</sup> that they should make them days of feasting and joy, of sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor.**

The intent of Mordecai's letter was to establish a remembrance of what occurred. In order to solidify that, the days were to become special days, with more than just a memory of what happened, but an active participation in the day. Thus, each year, the people would come to anxiously anticipate the celebration. And so, the commemoration each year was to follow what occurred on the first occasion – feasting, joy, and sending portions of food. And one extra expectation is given, that of sending gifts to the poor. The obvious reason for this addition is that all Jews were delivered, and thus all Jews, even the poor, should be able to participate in, and celebrate, what occurred.

In this verse is the last use of *mishteh*, or banqueting, in Esther. Out of 46 uses in the Old Testament, 20 of them have been seen in Esther. It is remarkable when considering the size of the book. But it shows the importance of banqueting to the turning of events in the story, and thus in history itself. And so, a festival of banqueting is appropriate to remember this fact. One can picture the words of Isaiah in the joy of the Jews here. In Isaiah 25:6, the *mishteh*, or banquet, is seen twice. Compare the story of Esther, and see how it fits well into Isaiah's prophecy of the future –

And in this mountain  
The Lord of hosts will make for all people  
A feast of choice pieces,  
A feast of wines on the lees,  
Of fat things full of marrow,  
Of well-refined wines on the lees.  
<sup>7</sup> And He will destroy on this mountain  
The surface of the covering cast over all people,  
And the veil that is spread over all nations.  
<sup>8</sup> He will swallow up death forever,  
And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces;  
The rebuke of His people  
He will take away from all the earth;  
For the Lord has spoken.  
<sup>9</sup> And it will be said in that day:  
"Behold, this *is* our God;  
We have waited for Him, and He will save us.  
This *is* the Lord;  
We have waited for Him;  
We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." Isaiah 25:6-9

**<sup>23</sup> So the Jews accepted the custom which they had begun, as Mordecai had written to them,**

The custom would be remembered for a year, or a few years, and then it is possible that it would be slowly forgotten. Further, for those who celebrated, they would remember the day of their rest – be it the 14<sup>th</sup> or the 15<sup>th</sup>. In order to have all join in a united celebration, and in order that the day would never dwindle away, Mordecai wrote to them of the things that occurred and to remember them in this special way, year by year. It says here that they Jews accepted this, receiving it as a permanent custom. And the reason now given is...

**<sup>24</sup> because Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to annihilate them,**

Here, the entire title of Haman is given. He is the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and he is the enemy of the Jews. It is also the last time that he will be mentioned in the Bible. In a short recap, we are reminded that it is he who had plotted against the Jews in order to annihilate them, but instead, it is he who saw annihilation.

**<sup>24</sup> (con't) and had cast Pur (that is, the lot), to consume them and destroy them;**

This takes us back to Chapter 3, where Haman had cast the *pur*, or the lot, in order to set a date for the destruction of the Jews. He may have known that the Lord is the God of the Jews, but what he probably was unaware of is what that meant concerning lots –

“The lot is cast into the lap,  
But its every decision *is* from the Lord.” Proverbs 16:33

As a sort of ironic twist of the Hebrew, the word *hamam* or, consume, is used here – *l'humam u-l'abedam* – to consume them and destroy them. *Hamam* is a word almost always used to speak of an action coming directly from the Lord in order to throw His enemies into confusion. It is probably being used here as a play on the name of Haman. “Haman tried to *hamam* the Jews, but instead Haman got ‘*hamam'd*’ by the Lord.” This is seen next...

**<sup>25</sup> but when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letter that this wicked plot which Haman had devised against the Jews should return on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.**

The name Esther is inserted here, and it seems out of place to do this. It is more likely speaking of the matter itself – “And when the matter was brought before the king.” Once the truth was brought to his attention, the action necessary to rectify the situation was commanded. Interestingly, and in accord with using the word *hamam* in the previous verse, it doesn’t give the details about the deliverance of the Jews, but instead, it deals with the plot itself and how it was turned back on Haman and his sons. One can infer divine retribution is the intent of the words here.

*A celebration of the foe’s defeat!  
A time to rest in the work accomplished  
A time when the Ruler reigns from His royal seat  
Now there is peace; war and strife is abolished  
Here we relax and rejoice in what has been done  
In this place there is peace and rest  
Who can steal our joy? We looked and there is none  
We are no longer downtrodden; no longer oppressed*

*The days of working for peace and rest  
Have now passed behind; they are no more  
In garments of luxury we now find ourselves dressed  
We have arrived on that marvelous, peaceful shore*

## **II. Words of Peace and Truth (verses 26-32)**

**<sup>26</sup> So they called these days Purim, after the name Pur.**

This one verse both looks backward and then forward. First, it looks backward to what has been said and gives a name based on that, Purim. The Jews gave the Persian word *pur* their own Hebrew plural, calling the celebration *Purim*. The *im* is simply like an “s” on one of our words as a plural marker. The verse also looks forward to what will be said with the next words...

**<sup>26</sup> (con’t) Therefore, because of all the words of this letter, what they had seen concerning this matter, and what had happened to them,**

The word “letter” here is *iggereth*. It is completely different than the other seven times the word “letter” or *sepher*, has been used so far in Esther. It signifies a letter, such as an epistle. The three thoughts are combined into one whole. “The words of this letter” refers to what Mordecai had written. “What they had seen” refers to the events of

Providence that had come to pass before their eyes. And, “what had happened to them” refers to the deliverance based on those events. These three give the reason that...

**<sup>27</sup> the Jews established and imposed it upon themselves and their descendants and all who would join them, that without fail they should celebrate these two days every year, according to the written *instructions* and according to the *prescribed* time,**

Verse 26, leading into verse 27, introduces our final set of twos in the book. It is the two letters instituting the commemoration of Purim. The first is here, written by Mordecai. The second is written by Esther & Mordecai in verse 29. They contrast, and yet they confirm the instructions for the observance of the celebration at their appointed time, year by year, and wherever the Jews were.

Purim is more than just a voluntary annual celebration of remembrance, but a self-imposed time of remembrance. Mordecai gave the instructions; they were accepted and the self-imposition of them became a resulting custom from that time on. It was to become, and indeed it is, as firm a date of remembrance as the Passover. All Jews, their descendants, and any who would join them – generally meaning proselytes – observe the days. This is seen as we continue...

**<sup>28</sup> *that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city, that these days of Purim should not fail to be observed among the Jews, and that the memory of them should not perish among their descendants.***

An obvious question arises from the establishment of Purim. “Is it of divine origin, or is it of human origin?” The story is given in the book of Esther, a book of the Bible, but the imposition of the celebration came from a Jew and not only a Jew, but one of the dispersion. It seems hardly likely that the Jews in Israel would feel the need to add something to their culture and life that came from someone who wasn’t a prophet or a priest. But it was accepted.

As Mordecai was second to the king, and as the land of Israel was subject to the laws of Persia, and as there was nothing but good which had come from the matter, it was accepted as Mordecai had written. Thus, it was of human origin. However, it is as clear as it can be that the Lord had directed the events – from beginning to end – in order to bring about the Jew’s deliverance. Therefore, it is implicitly of divine origin, and certainly divinely sanctioned.

