

Esther #2 Ch. 3-4

by Chuck Missler

The book of Esther is a story of God's providence and care for his people, despite their lack of faith and spiritual struggle.

Duration: 56:26

Scripture: Genesis 25:21, Genesis 25:23, Exodus 17:6, 1 Corinthians 10:10-11

Topics: "Esther"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concern for the commitment and agenda of those who seek to wipe out Israel, specifically comparing the PLO to Haman's plan. The speaker then focuses on the crisis faced by Mordecai, a Jew, and his expression of deep grief through mourning. The role of money is highlighted, with its significance mentioned multiple times in the text. Additionally, the speaker suggests that the book of Esther has underlying themes that relate to the readers, drawing parallels to the book of Romans. The sermon also references the story of Moses delivering water from the rock and connects it to lessons from Israel's time in the wilderness as discussed in 1 Corinthians 10.

Transcript

Well, we're continuing our study in the book of Esther. We're in chapters three and four tonight. The book of Esther is one of the neglected books of the Bible.

It's strange because it's a fabulous story. It's one of the most interesting plot lines with twists and irony and so forth. And yet, it turns out to be a rather obscure book spiritually.

And you can't help, when you read the book, you enjoy the book. It's a colorful, interesting story. And yet, you easily can stand back and say, why is that in the Bible? Name of God does not appear in it anywhere.

There's no religious issues and so forth. It's an interesting book, but what does it mean spiritually? And yet, we know, of course, from the scripture, Paul told us that whatsoever things are written aforetime were written for our learning. That we, through the comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.

And so, we're puzzled. And that's one of the challenges we're going to take. We're not going to get into the book a little bit, try to understand it.

But we're going to have our antenna up, so to speak, for some other issues. And the first thing that hits us is the name Esther. The Hebrew name is Hadassah, which means myrtle, like a myrtle tree.

But the name is Esther, which Gesenius, the Hebrew expert, says means something hidden. Something hidden. So right away, you know it's my kind of book, I think.

Because we're going to discover that there's a number of things hidden in the book. We're going to discover, possibly, a whole subterranean meaning of the book. Not that it didn't happen as reported, don't misunderstand me.

But typologically, as a scholar might say, it has some interesting implications. And we also discover, not only that, but in the text itself, we will discover that there are hidden codes. Luther was wrong.

Luther wanted thrown out of the Bible because the name of God didn't even appear in the book. And he was wrong. It occurs about nine times.

Five times as an acrostic, and about four times as an equidistant letter sequence. And we'll deal with that separately when we get downstream here a little bit. There's something else we're going to discover, strangely enough.

And that is that this book is about you and me. It's sort of an Old Testament preview of the Book of Romans, among other things. So let's first of all jump in.

When did this book occur? It occurred in the Persian Empire. You may remember from Daniel, the Babylon fell. In Daniel chapter 5, the Persian Empire took over.

In fact, Daniel rose to power. The predecessor of the king here. This is estimated to occur somewhere between Ezra chapter 5 and 6, in terms of timing.

But basically, the Babylonian Empire fell. The Persian Empire rose to its glory. And this is in the glory days of the Persian Empire.

And it will subsequently get superseded by the Greek Empire, which in turn will be conquered by the Romans. And you know the story. But that's roughly where it is.

The issue, the primary plot issue in the book, is a Hitler-like attack aimed at the extermination of all Jews. Extermination of all Jews. Does that echo Nazi Germany? In a way.

Does it echo the PLO again? In a way. Well, we'll see. The major characters, Ahasuerus, the king, generally viewed by most commentators as Xerxes.

The one that we know in secular history as Xerxes. He's the king. And we have Esther emerge, last time we were together, as a replacement queen.

Vashti was disgraced, and Esther, in effect, rose in her place. She was raised, apparently, a very attractive person. In many ways, not just physically.

And we'll probe into that as we go. But she was raised by her uncle Mordecai. So he's her uncle guardian.

And in this session that we're going to get into tonight, we're going to introduce the other major player. Haman. And in an Orthodox Jewish community, whenever his name is mentioned, they boo and hiss.