And this is all the more relevant because it is notable that Nisan is the first month of the year in Israel's redemptive calendar. The last month is Adar. In both months, the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of the month are considered special days. Nisan 14 is the Passover, and the 15<sup>th</sup> is the first day of Unleavened Bread. Adar 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> are now made special commemorations. The first recognized Israel's redemption from Egypt. The second recognizes deliverance from the enemies of God's people. The redemptive year thus opens and closes in recognition of the Lord's hand in the preservation of His people.

Finally, as the proverbs showed us, the Lord directs the lot. Therefore, the days are not accidental, but purposeful. The unseen hand of the Lord guided the events which led to a national proclamation that the days of Purim would not cease. Therefore, wherever a Jew is, and throughout his generations, the day is to be remembered as a day of deliverance.

**29 Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim.**

Here we have an interesting verse. It reads literally, "Then wrote Esther the queen, daughter of Abihail; and Mordecai the Jew, with all authority, to confirm letter the Purim the this, the second." Esther is suddenly brought back into the narrative, and she is writing the letter along with Mordecai. She is not only named, but so is the name of her father. That hasn't been seen since verse 2:15. The story is highlighting that Esther is the daughter of *Abikhayil*, or Possessor of Might. This is followed up with "Mordecai the Jew," instead of just "Mordecai."

And then it says that they have *kal toqeph* or "full power." The word *toqeph* is new here. It will be seen twice in Esther, and once in Daniel. They are granted the full power, or authority, to confirm a second letter about Purim. The word "letter" here is the same as in verse 26, *iggereth*. This is the last time it is used in the Bible. The words of the verse are widely translated, and scholars debate over what the true meaning is of what is being relayed.

But because of the use of this word, *iggereth*, it appears that the first letter is that of Mordecai in verse 26, and now a second letter is being issued by Esther, along with Mordecai. This then closes out our final set of two's in the book – the two letters instituting the commemoration of Purim. The first was in verses 26 & 27, written by Mordecai. The second is here, written by Esther and Mordecai. They contrast, and yet they confirm the instructions for the observance of the celebration at their appointed time, year by year, and wherever the Jews find themselves.

**<sup>30</sup> And Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews, to the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, with words of peace and truth,**

These are not copies of the letter which was just written, but they are letters which would accompany that letter. It is a different word here, *sepher* instead of *iggereth*. It then explains why Mordecai is mentioned in the previous verse. Esther and Mordecai wrote the letter, and with it are accompanying letters which then go out to all 127 provinces in the kingdom. As it says, they are letters with words of *shalom v'emeth*, or “of peace and truth.”

What this may mean is that the letters began with a salutation which said something like, “Peace and truth to you who receive this.” Or, it could mean that the substance of the words were both friendly in nature and sincere in content. Interestingly, and as a squiggle for your brain, the word *emeth* is used, like the 127 provinces of the kingdom, 127 times in the Old Testament. And so we should stop here and evaluate the symbolic meaning of the word *emeth*, or truth –

TRUTH in Hebrew is אמת (*emeth - aleph, mem, tav*)

1. Aleph means Strength and points to God
2. Tav means A Mark and points to the Cross
3. Mem is in center of the Alphabet
4. Mem is a pictograph of Water and it means Blood
5. The entire word EMET is symmetrical in the alphabet.
6. God – Blood – Cross.
7. Jesus = TRUTH.
8. He was, He is, He will be.

**<sup>31</sup> to confirm these days of Purim at their appointed time, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had prescribed for them, and as they had decreed for themselves and their descendants**

The three verbs, “confirm,” “prescribe,” and “decree,” are all from the same Hebrew word. The word means “to stand,” and thus it signifies “fixing,” or “establishing.” The letters of Mordecai confirmed what was prescribed by both himself and Esther concerning the days of Purim – when it should be held, how it should be observed, and so on.

31 (con't) **concerning matters of their fasting and lamenting.**

These words completely dumbfound scholars. First, the word fasting is plural. It should say, “fastings.” Some claim the words are a later insertion, some claim they are speaking of fasting and mourning on the thirteenth of the month, known as “Esther’s Fast.” Others just ignore any context and ramble on about the state of Esther and Mordecai when they first got the bad *news* about the annihilation of the *Jews*, and how that should be continued on by the Jews in the future.

What is probably correct, is that the “matters of their fastings and lamenting” has nothing at all to do with Purim. Instead, it is speaking of what is noted in Zechariah 7:5 –

“Say to all the people of the land, and to the priests: ‘When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh *months* during those seventy years, did you really fast for Me—for Me?’” Zechariah 7:5

The Jews already had customary times of fastings and lamenting, as during their time of exile. They are not biblically mandated, but were customary times of mourning, just as “Holocaust Remembrance Day” is observed today in Israel. The days of Purim are now being tied in with those times of fastings and lamenting as customs to be observed by the Jews. Unlike those, however, Purim was always to be observed, and by all people.

**\*32 So the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim, and it was written in the book.**

Esther was given authority to confirm the matters of Purim, something pertaining only to the Jews, by a command. After that was accomplished, the details were written *ba’sepher*, or in the book. The question is, “What book?” Some say it is the book of Esther, but that is not a natural way for a Hebrew author to refer to a book he is writing in. Others think it might be a book used as a basis for the book of Esther which has not been preserved. But what is probably correct is that it is speaking of the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Persia and Media. It has already been described this way four times in Esther, and there is no reason to assume that it isn’t the same here.

As a point of note, the *maamar*, or decree, of Esther is the same word as was used concerning King Ahasuerus towards Vashti in verse 1:15. It is a command. This is its third and last use in the Bible. And as a curious finishing note to the verse and the Chapter, Catholic Bibles, such as the Latin Vulgate and the Douay-Rheims, translate this verse in

the most odd manner. They say, “And all things which are contained in the history of this book, which is called Esther.” That is so far from the Hebrew that it had to be intentional.

It may be that because the word *maamar*, or command, is coming from a woman, they intentionally changed the wording so that it could not conflict with later instructions in the Bible about women not having authority over men. If that is the case, as I suspect, that is a terribly stupid reason for changing the word of God.

Deborah was a Judge of Israel; and despite the circumstances, there was one ruling queen, Athaliah, in Jerusalem for a while. She eventually got whacked and things got back on the right path, but the Bible is a record of what occurred, and what was said, regardless of the propriety of the situation. Translations of the Bible need to reflect what is said, not what one desires for it to say.

We now have one chapter, of three verses, left to go. What will come out in that sermon was still yet unknown at my time of typing this sermon. Like Jonah, I hadn't got my mind made up in advance, and I can only present to you what the Lord will reveal as I contemplate what has been presented in these past nine chapters.

For now, what I can tell you, is that I hope you are much better informed on the book than when we started. If nothing else, we have reviewed every verse and every sentence with a view to the hidden Lord who is still clearly evident in its pages. He is, after all, the main Subject of all of Scripture. What we need to do now, and at all times as we read the word, is to think on Him, on His plan of redemption, and on what lies ahead for Israel as a people, and for us as a body, in that plan. With these things in mind, the Lord will continue to open our minds and reveal Himself to us.

As we have seen since Chapter 1, His attention is on what is happening, He is there – directing the events, and what seems clearly hopeless, is actually a chance for the Lord to shine through all the more at the end. Imagine the pain of the those who walked with Christ as they saw Him crucified. The darkness which must have covered their hearts would have been unimaginable. And yet, despite the greatest moment of pitch black they had ever encountered, there shown forth the most resplendent light they could ever have imagined.

This is what we too need to focus on as we hit those black, dark moments in our own lives. Children may be as lost as the prodigal son, marriages may be torn and destroyed, finances may be completely used up, but these things can never cover the light which lies ahead for the redeemed of the Lord. Israel went from sackcloth and ashes to

feasting and joy. So too will we at the end of this difficult road, if we just profess faith in Christ. He's already gone before us to open the doors and prepare the table. Let us follow Him until we pass through and sit down to dine, rejoicing in His marvelous presence for countless ages to come.

**Closing Verse:** *"You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;  
You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness,  
<sup>12</sup> To the end that my glory may sing praise to You and not be silent.  
O Lord my God, I will give thanks to You forever. Psalm 30:11, 12*

**Next Week:** Esther 10:1-3 *Really powerful and famous was this guy...* (The Greatness of Mordecai) (13<sup>th</sup> Esther Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. At times, you might feel as if he has no great design for you in life, but he has brought you to this moment to reveal His glory in and through you. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **The Days of Purim**

But the Jews who were at Shushan  
Assembled together on the thirteenth day  
-----as well as on the fourteenth, after great success  
And on the fifteenth of the month they rested  
And made it a day of feasting and gladness

Therefore the Jews of the villages  
Who dwelt in the unwalled towns celebrated the fourteenth day  
-----whoo hoo! O brother!  
Of the month of Adar with gladness and feasting  
As a holiday, and for sending presents to one another

And Mordecai wrote these things  
And sent letters to all the Jews, near and far  
Who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus  
To establish among them that they should celebrate yearly  
-----the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar

As the days on which the Jews

Had rest from their enemies, hip hip hooray  
As the month which was turned from sorrow to joy for them  
And from mourning to a holiday  
That they should make them days of feasting and joy, for sure  
Of sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor  
So the Jews accepted the custom which they had begun  
As Mordecai had written to them, with this good news  
Because Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite  
The enemy of all the Jews

Had plotted against the Jews to annihilate them  
And had cast Pur (that is, the lot)  
To consume them and destroy them  
But when Esther came before the king  
-----he commanded by letter that this wicked plot...

Which Haman had devised against the Jews  
Should return on his own head  
And that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows  
There they hung, eleven of them dead  
So they called these days Purim, after the name Pur  
Therefore, because of all the words of this letter  
What they had seen concerning this matter  
And what had happened to them; how things turned for the better  
The Jews established and imposed it  
Upon themselves and their descendants far and near  
And all who would join them  
That without fail they should celebrate these two days every year  
According to the written instructions  
And according to the prescribed time, with happy elation  
That these days should be remembered  
And kept throughout every generation

Every family, every province, and every city  
That these days of Purim should not fail  
-----to be observed among the Jews  
And that the memory of them should not perish  
Among their descendants, but should be kept alive this happy news

Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail  
With Mordecai the Jew  
Wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim  
This thing he did do

And Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews  
To the provinces one hundred and twenty-seven  
Of the kingdom of Ahasuerus  
With words of peace and truth, words without leaven

To confirm these days of Purim at their appointed time  
As Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther for them had prescribed  
And as they had decreed for themselves and their descendants  
Concerning matters of their fasting and lamenting  
-----as they had described

So the decree of Esther these matters of Purim confirmed  
And it was written in the book; thus it was affirmed

Lord God, thank You for Your presence that is with us  
Even when we don't realize that You are there  
Because You sent Your own Son Jesus  
We can know that You truly do care

And so Lord, be real to us in a wonderful new way  
Open our minds and our hearts to seeing You always  
Through every step we take, and throughout every day  
Be real to us, O God, and to You will shall give all of our praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

## ESTHER 10:1-3 (THE GREATNESS OF MORDECAI)

*\*To watch the video of this study, select from the following: [YouTube](#) or [Sermon Audio](#)*

Esther, like Ruth or Jonah, is a book which records events that really occurred. Like Ruth, it is one of the historical writings, but like Jonah, and even Ruth, it is also a book which prophetically looks forward, while also being given in types and shadows of other things. But Esther doesn't just look forward, it also looks back on history and, through the real events that it records, it gives us a snapshot of all of redemptive history, but most especially in how it deals with the Jews.

To insert the church into Esther would be to mischaracterize the symbolism of what we are being shown. It is true that the church is included in one of the seven dispensations of time, but the church deals with both Jew and Gentile. Rather than focus on the Gentiles during the dispensation of Grace, Esther looks at how Jews, as a people, have responded to that period.

There are enemies, and then there are enemies. Can we not say that a state of enmity exists between Christ and the unbelieving Jewish people of today? Of course we can! If we deny this, we are naive in how we view Scripture. And yet, there are those out there who are completely foolhardy in this regard. They claim that the Jews are saved through their adherence to the Law of Moses. This is known as dual-covenant theology. It is heretical and it is dangerous. And more, it is specifically refuted by an understanding of what the Book of Esther is showing us. Paul is very clear when he speaks of the enemies of the cross of Christ, including all – Jew and Gentile – who have rejected His work.

Death is an enemy. But death is merely the result of sin. Therefore, sin is an enemy. But sin is the result of disobedience to law. The book of Leviticus, speaking of the law, says that the man who does the things of the law will live. However, nobody but God can do the things of the law. If we could, we wouldn't need Jesus! Thus, the law – though it is good – actually acts as an enemy to us because of our sin nature. And the law exists. Just as the law in the Garden of Eden was given and it led to the fall, the Law of Moses does the same. The law exists, and there is nothing that we can do about it. We are defeated as foes of the law... but for Christ Jesus.

**Text Verse:** *“For we will surely die and become like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. Yet God does not take away a life; but He devises means, so that His banished ones are not expelled from Him.” 2 Samuel 14:14*

If the law was all that there was, it would be a futile existence indeed. Especially because the law is God's standard. It is what we must meet in order to be granted that life promised in Leviticus 18. The book of Esther is a type and shadow of what God has done in redemptive history, and it reveals the means devised by God to bring back His banished ones. John Lange caught onto this in a limited way. From his commentary of Esther 9 –

“We would be more just to Esther, to the Jews spoken of in our book, and to the book itself, if, in what was done in Shushan as well as in all Persia, we would see an anticipation of the judgments connected and parallel with the progress of the kingdom of God on earth, and especially of the final judgment. If the animus of the O. T. with respect to the destruction of enemies seems to us terribly vindictive, rather than mild, yet this may not only be excusable, but may even be a prophetic intimation the fact, so prominently and emphatically expressed, in the present instance, that the Jews did not stretch out their hands after the goods (spoil) of their enemies, proves to us that they meant to conduct this contest as a measure of self-protection, or better as a holy war, the sole purpose of which was the removal of their enemies.” John Lange

The removal of their enemies. Well said, John Lange. But just who are the enemies being pictured in this book? And who then is the great enemy, Haman, picturing? And even more, the ten sons of Haman were counted as the enemies of the Jews as well. Other than a list of names, we know nothing more about them than that they were his sons, and that there were ten of them. And yet, Esther felt it necessary that they be hung for all to see *after* they had been killed. And more, the Lord specifically included these details in His word. Why? Who is the great enemy of the Jews today?