Okay. Yeah, thank you, thank you. I appreciate that.

Frank Peretti gave us the appropriate response there. I appreciate that, Frank. But one of the things that most people, I think, when they read the book of Esther, they tend to read it as a book.

Rather than realizing it's in the Bible. And again, we're going to apply one of the dictums of our ministry. And that is that we have 66 books penned by 40 different guys over thousands of years that are an integrated message.

So it should not surprise us that the goings-on of the book of Esther have deep roots. Let's, first of all, turn with me to 2 Samuel 16. 2 Samuel 16.

And I want you to remember a little incident that will probably ring familiar to you. We'll start about verse 5. Shimei is a character here. When King David came out of Bahurim, behold, there came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei.

Now he's out of the house of Saul. That's the important part I want you to remember. He's the son of Gerah.

He came forth and cursed continuously as he came. So this guy's cursing the King David, right? He cast stones at David, and at all the servants of King David, and all the people, and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left. And thus said Shimei, when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man and thou worthless fellow.

The Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned, and the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son. And behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man. Then said Abishai, the son of Zerah the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord, the king? Let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.

My kind of guy. Let's fix this right now. The king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zerah? So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David.

Who shall then say, Why hast thou done so? David said to Abishai and all his servants, Behold my son, who came forth of my own body, seeketh my life. How much more now? May this Benjamite do it. Let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him.

It may be that the Lord will look on my affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day. And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hillside opposite him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust. And the king and all the people who were with him became weary, and refreshed themselves there.

So here's an incident where this character is cursing and throwing stones at David. And what did David do? He spared him. Now, who do you think is one of Shimei's descendants in the book of Esther? Mordecai.

Mordecai. Oh, yes, Mordecai. We'll come to Haman in a minute.

So if David had Shimei killed, one could conjecture that Mordecai might not have been there when we needed him. Just a possibility, a conjecture obviously. But meanwhile, there's somebody else that is going to be introduced as we get into the chapter before us.

And that's this guy Haman, who's an Agagite. Yeah, we're doing very good. I think I started something.

Agag was the name given to kings of Amalek, the people, quote, against whom the Lord hath indignation forever. See, Haman is an Agagite, a royal Amalekite. He's the last of his proud house to occupy a position of influence and power, according to Josephus and Antiquities.

And by the way, with Haman's death and that of his 10 sons, the name of Amalek will be blotted out. See, Haman will have 10 sons, and they will be dealt with in chapter 9. We'll get there. But where does this start? Turn with me to Genesis 25.

We're going way back in the book of Genesis, chapter 25. And we'll pick it up, oh, about verse 21. Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife because she was barren.

The Lord was entreated by him. And Rebekah, his wife, conceived, and the children struggled together within her. He said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the Lord.

The Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people. Two different things here again. Two nations, yes, but something else that Paul will deal with later.

Two manner of people are in thy womb. The one people shall be stronger than the other people, and the elder shall serve the younger. And when her days were to be delivered, she should be fulfilled.

Behold, there were twins in her womb. The first came out red all over like a hairy garment, and they called his name Esau, or alternatively, Edom, the red, you know, story of Esau. And after that came out his brother, and the brother out in his hand took hold on Esau's heel.

His name is called Heel Catcher, or Jacob. And Isaac was three score years old, and so forth. So, you know the story.

This is, and it goes on, and you know how the following verses to the rest of this chapter, how Esau sold his birthright to his brother Jacob. You know that story. But the point is, Esau and Jacob were struggling even in the womb.

As you go further, these will be used idiomatically in the scripture. The flesh and the spirit, struggling one against each other. Esau was the firstborn, and then Jacob.

Now, 1 Corinthians 15, 46 says, Howbeit that was not first, which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual. It's interesting that the firstborn isn't necessarily the one favored. Legally, the firstborn had a double portion, all that sort of thing.

But often in the scripture, more often than you realize, the firstborn is set aside as being in the flesh. Cain was set aside, and Abel, when he was reviled and Seth being born in his place, is given the preeminent place. Ishmael must be cast out, so that Isaac could be honored.