Esther, even without the answers to these questions, has been a marvelous adventure. But the questions beg for us to answer them, and so we will. I pray that what is presented to you today is wholly in accord with His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. The Exaltation of Mordecai (verse 1-3)**

**<sup>1</sup> And King Ahasuerus imposed tribute on the land and *on* the islands of the sea.**

The narrative now jumps suddenly from the accounts of what occurred on Purim, and how the celebration was mandated, to a statement concerning the imposition of tribute on the land by King Ahasuerus. It seems entirely out of place stating the words of this

verse now. It is as if it is haphazardly tossed in here without any anchoring in the narrative.

In fact, Jamieson-Fausset-Brown finds it perplexing enough to state that Chapter 10 is simply an appendix to the history already presented, and that it has been improperly separated from the preceding chapter. But such is not the case. Though connected to what has been presented, it is also a completely different thought that has its own unique purpose and design.

The word used, *mas*, or tribute, is elsewhere consistently translated as “forced labor.” Thus, it is assumed that this forced labor equates to the levying of a tribute upon the lands under the authority of the empire. For the Persian empire, the islands mentioned would be those which are found in the Aegean Sea. The reason for the tribute is unstated, but because it follows directly after the war between the Jews and the nations, it can be assumed that the war was actually so great that the empire required the tribute in order to rebuild, repair, and redirect. Thus a tribute was levied in order to overcome the effects of the war that occurred.

It appears that Ahasuerus is the main subject of the verse, but in showing that he had such great power and authority to impose such a massive tribute upon the realm, it then demonstrates that his chosen royal vizier, Mordecai, had risen to a position of complete authority and greatness in all of the realm. In other words, though Ahasuerus is the subject of the verse itself, it is actually a statement concerning the greatness of Mordecai. This is notably revealed in the next words...

## **<sup>2</sup> Now all the acts of his power and his might,**

These words confirm that the true subject of verse 1 is Mordecai. First, it says, “the acts of his power.” The word *toqeph*, or power, was first seen in the Bible in verse 9:29 which said “Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim.” The authority of Ahasuerus is implicitly also the authority of Mordecai. He bears the royal signet and thus he possesses the power. This is then revealed in the next words...

## **<sup>2 (con't)</sup> and the account of the greatness of Mordecai,**

Here we have the second and final use of the word *parashah*, or account, in the Bible. It signifies an exposition or declaration. Nowadays, it refers to a section of a biblical book, somewhat like our chapter divisions in the Bible. The *parashah* forms the basis for

reading of Scripture in Jewish synagogues. The greatness of Mordecai is especially noted in conjunction with the acts of power and might which stem from the king himself. Thus, one can see that the focus is on him, and it is he who wields the authority because he fills the position...

<sup>2</sup> (con't) **to which the king advanced him,**

In these words, there is the idea that in exalting Mordecai, the king himself is also exalted. One is not robbing the other of glory, but he complements the king because of his own greatness. It is therefore appropriate that as the record of the king is recorded, the record of the king's right hand man would also be so recorded...

<sup>2</sup> (con't) **are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia?**

The book of the chronicles of the kings is said to not only contain the record of King Ahasuerus, but it also chronicles the deeds of Mordecai, relaying that he also possessed kingly power. Although he is positionally second, he bears the dignity and authority that stems from the kingly throne. It is the logical conclusion to the statement that he is recorded in these writings.

Here, the empire is noted for the first time in Esther as "Media and Persia" rather than "Persia and Media." Media is named from Madai, the son of Japheth. The word is associated with *madad*, or measure. Thus, Media would signify "Measure." Persia, without all of the lengthy details, would signify "Division(s)."

As Chapter 10 is such a short one, Sergio ran an acrostics search. He noted that verse 2 forms an interesting sentence, which is derived from forward and backward acrostics formed from the first letters. The words say, *Humtu v'tamu. v'gam gihah akas keheh. Ad hadas hilam v'milah* – "They were killed and destroyed, and also the dark\* anger was cured, until Myrtle and the Word is here." It doesn't seem to make sense, but it is actually a beautiful thought. The acrostic is an amazing parallel to the account itself, especially what it is picturing. Now in understanding that Mordecai bears full authority as is recorded in these chronicles, the book of Esther closes out with words of *shalom*; words of peace...

<sup>3</sup> **For Mordecai the Jew**

There is an immediate stress on the fact that Mordecai is a Jew. He is not a Mede or a Persian, but a Jew, who has been exalted in the realm. He didn't convert from his Jewishness in order to accept the appointment, instead, he remained a Jew. It is he who...

<sup>3 (con't)</sup> **was second to King Ahasuerus,**

The closing of the narrative shows that a Jew holds the position second to the king alone. This means that Mordecai held a representative position among his people. And not only was he in this exalted position, but his people remained, despite having faced complete annihilation. It is he who rescued them, and it is he who then was exalted in their eyes. As it says...

<sup>3 (con't)</sup> **and was great among the Jews and well received by the multitude of his brethren,**

Though Mordecai was at one time just considered another Jew, and one who was actually kept in obscurity in his relation to Esther, he eventually was realized for his greatness, and he became great among his own people. They openly received him as being great among them. He had always been in Shushan, the Lily, but he remained obscure among the Jews until the time that he was needed to rescue them. The hidden Lord then acted, revealing His plan in the calling of Mordecai to his time of recognition among his people. From that point on, he was...

<sup>\*3 (fin)</sup> **seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his countrymen.**

The Hebrew literally reads, "seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his seed." The two thoughts are placed in parallel though, and so seed isn't speaking of his posterity, but his countrymen, as if sons. Closing out the book, are two acrostics. First, in the beginning of the verse there is an acrostic that forms the word *male*, full or completeness. Then, there is another acrostic with the words, *kamah mehem*. It is a question followed by an answer, "How many of them?" The answer is "Completely."

Secondly, the next acrostic in order says, *b'shuvi shlomii*, or "In my return is peace." Considering the surrounding text, it is a rather remarkable acrostic which matches the intent of what is said in the verse itself. In fact, Sergio never read the verses. He just searched for the acrostics and then laid them out. When I told him how precisely they match the surrounding verses which speak of peace to Mordecai's countrymen, he was

astonished. Finally, many of the acrostic words in this verse form the same concept backward and forward. A theme is repeating as a stress to the story itself.

Now, with all of the book analyzed, the obvious question is, “Is there anything beyond the surface story that the Lord is telling us?” Esther is the last book of the Old Testament historical writings. Therefore, it would make sense that what is recorded here would parallel the final historical account of Scripture itself. It is with that thought in mind, that we will all-too-briefly review the book of Esther from a pictorial perspective of history itself.

*Exalted to the right hand of God!  
All power and authority to act in His name  
In every nation; everywhere that man does tread  
His power is unlimited, as is His glory and fame*

*To the ends of the earth, and to the islands of the sea  
Throughout all places His power and authority are known  
His mighty deeds are recorded, O so carefully  
So that of them, to all peoples they may be shown*

*He is good to His people, and to them He speaks words of peace  
And in Him, His people shall forever delight  
His greatness is eternal, never shall it cease  
For the ages of ages, in Him we shall delight*

## **II. Dispensations**

**Read Galatians 4:21-31.** In Galatians 4, Paul says the two wives of Abraham are symbolic of the two covenants. Esther follows this same remarkable symbolism, showing it from another angle.

The book of Esther began with a statement concerning the reign of Ahasuerus over the entire realm of the empire. It then ended with a statement concerning the king imposing tribute on all the land and islands of the sea. But it includes the addition of the greatness of Mordecai. During the story, however, there was a time when the enemy of the Jews held that same position. From this, we can then see a history of the world itself; the dispensations of time in which the Bible is divided, and which detail the plan of redemption, brought about through a particular group of people, and a particular Individual, chosen to deliver them and be exalted among them.

The book begins with the king, in *Shushan*, or Lily. The Lily signifies great beauty and splendor. It is a favorite in the Song of Solomon, being used eight times there. It is equated to magnificent glory by Jesus in Luke 12:27 –

“Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”

And this is how Shushan is described right in Chapter 1. The details of the palace were magnificent. It was a place of joy and feasting, beauty and royal splendor. There was harmony, just as in the Garden of Eden. It is the dispensation of **(1) Innocence**. But then there arose a problem. The king sent his seven servants to bring his bride before the people. She disobeyed his orders. It is a picture of the fall of man. Vashti pictures the *state of disobedience* leading to the fall. If you remember, it was conjectured, rightly, that the king had asked Vashti to come with her crown, but nothing else was mentioned. Thus she was naked; a picture of a sinless state. However, she hid herself from the king. It is reminiscent of Adam and his wife hiding in the garden from the Lord.

Man was made lower than the angels, and he was crowned with glory and honor, but that crown was removed, and he was expelled from the presence of the Lord. Thus we see that Ahasuerus pictures the divine throne of God in Shusan, Paradise. Vashti signifies disobedience, and a loss of access to that throne. It was not merely an offense against the king, but against the throne. The same is true with the fall of man. It was an offense against the ruling power of God. It thus resulted in the fall of man and his expulsion from the Lord’s presence. At the fall, man was given authority over the woman in Genesis 3:16. This is repeated in Esther 1:22, where it said “that each man should be master in his own house.” It is the dispensation of **(2) Conscience**.

After this came a new law to correct the situation which occurred with Vashti. A search would be made for a new queen to replace her. This is the dispensation of **(3) Government**. It is a time when man would be found in many people groups, but in which a select line would be chosen out of them for the king’s delight. Each people group is represented by the gathering of the virgins, but only one will be selected. It is thus an anticipation of the dispensation of Promise, and which is realized in the selection of Esther.

If you remember, the virgins were brought forth, one at a time after being carefully evaluated and readied for their time before the king. There it said, that each virgin “was given whatever she desired to take with her from the women’s quarters to the king’s palace.” When Esther’s time came to go before the king, it said of her that “she

requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised."

Hegai represents the Spirit of the Lord, directing the events, choosing the right person for the Promise, and relaying what is pleasing to God. Esther was chosen by him, he tended to her until she was ready for her meeting, and he recommended what she should take before the king. However, she was given the choice.

She could have taken whatever she desired, but her desire was to take what Hegai knew would please the king. It is a picture of free will being exercised in accord with God's will, and thus it is a picture of salvation by grace through faith. The grace was given to Esther through her unmerited selection. The faith was Esther's willingness to trust not in her own self, but in Hegai's words. And this led to her selection as queen.

It is the call of Abraham; the dispensation of **(4) Promise**. Thus, whereas Vashti signifies disobedience and a loss of access to the throne, Esther signifies faithful obedience and access to the throne. Said otherwise, she represents the beauty of the Gospel. Hence, *emunah* in Hebrew, or *pistis* in Greek – both meaning "Faith" – are feminine nouns, represented by Esther.

In the next chapter, Haman comes flooding into the story. He is the enemy of the Jews. Everything about him shows him to be such. He is the son of Hammedatha, or "The son of the one who works in darkness." He is also an Amalekite, an ancient enemy of the people of God. They are the "The People Who Wring Off." They are those who are disconnected from the body and strive to disconnect the body. It is a fitting description of Haman and his coming actions. In the Exodus 17 sermon, we learned that the Amalekites represent false teachers, heretics, and other unregenerate people who are constantly attacking the weakest of the flock. Amalek is the natural man that Paul writes about in 1 Corinthians 2 –

"These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. <sup>14</sup> But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned."

1 Corinthians 2:13, 14

One must wonder how he fits in then. There is Esther, representing access to the throne by Grace through Faith, and yet Haman obtained access to the throne, even the king's

signet-authority. What is he picturing? He is the dispensation of **(5) Law**, specifically its effect, which is a curse. As Paul says –

For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” <sup>11</sup> Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith.” Galatians 3:10

We will just call him Law from here on. It is he who passed the law which would lead to the destruction of the Jews. In the edict, he offered to pay the price of their lives with silver. As I said then of Esther and Haman, one has found the favor of the king’s heart, and the other has found the favor of his throne. But we know that the law was given by God. How can that be contrary to the people of God? The answer is most especially found in Paul’s letter to the Romans, though he speaks about it throughout his letters. From Romans 7:7-11, we read –

“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “You shall not covet.” <sup>8</sup> But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. <sup>9</sup> I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. <sup>10</sup> And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. <sup>11</sup> For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.”

Death comes through the law. Instead of accepting Haman’s silver, the king said to him, “The money (*keseeph*/silver) and the people *are* given to you, do with them as seems good to you.” In the Bible, silver pictures redemption. Through the law would come redemption, but not in the way expected! The approval of the law was filled with seemingly surplus words – destroy, kill, annihilate; and young and old, little children, and women.

The cruel passion of the overuse of words was to ensure that complete destruction of all Jews, without exception, is the ultimate goal and expectation. Law leads to death for all. The people of Israel were given the law, and the law set about to bring death – exactly as the account in Esther shows, and exactly as Paul explains it in Romans.

It appears that Haman, Law, would prevail. But it must be remembered that justification by grace through faith – the Gospel – came before the law, just as Esther was introduced before Haman. The importance of this will be explained later.

With the coming of Haman, *pur*, or lots, were cast, and a date for the destruction of the Jews was set. The law was written, and it could not be revoked (or pass away). Though it seemed out of control, the unseen Lord's guiding hand was still evident in Esther just as it has been evident in history. The law was not a mistake, but a lesson, a guide, and a tutor. We must remember that access to the throne was already granted to Esther, but it was not through law; it was by grace through faith. The law also provides access to the throne, but in a completely different way – total obedience; something we are incapable of.

What this means for now though is that Law, represented by Haman, is actually *the enemy* of the Jews. The very thing they trust in, is the very thing that is set to bring about their destruction. Ask any observant Jew if they believe this, and you will be called a lot more than just a heretic. And yet, this is what the Bible teaches, most specifically in the New Testament. However, it is even seen interspersed throughout the Old Testament as well. From Abraham, to David, to Isaiah, to Habakkuk, it is the constant, and yet wholly ignored, theme presented to Israel.

While considering the story thus far, what has been the status of Mordecai? Oh yes, Mordecai! We have overlooked that guy. His status? He has remained relatively out of the picture. He is in Shushan, or Lily. He raised Esther as his own daughter. Remember that she pictures restored access to the throne by grace through faith; the beauty of the Gospel.