And of course, same thing here with Esau and Jacob. Manasseh gives way to Ephraim. See, in each case, it's the number two guy that rises to prominence to the top.

See, he'd given the firstborn, had been forfeited by Reuben as a firstborn. So, who does Esau... We all follow Jacob, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and so forth. What does... Who does Esau give birth to? Amalek.

Amalek. In chapter 36, verse 12, that Amalek is derived from Esau's wife. Now, he's... So Amalek, as Esau was, is a type or a symbol of the flesh.

And what comes from the flesh? Ungodly passions, and Amalek is a type. In Ephesians chapter 2, verse 3, Paul tells us, "...among whom also we all had our conversation or behavior in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Paul will build on that furthermore. Now, where do we first really read of the Amalekites? Is in Genesis 14, in the valleys of southern Palestine.

They were involved in the great conflicts of land, in the region that is classically called Palestine. And one of the... They're specifically involved in the conflicts of the Elamite ascendancy. Now, who... The term Elam, you run into the Bible.

It's a word that means highland. He was the son of Shem in Genesis 10. And it's the name of the country inhabited by his descendants.

And it lies east of Babylon, extending a distance of a thousand miles from the Mediterranean. The name Elam is an Assyrian word meaning high, in effect. And the inhabitants of Elam, or the highlands were east of Babylon, were called the Elamites.

They were divided into several branches, each speaking different dialects of the same basic language. And they were the forebears of the Persians. See, when Isaiah is called upon to prophesy about the Persian empire, over a hundred years before the Persian empire existed, how does he talk about it? It doesn't exist.

You can't speak of Iran or Persia. It didn't exist then. He spoke of it as Elam, speaking of it in terms of its forebears, you see.

So, in the time of Abraham, Shushan or Susa seems to have already become the capital of the country. Babylonia was often visited by the Elamite kings who asserted their supremacy over it. As an example, in Genesis 14, where you have the famous five kings versus four kings that Abraham ultimately intrudes in, the whole Genesis 14 thing, Sherdar Laomer is the leader of the bunch.

And there are a lot of other campaigns. I won't take you through the whole thing. But the point is, when the Syrian empire fell, Elam passed, in effect, in the hands of those that we would consider as the Persians.

Now, all this is background to get to Exodus 17. Exodus 17. This is that passage where we have water from the rock.

God had delivered his people from Egypt in the Exodus. They were without water. So the waters of Marah were sweetened.

He also gave them bread and quails and all that. God had decided to provide for his people. That's going to be one of the underlying themes of the book of Esther also.

Except in the days of Esther, they weren't really in fellowship. So God is invisibly providing for them. But the point is, to get you the flavor of this thing, we have here the rock in Horeb where, in the interest of time, we're really dealing with the first seven verses.

You can read that at your leisure. But you may recall where God, through Moses, delivers water from the rock. I want you to turn with me to 1 Corinthians 10.

1 Corinthians chapter 10. And Paul is dealing with the lessons of Israel in the wilderness. Remember, Paul told us that what's ever written before time is written for our learning.

And I want you to notice how they were baptized. Verse 2, they were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and the sea. He's relating the passing of the Red Sea with baptism, if you will.

And we all did eat the same spiritual food, the manna and so forth. And then verse 4. And did all drink the same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ. Paul is drawing an analogy, a lesson.

Yes, they had a literal rock with literal water. But Paul is also making the point, in a sense, that the rock that was with them all the way through their wanderings was Jesus Christ. And that it's interesting how the Holy Spirit, throughout the scripture, uses the same idioms.

The stone that the builders... Here we have the rock, the stone that builders rejected as a headstone of a corner, and so forth. Again and again and again, you find the term stone or rock. Even in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the stone that smites the image grows to become a mountain, and so forth.

So we find those idioms very consistent. But now, you might pop down while we're here, to verse 10. Neither murmur ye as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed by the story.

Now all these things, verse 11, happened unto them for examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. So Paul is making a... The whole chapter, 1 Corinthians 10, uses these Old Testament narratives to make spiritual application. So when we do that, we need to do so cautiously.