He also sat within the king's gate, and he charged Esther to not reveal her family or her people. That itself represents God's dispensational plan of redemption. Though the pattern is set in Abraham, the dispensation of Promise, that stays concealed so that the dispensation of Law may be worked through. It is, as Paul relays in Galatians, a necessary step intended to lead man to Grace.

In the Bible, the *sha'ar*, or gate, is the place of judgment – where legal matters are resolved. So here is Mordecai, a Jew, sitting in the place of judgment, in Shushan. And now, we need to remember why Haman decided to kill the Jews. It is because of Mordecai. His hatred of Mordecai led him to want to kill all the Jews. If Mordecai represents Christ, and he does, then why would Haman, who represents Law, hate him?

It is because Christ is, as Paul says, “the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”

If Law prevails, the people would continue to die because by the law is the knowledge of sin, and the wages of sin is death. Thus the devil would retain his authority over the world. Christ knew this, and so He came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. In His fulfillment of it, the law would be rendered powerless. This is why Christ didn't dispute the devil's claim that the whole world was his and he could give it to any he chose. Through Law over fallen man, this was a true statement. In destroying the Jews, the promise of God to the patriarchs would fail.

The timing of the events of Chapter 3 are important to understand. Mordecai would not bow to Haman *before* Haman got the signet. Thus, in picture, his actions were not *disobedience* to Law, but *obedience* to Promise. The ancient enmity between man and Law goes all the way back to Eden. Paul explains it in Romans 7:9 with the words, “I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.”

Here we can remember what was said in Chapter 3 concerning the date of the casting of lots by Haman, the 13<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, the day before Passover. It was at this same time, almost 500 years later, that the Jews who prided themselves *in the law*, conspired together to destroy, Christ Jesus. As we saw, the number thirteen is the number connected to rebellion, apostasy, defection, corruption, disintegration, revolution, or some kindred idea. The law is an entity, not a person. But that entity is contrary to what has already been established in another entity, the Gospel of grace through faith, already seen in Abraham, and pictured by Esther.

At the end of Chapter 3, it was seen that the king (the throne) and Haman (Law) sat down to drink. Law, pictured by Haman, is seemingly now the way to access the throne. And that access is denied to all who are bound under it. With that, Chapter 4 immediately opened with Mordecai tearing his clothes and putting on sackcloth and ashes. With the law in place, Christ's destiny was sealed. Only through death could there be life. As Isaiah says –

“He is despised and rejected by men,  
A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.  
And we hid, as it were, *our* faces from Him;  
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.” Isaiah 53:3

It is an apt enough description for us of Mordecai at this point. Right at the beginning of Chapter 4, we read that “When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city. He cried out with a loud and bitter cry.” At that time, we were shown a very specific parallel between Mordecai and Esau.

In the Genesis sermons, Esau pictured fallen Adam. Jesus took on the nature of man, his humanity. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul calls Him the second Adam. This then is the time of Jesus’ incarnation. He thus is representative of Israel, having lost their blessing, and who is now facing a curse. Christ came from Israel, revealing His humanity and that He is a Jew, under Law.

From there, Esther (the Gospel) wants to know what is the distress concerning Mordecai (Christ). So she sent Hathach to find out what was troubling him. Mordecai in turn explains what has transpired, including the decree of Haman, meaning death through the law. He notes the *parashah*, or exact amount of money that was offered for the destruction of the Jews.

As I said, the word *parashah* refers to a section of a biblical book, somewhat like our chapter divisions in the Bible. The *parashah* forms the basis for reading of Scripture in Jewish synagogues. It is *the law* as read by the Jews to this day, which bring them anticipated death. By law is the knowledge of sin, and the wages of sin is death. The law does not bring life; it brings death. But Mordecai went on, appealing for Esther to go before the king to petition for her people. Esther then responds that she has not been summoned by the king for an extended period of thirty days, and that to approach the king without being summoned would mean death. Was the Gospel given during the time of Promise still sufficient to bring her access to the throne? At that time, it said, “So they told Mordecai Esther’s words.”

Up until that point, everything was singular. All of a sudden, in verse 12, it changed to the plural. The plural, “they,” is speaking of anyone who had thus far believed God’s promises of faith in the Messiah. Messiah had been promised, and there is now a questioning of the Gospel of Grace by Faith. Had it failed? Would Law prevail? But rather than being an inopportune time, it was the perfect time – thirty days. The number thirty signifies “a higher degree the perfection of Divine order, as marking the right moment” (EW Bullinger). The chain of events had reached a time where a new direction should be sought.

And so Mordecai, picturing Christ, instructs that it is the perfect time to rely on the Gospel, and not be destroyed by Law. A marvelous change could be expected. It is at this time that Esther approaches the king without being summoned. Would she receive grace? The words testify to the fact – *naseah khen b’enav*, “she obtained grace in his eyes.” Yes! “The just shall live by faith.” And this was *while Law was still the law*.

In this, the offer of the king is made, “What do you wish, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given to you—up to half the kingdom!” Her only request, a banquet with the king (the throne) and Haman (Law). And that led to the petition for another banquet on the following day. But on that same day, the plot to hang Mordecai was also made. Haman’s hatred of Mordecai is seen in the Jews of Jesus’ time concerning Christ Himself. They wanted Him destroyed and so they plotted against Him. They trusted their deeds under the law rather than what the law pointed to – Christ. This is what Paul wrote about in Romans 2. A person “is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; <sup>29</sup> but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God.” The Gospel of grace through faith in Messiah was concealed in the Old Testament, just as Mordecai instructed Esther to conceal her identity. Now that time was ended.

And so, on the same night, the king’s attention is directed to one whom he has decided to now honor. The time for the long overdue acknowledgment of approval has arrived. Calling in Haman (Law), he asks “What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?” Obviously, those under law feel they have earned the right to the king’s favor, and so Haman thinks up the most outlandish and ostentatious display he can think of to herald his victory.

But then... it is Christ who is to be honored, not Law! And so what happens... it is he, Law, who lays the kingly attire on Mordecai (Christ), just as the kingly attire was placed on Christ in the gospels. Law actually adorns Christ for who He is!

Haman then leads Mordecai on a horse shouting aloud “Thus shall it be done to the man to whom the king delights to honor!” Paul says specifically that “the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” In picture, Haman, leading Mordecai around on the horse and yelling out his proclamation, is doing *exactly* that. Law is acting as a schoolmaster to the people that the king delights to honor grace through faith in Christ, not Law, because Christ is the fulfillment of the Law and the end of the law for righteousness for all who believe. It is by faith in Him, not in our deeds, that God delights. And to make that point perfectly obvious, Haman is then horrified,

covering his face and rushing home where his wife and friends tell him that “If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish descent, you will not prevail against him but will surely fall before him.” Messiah has come. The Savior of Israel has made Himself manifest. The dispensation of Law is near its end.

Chapter 7 opens with the second banquet of Esther. It is when she petitions for her people, the Jews. They are under Law, and they are destined for annihilation. When the king finds that it is Haman (Law) that has set them for destruction, His wrath was raised. It is a picture of the wrath of God at sin. Paul says in Romans 4:15 that “the law brings about wrath,” and so there is only one way to remove the wrath, and that is through the death of Law. But the law is written, and it cannot pass away. However, its effects can. Again, Christ said, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17).

Through Christ’s fulfillment of Law, man can die to Law. With that, the king is told of a gallows made for Mordecai. His response: “Hang him on it.” With that, it says, “So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king’s wrath subsided.” In the death of Jesus came the death of the Law for all who believe in Him. But you ask, “How can you equate Haman’s death with Christ? That doesn’t make any sense!” Well, it doesn’t if your stuck under Law, and can’t see beyond your own good efforts in an attempt to please God. But when you pull out your New Testament theological instruction manual, you find –

“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, <sup>14</sup> having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”  
Colossians 2:13, 14

Haman pictures Law, but Christ actually died. It was Christ who was nailed to the cross, and so in type and picture, Christ became our Haman, our Man under Law, if you will. It is no different at all than Christ equating Himself with the serpent on the pole in John 3:14, or Paul saying that God made Him who knew no sin *to be sin* for us. In the death of His body, the law died with Him for all who believe. For all who don’t, Law, and thus the enmity, remains.

This is where the marvelous symbolism of a very misunderstood passage in the book of John is explained. It says in John 20, “Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying *there*, <sup>7</sup> and the handkerchief that had

been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself.”

Many fanciful explanations have been made up about this, but the truth is revealed in what happened to Haman, when he was taken to be executed... they covered his face. The Law was to die. Christ died in fulfillment of the law. When He arose, the face covering was removed, and carefully folded. It was an intentional act of the Lord showing that the shame of death through Law had been removed for those who trust in Him.

The people of Israel, the Jews, even to this day, celebrate Purim, and yet they are celebrating the *exact opposite* of what they think they are celebrating. They curse Haman, stamp their feet, and howl wildly as his name is read, and yet, he simply pictures Law that they are still under. Until they come to Christ, Haman will continue to come after them to destroy, to be killed, and to be annihilated because of the ministry of death, meaning Law (2 Corinthians 3:7). Why do the Jews celebrate Purim? It is because of what *pur* signifies. It is a lot, a broken piece, and thus *Purim*, the plural of *pur*, signifies broken pieces. *Pur* means “to break,” “frustrate,” “make ineffectual,” “annul,” “bring to naught.” This is what Christ has done concerning our covenant with death according to Paul –

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup> For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,  
And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”

<sup>20</sup> Where *is* the wise? Where *is* the scribe? Where *is* the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? <sup>21</sup> For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup> For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; <sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, <sup>24</sup> but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup> Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

The Jews cling to the law, but it is Christ who has defeated that enemy. The law is annulled in Christ. This is the message of Purim.

At the opening of Chapter 8, the first verse says, “On that day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews.” The Gospel has prevailed and has received everything that Law possessed. This is certain because no definite article was placed in front of the word “house.” Instead, it said, *beit haman*, or “house of Haman.” It is comparable to speaking of the house of David, meaning not just a physical house, but everything associated with David. What belonged to Haman (Law), all which made him who he was, transferred to Esther (Gospel).

It is at this time, that the King took off His signet and gave it to Mordecai. Gospel has replaced Law; Christ has been exalted over the house of Law. But immediately Esther falls at the king’s feet mourning in tears for her people. It is at this time in the story that the dispensation of (6) Grace finds its true entrance. For a second time, the golden scepter was held out to her. The Gospel is evidenced at anytime, but it was only fully realized for us after the fulfillment of Law. The Promise to Abraham leads to the Grace through Faith in the finished work of Christ Jesus. The law cannot annul what had already been determined by God, As Paul says in Galatians –

“And this I say, *that* the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect.” Galatians 3:17

Paul refers to the promise of Abraham as a “covenant.” He then says that the law cannot make it void. Likewise, the new covenant in Christ does not void the old covenant through Moses, but our death in Christ gives us a new life. In this, we are dead to Law and freed from it, and yet we are alive in the new covenant of Grace. Believe it or not, this is all seen right here in Esther. No law of God can be revoked, it must stand, including the Law of Moses, but He declares through the Gospel that the law is no longer in effect for all who are in Christ.

However, the law still has power over all who do not believe. The Jews are not out of hot water yet. They are sold to destruction by Law, even if Law is defeated. The date of their destruction is set, and it cannot be revoked. But Esther (Gospel) petitions the king for her people. There must be a way to save them. And so the King instructs Esther and Mordecai to use their signet authority. This is the reason for including the tribe from which Mordecai was from, Benjamin. It pictures what occurred. Benjamin was first named Ben-Oni, and then Benjamin. The Son of Suffering had become the Son of the Right hand. The signet of authority is His. And so He will use that authority in a remarkable way.

As I noted in Chapter 8, the word, *tabaath*, or signet was first used in Genesis 41:42 concerning the signet ring of Pharaoh. That was taken from his hand and granted to Joseph. It pictured the authority of Christ. After that, the same word was used to describe the rings for carrying the Ark of the Testimony in Exodus 25, which pictured the four gospels that reveal Christ. They are the link between the Old and New Testaments which speak of the coming Christ and the Christ who has come. They reveal His authority. The power and authority is found in the *tabaath*, or ring. Something Mordecai, picturing Christ, then uses.

The word issued by Haman (Law) is irrevocable. In this case it is a word which brings death. And yet, another word can be issued which will grant life. The king would not allow one word of reversal of the former command, but yet its power could be annulled *through a new command*.

The signet is the granting of all power and authority to Christ. The law is set, but He can still act without revoking the law. Though it is the dispensation of Grace, the focus is solely on the Jews, and Chapter 8 goes directly from the time of Christ's first advent, to the tribulation period. The whole world, pictured by the Persian Empire, is set to destroy the Jews, but the Jews are now granted authority to defend themselves. It is a physical battle in Esther, but it as much pictures a spiritual one. The edict is issued is from Mordecai (Christ), and Esther (the Gospel), it is the New Covenant.

At the end of Chapter 8, Mordecai went out in royal apparel of blue and white, with a great crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple. The colors are reminiscent of those used in the tabernacle. They signify the exaltation of Christ, the embodiment of the law, His righteousness, His deity, His purity, and His royalty granted because of His sacrifice.

The Jews of today are at enmity with Christ. They are under Law, and the time of their destruction has been decided. But in the Bible, the final books after Paul's letters are directed to them, not to the Gentiles. Hebrews, James, and Peter specifically, and John and Jude to some extent. And then there is Revelation. Chapters 1-3 are written to the church, but verses 4:2-19:10 are written to the Jews of the end times.

The physical destruction which is coming against Israel is a given, but the spiritual revitalization of them in coming to Christ is also. The Jews will prevail over their enemies, but the highlight of the narrative focuses on a very particular group within Sushan – five hundred the first day, three hundred the second day, and the ten sons of Haman. The larger numbers were explained in Chapter 9, but what was the point of

mentioning the death of the ten sons of Haman, and then their being hanged after they were dead?

The answer is exactly the same of that of hanging Haman. The ten sons of Haman are what issue from the giving of the law, the Ten Commandments. It is Esther, the Gospel, who says to hang the ten sons of Haman. It is the Gospel of Christ which demands our allegiance to Him as the fulfillment of the law, not to the law itself. Hanging Haman left the sons untouched for the Jews. While the church pursued Christ, the Jews pursued Law.