When we do that, we should realize that Paul has set us an example. Well, Exodus 17, the reason I had you turn to that, is I wanted to get through the water part, because there's another part of it that's going to directly bear on our narrative, and I want you to pick it up, about verse 8 in Exodus 17. The first seven verses had to do with the rock, and the water, and all that.

Verse 8. Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel at Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose this out, men, and go out and fight with Amalek tomorrow, and I will stand at the top of the hill, and with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said unto him, and fought with Amalek.

And Moses and Aaron with her went up to the top of the hill, and came to pass. When Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed. And when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

His hands were heavy. Tough, tough problem here. His hands were heavy.

So they took a stone, put it under him, and sat on it. And Aaron and her held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. And his hands were steadily, held steadily, until going down to the sun.

And Joshua vanquished Amalek and his people under the edge of the sword. Now notice what God says about this in verse 14. The Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua.

For I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah Nissi. For he said, Because the Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war

with Amalek from generation to generation.

And so we have this going on. And again, I want you to think of Amalek as a type of the flesh, like Esau. He's a derivative of Esau.

Galatians 5, 16 and 17. You may recall from a recent study in Galatians. Paul said, For this I say then, walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. And these are contrary one to another. And so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

Again, we have the struggling twins in the womb echoing the same kind of a thought here. Now, by the way, we won't take each one of these in detail. But if you get to Numbers 14.

Israel, whenever it goes up against an enemy under their own strength, they get clobbered. Whenever they go up there in the spirit, they win. And same thing with Moses.

It occurred in Deuteronomy 25. If you study the book of Judges, chapters 5, 6 and 10. Every time that Israel goes up in faith and lowliness of self-judgment, Amalek power is broken.

When they don't do that, they get clobbered. Now, I want to lead up to 1 Samuel 15. We're working our way towards Esther, trust me.

1 Samuel, and just the first three verses. Samuel said unto Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint thee as king over his people, over Israel. Now therefore hearken thou to the voice of the words of the Lord, and thus saith the Lord of hosts.

I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how that he did wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not. But slay both men and women, infant suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

Wow. That was the instruction that God gave Saul through Samuel. Right? Well, verse 4. Samuel gathered the people together, and numbered them.

There were 200,000 footmen, 10,000 men of Judah. Saul came to the city of Amalek, and did lay wait in the valley. And Saul said unto the Canaanites, Go, depart.

Get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them. For he showed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt. So the Canaanites departed from among the Amalekites.

Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until Thou comest to Shur, which is over against Egypt. And he took Agag, the king of the Amalekites, alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and the oxen, and the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them.

But everything that was vile and refuse, they destroyed utterly. And then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And grieved Samuel, and he cried unto the Lord.

You know, you do get the impression as you read the Bible that God takes things very seriously. And he means what he says, and says what he means. I always get uncomfortable when I see people play around with the scripture.

No, I think God means what he says, and says what he means. So, but anyway, going on, Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul. It was told Samuel, Saul came to Carmel and set up a place, and has gone about and passed on, gone to Gilgal.

And Samuel came to Saul and said to Saul, Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the Lord, I have performed the commandment of the Lord. And Samuel said, What meaneth this then, the bleeding of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? I love this thing. Oh, he did.

What's this I hear? I hear, I hear sheep and oxen. Saul said, They have brought them from the Malachites, for the people have spared the best of the sheep and the oxen to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God, and the rest we have utterly destroyed. And Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me this night.

And he said unto him, Say on. Samuel says, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel, and the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Malachites, and fight against them until they are consumed. Why then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord? And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, I have gone the way which the Lord hath sent me, and I have brought Agag, the king of Malachi, and have utterly destroyed the Malachites.

But the people, but the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen. He's trying to lay it off somebody else, you've heard that. Saul had an improper relationship with his people, I guess.

Anyway, of the things which should have, mission went by, it didn't, okay. Have utterly destroyed to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal. And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great a delight in burnt offerings and sacrifice, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than to sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

For rebellion is the sin of witchcraft. Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft. Stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.

Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king. And anyway, Samuel starts to go, and Saul is grabbing his thing and rips his coat. And Samuel turns and says, God, does this day rent the kingdom from you, Saul? So, heavy stuff.

What was Saul's mistake? He didn't kill Agag or his family. Samuel goes back and kills Agag, but apparently not his family. Because who descends from Agag? Haman.

If Saul had done what he was supposed to, Haman wouldn't be on the scene in the book of Esther. Do you see what's going on here? We have Mordecai that's there because of the grace of David. And we have Haman there because of the non-performance of Saul to God's commandment.

And before the chapter of Esther is over, not only Haman, but his ten sons will be hung, or not actually hung, that's the way the text reads, actually impaled before it's all over. So that's all background. Haman is

a witness that apparently they did not wipe out his royal family.

And of course, if Saul had been obedient, Haman would not even be on the scene. Sin unjudged and evil propensities unmortified will result in grave trouble later. And so Samuel showed Agag no mercy, but some of his children escaped him.

And 600 years later, the royal Amalekite by the name of Haman meets a descendant of the house of Kish, the father of King Saul, Mordecai. They're going to confront each other. So that brings us to, you never thought we'd make it, did you? Esther chapter three.

There's a break of some years between chapter two and three. So we left off chapter two last time. We're now in chapter three.

And those several years were spent going through some background here. Verse one. After these things did King Azarias promote Haman, the son of Hamadath, the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above all the princes that were with him.

Now Haman is thus appointed to be the grand vizier, or what we might call a prime minister of the Persian empire. And by the way, all of this occurs, just to remind you how we closed last time, after Mordecai had saved the king from an assassination plot. The two men were executed.

It would have been reasonable to suppose that Mordecai expected a reward on behalf of the king, but no reward was given him by some bureaucratic screw up. Somehow it was just overlooked. But that's every detailed book of Esther begs this issue.

What's a coincidence? Because you discover that instead of being awarded, then he's going to be there. God's timing is perfect. This will turn out to be a big plot element forthcoming.

When the king rediscovers what happened, realizes no reward was given, and it couldn't have come at a better... There's a scene that is incredible forthcoming. But let's move on right now. God's timing is always right.

Verse 2, And all the king's servants that were in the king's gate bowed and revered Haman, and for the king had so commanded concerning him. So everything's going great, except there's one guy. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence.

See, Haman's promotion required all the nobles to bow, kneel down to him. And they had to give him special respect. And this is sort of similar.

This sort of echoes. Remember what happened to the three young men that were friends of Daniel in Daniel chapter 3, the fiery furnace and the lot bit. But in this case, there's one unyielding old man that's very insignificant, unacknowledged.

That is, of course, the whole element of the plot line continuing here. Verse 3, Then the king's servants which were in the king's gate said to Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment? Hey, guy, why don't you go along with the crowd? Don't make any waves. What harm can it cause? And what harm can it cause? His not doing this endangers every living Jew in the empire before it's over.

Verse 4, Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, he hearkened unto them, and they told Haman to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand, for he had told him that he was a Jew. So Haman

is really bothered by this. He's got everything else he wants, this one guy.

But that suddenly becomes, of course, the big event, right, in Haman's life. There's a lesson there, too, I think. But anyway, the judge in the gate is one of the despised captives.

He's a Jew. And he's risking everything, not just of his own, but all the Jews, by this effrontery, as far as Haman's concerned. Mordecai is no longer the back-of-the-scenes manipulator, as he was in Chapter 2. He takes his stand as one of God's chosen.

And he cannot bow to the blatant enemy of the God he worships. He is ultimately politically incorrect, okay? And you may laugh. I understand I'm being cute here.

But on the other hand, some of you in this room may have the same opportunity that Mordecai had. He that sides with God will always have perpetual indignation against Amalek. Now anyway, Verse 5, When Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath.

And he thought to scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they showed him the people of Mordecai. Therefore, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Hezareth, even the people of Mordecai. Now, Satan's strategy is becoming clear.

Mordecai is just the puppet in Satan's hands. And he was enraged by Mordecai's refusal. He set out to kill all the Jews, which is the main plot element in the book of Esther.