Despite issuing from the law, the Ten Commandments are the basis of it. As long as Law is the goal, and not Christ's fulfillment of it, a spiritual battle will always exist. Israel today, whether observant or secular, finds its foundation in the law, summed up by the Ten Commandments. Until they find their true foundation in Christ, the fulfillment of this law, they will remain at enmity with God. The Ten Commandments sum up the Law; Christ embodies the law. It is Christ who died on the cross, and yet Paul said that it is the law, meaning Christ's fulfillment of it, which is nailed to the cross.

People try so hard to find a distinction between a moral law and a civil law in the Law of Moses. The Bible never makes this distinction. One is either under law and under sentence, or they are in Christ, under grace, and free from condemnation. Those are the only two choices the Bible gives. Chapter 9, symbolizing the Tribulation period, is given to lead the Jews to this understanding. Until they come to that realization, tough times lay ahead for them. But that time will end. The new law which is written is that which was prophesied in Jeremiah 31. A New Covenant was promised to the house of Israel and the house of Judah, but it only comes into effect for them when they, as a national group, accept it.

If you take the last paragraph of Chapter 9, and simply think of what each person is picturing, it opens up the passage. When you read Esther, think of the Gospel. When you read Abihail, think of Possessor of Might, When you read Mordecai, think of Christ Jesus. The kingdom of Ahasuerus is the world, the second letter is the New Testament. In fact, what is the almost-constant greeting in the New Testament epistles? Well what does it say in Esther 9? "And Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews, to the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, with words of peace and truth."

The one hundred and twenty-seven provinces picture the world. The New Testament epistles have gone out to the entire world, and they almost always begin with the word "peace," and they always speak of Christ, who is the Truth. It is that word in Hebrew,

*emeth*, or Truth, that we carefully analyzed in the last sermon. It is used 127 times in Scripture, just as there are 127 provinces. The Truth of Christ has gone out to the whole world – He is God; He did go to the cross, and He did shed His blood; He was, He is, He will be. All of this leads to what lies ahead for the Jews as a people, the (7) Millennial Reign of Christ, Chapter 10 of Esther.

King Ahasuerus pictures God, the ruler of the world, the greatness of Mordecai is the greatness of Christ Jesus, the second Member of the Godhead. It is the greatness of Mordecai which is highlighted in verse 2. He was advanced to his position of authority which was then recorded in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia. There in verse 10:2 is the second and last use of the word *parashah* in the Bible. Someday, the Jews will no longer look to the Law for their readings, but to – as it says – the “account of the greatness of Mordecai,” meaning the glory of Christ.

As I noted, it is the first time they are called “Media and Persia” rather than “Persia and Media.” And that is in conjunction with the words, “the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia.” As we saw, Media is associated with the word *madad*, or measure. Persia signifies “Division(s).” Where there were divisions and then the measure, there is now the measure and then divisions. There is a harmony which has been realized which was previously *lacking*. Thus the name is stated this way to show this. It is a picture of the Bible, God’s measure (canon), followed by its divisions – Testaments, books, chapters, and verses.

In that verse are found the words forming the acrostic, “They were killed and destroyed, and also the dark anger was cured, until Myrtle and the Word is here.” It shows the power of the law which exists until the wrath is appeased in Christ. What is really impressive is that that words include the *hadas*, or myrtle. This is because it is where the name Hadassah, Esther’s Hebrew name, is derived from. Isaiah references the myrtle twice (41:19 and 55:13). In these references Old Dominion University notes that they then concern “the divine establishment of the people in the land in subjection to Jehovah.” They then note that “As an evergreen, fragrant shrub associated with watercourses, the myrtle is a fitting symbol of the recovery and establishment of God's promises.”

Imagine that! “...the divine establishment of the people in the land in subjection to Jehovah.” That is exactly what has been anticipated since their inception as a people. They have cast off His rule since the beginning, but the time is coming when they, the Jews, will be subject to Him, because of Christ.

The *hadas*, or myrtle, is associated with watercourses. Just as there were watercourse running through Eden, there will be that again in the Millennium. Read Ezekiel 47 to brush up on that. The description of the myrtle could not be more perfect – a “symbol of the recovery and establishment of God’s promises.”

What is even more unusual is that the myrtle is never mentioned until the first captivity of the Jews, but then it is specifically said to be used in the building of the tabernacles in Nehemiah 8:15, even though this was not stated in Leviticus at the giving of the law. Thus, the myrtle is again seen to be a picture of restoration. Understanding this, it is to be noted that the only Feast of the Lord mandated for the time of the Millennium is the Feast of Tabernacles. It makes it all the more amazing that the myrtle is here mentioned in this acrostic.

Finally, the acrostic finishes with, “and the Word is here.” The Word of God (Christ) will be there, ruling among His people, symbolized by Mordecai who bears the authority of the king. And then that is topped off with the final acrostics of verse 3. The secret question is, “How many of them?” The answer is “Completely.” This is referring to all who enter the Millennium. All of them will be believers in Christ.

Secondly, the last acrostic in order says, *b’shuvi shlomii*, or “In My return is peace.” In His first coming, peace is offered, but it was not yet realized for Israel. However, in His return, there will be peace. Isaiah prophesied of it –

“Of the increase of *His* government and peace  
There will be no end,  
Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,  
To order it and establish it with judgment and justice  
From that time forward, even forever.  
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.” Isaiah 9:7

This is what is pictured in this final passage of Esther. It is an amazing journey that Israel has been on, and it will soon come to its fulfillment. The Lord has regathered this particular group of people back into their land, and there they shall face their enemies, both physical and spiritual. When they realize what they have missed for so long, they will openly mourn over the path they had chosen. But when the time of mourning is past, they will rejoice in their deliverance, and they will celebrate in a way that they have never celebrated before.

The years of trouble, the seemingly never-ending death sentence, and also the times of pride and boasting in their own accomplishments will be behind them. They will find that for those redeemed by Christ, the only boasting to be done is in Him. When they have vanquished their enemies, they won't lay their hands on the plunder. Rather, they will acknowledge that it belongs to the Lord alone. It is His victory, and it is His honor to receive –

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup>that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.  
Philippians 2:9-11

This is the story of man's redemption, from tragic fall to final restoration, it is all about the One who came to make things right again. Esther is a snapshot of this from a time gone by, and yet looking forward to a time of glory which lies ahead. How great is this word which reveals such marvelous things!

**Closing Verse:** *“Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.” Romans 3:31*

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. At times, you might feel as if he has no great design for you in life, but he has brought you to this moment to reveal His glory in and through you. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **The Greatness of Mordecai**

And King Ahasuerus imposed tribute on the land  
And on the islands of the sea; so we understand

Now all the acts of his power and his might  
And the account of the greatness of Mordecai  
-----to which advanced him the king  
Are they not written in the book of the chronicles  
Of the kings of Media and Persia? Don't they speak of this thing?

For Mordecai the Jew was second to King Ahasuerus  
And was great among the Jews

And well received by the multitude of his brethren  
-----seeking the good of his people  
And speaking peace to all his countrymen  
-----sending out the good news

Lord God, thank You for Your presence that is with us  
Even when we don't realize that You are there  
Because You sent Your own Son Jesus  
We can know that You truly do care  
And Lord God, thank you for this wonderful book  
Esther! What a marvel to have studied it  
Into every detail possible we took a look  
And to You our thanks and praise we now submit!

Hallelujah to Christ our Lord!  
Hallelujah for Esther, a marvelous part of Your superior word!

Hallelujah and Amen...