Not just Mordecai. All anti-Semitism echoes Satan's specific handiwork. All prejudice is wrong.

Don't misunderstand me. All racial prejudice is wrong. But anti-Semitism specifically is Satan's attempt to thwart God's disclosed plans.

Now, what a mess Mordecai has created here, right? Couldn't this one obstinate Jew keep his convictions to himself and just kept him and all his friends out of harm's way? Wouldn't it have been simple? Couldn't he have simply conformed and prevented the jeopardy of all his people? Doesn't Mordecai understand that things are different now? They're not like they were in the days of Moses or in the days of the judges or the days of Samuel? No. Mordecai trusted the Lord. And this is what distinguishes men of God in all generations.

As Ironside so eloquently highlighted, it was this spirit that sustained Noah in his testimony against a corrupt, sin-loving world that mocked him while he built this barge in his driveway. It was this confidence of faith that caused Moses to forsake Egypt. It was this energy of faith that Caleb took on the Nephilim and the Amalekites and the Anakim.

It was this chutzpah that led to Gideon's war with pitchers and torches and David's fight with the armored giant with what? A sling, a shepherd's sling and stones? It was this confidence that caused Daniel to open his windows in Babylon and pray towards Jerusalem even though it was 200 miles away and in rubble. And it was this confidence that drove Paul in his ordeal in his devotion to the Lord. And same spirit that Athanasius suffered banishment rather than bow to the Arianism of the times that he lived in.

Savonarola that defied the licentious and avaricious officials of the church and state in Italy. That Martin Luther uttered his mighty no in the presence of the emperor and the bishops of the empire. That Pharaoh tossed venerated images into the river in the midst of furious priests and populace that John Knox caused

the queen to tremble.

And the covenanters in Scotland rose rather to be hunted as beasts of the field rather than own the spiritual authority of degenerate kings and bishops. And a mighty host, as Paul says in Hebrews, through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received the dead, raised to life again.

Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others had a trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, ye moreover bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with a sword, they wandered bound in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted and tormented.

They wandered in deserts and in mountains and in dens in the caves of the earth of whom the world was not worthy. As I was preparing this lesson in Esther, I was drawn to the application here. We watch Mordecai, we watch Esther, and obviously it's a remote, colorful, ironic, distant story.

And yet, I think the lessons here may have far more application to you and I than we have any idea right now. There are some of you listening to this that may have the opportunity to be a Mordecai or an Esther before long. And anyway, the proud Agagite, Haman, of course, was just a mere puppet in the hands of Satan, trying to make void the promises of God.

But from David's house, there was the promise being that out of David's house, there was one that would raise to bruise his, Satan's head, and one was to destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them through the fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. And Hebrews chapter 2 is where that quote is taken from. The entire Bible can be mapped as a drama in which Satan has continued trying to thwart the plans of God and has always thwarted it.

The death of Abel at Cain's hand being an example. The corruption of Adam's line in Genesis 6 that led to the flood. The attacks on Abram's seed.

As God says he's going to work through Abram, then Abram's seed is singled out. In chapters 12, 20, and 50 in Genesis and so on. The destruction of the babes by Pharaoh.

Pharaoh's pursuit of Israel through the Red Sea. All attempts to thwart God's plan. The populating of Canaan.

400 years earlier, God told Abraham that his people would inherit Canaan. That gave Satan 400 years to lay down a minefield. The Rephaim, the Emim, the Zumzumim, these tribes.

The populating of Canaan in anticipation of Abraham's inheritance. And that's a denial that continues to this day as the world tries to deny the inheritance of God's people to that piece of real estate. That's going on today.

It's the biggest problem in the world. We're going to face that this coming year. And as God declared that he accomplished his purpose through David, Satan's attacks focus on David's line.

Saul's javelin at the youthful of David. When Jehoram kills his brothers, all but one. When the Arabians kill all but Azariah.

When Athaliah kills all but Joash. And Hezekiah's assault and so forth. The infants at Bethlehem.

That occurs around what we saw around Christmas time. We're conscious of Herod trying to wipe out all the babies of Bethlehem. Again and again, Satan trying to thwart the plan of God.

And he will continue his attempts. His climactic attempt will be Armageddon. Attempt to wipe out the remnant before they could petition the second coming.

Now, if all the Jews were killed throughout the domain of Xerxes in Esther's time, that will include those Jews who had returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. That was Satan's probably primary target. And they were living according to the stipulations of the law, you see.

And so a massive execution of thousands of Jews. Simply an attempt to thwart God's program. But God, of course, won't be thwarted.

Very often He operates with miracles. We see that frequently in the Bible. He also operates with very interesting, quote, coincidences.

The rabbis have this colorful expression, coincidence is not a kosher word. There are no coincidences in God's kingdom. The book of Esther is full of happenstances, coincidences.

And it's actually God's fingerprints on the circumstances. He's always working on behalf of His people. In the book of Esther, He's working behind the scenes, invisibly.

And we'll discover it even behind the text when the time comes. Verse 7, it's Esther. In the first month, that is the month of Nisan, Nisan, the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast the pur.

Pur is an old Persian word meaning lot, like throwing dice, in effect. They cast pur, that is the lot, before Haman from day to day, from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is the month of Adar. Nisan, by the way, is the Babylonian word that replaced the Hebrew word of Abib.

Their calendar today is made up of Babylonian names. They carried with them after the captivity. Adar is mentioned in this verse too, also.

And that's also a Babylonian label. Haman is very superstitious. He wanted the day to be perfect, so he cast lots to pick the day.

And it turns out that by casting lots, the day that he picks is almost a year later. So there's a year for everyone to prepare. There's a year for God to work out His program to prevent all this.

And about four years had gone by since Esther had become queen. On the first day of the year, Nisan, it was at the beginning of Xerxes' twelfth year. So pur was cast to select the day of the month.

And Haman, along with the people in the Persian Empire, were extremely superstitious. And the whole Persian religious system was heavily emphasizing fate and chance and things like that. And Haman, in effect, was putting himself at the hands of fate to dictate his next move.

And little did he realize, of course, who was in charge? God is. Proverbs 16, 33 reminds us that the lot is in the lap of the Lord. Einstein made the famous quote.

It wrote something else. God does not play dice. And somebody quipped, if he did, he'd win.

Anyway, by the way, it's kind of interesting to me, as we're doing the research for Cosmic Codes, to discover that the idea of randomness, absolute chance, doesn't exist. Now, we know it theologically doesn't exist. But I mean, even mathematicians and physicists are coming to the conclusion that we don't find randomness in our physical reality.

And this has given rise to a whole field of study in mathematics called the theory of chaos. That's not a quip. That's a formalized field of mathematical inquiry.

And it attempts to explore what we call stochastic processes, things that we would consider random. The spilling of tacks on the floor. Certain things that are deterministic, cause and effect.

And there are other things that would seem to us as random. Spilling tacks on the floor, the distribution of debris after an explosion, things of that kind. The curling of smoke from, say, a pipe or a candle or something.

They're discovering that these things follow very strange mathematical laws. You can't find... It turns out you can't find true randomness. And both infinity and randomness are two concepts in mathematics that are conceptual, but they're not found in actual reality, strangely enough.

But let's move on. The month chosen by the lot was the 12th month, almost a year later. And it was on the 13th of that month.

That's the big day that's coming. It will end up being celebrated as the Feast of Purim by the Jews. They celebrate that day because that was the day they were ultimately delivered because of the events in Esther.

Verse 8. Haman said to King Ahasuerus, There is a people gathered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom, and their laws are diverse from all people. Neither keep they the king's laws, neither... Therefore it is not for the king's prophet to suffer them. And so he falsely accuses the Jews.

This isn't true, by the way. He's accusing them here. And he said the king would be better off without the Jews.

Doesn't mention Jews, by the way. You have to notice he doesn't even mention which of these people are. Verse 9. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed.

I will pay 10,000 talents of silver to the hands of those that have charge of the business to bring it to the king's treasuries. Haman must be quite powerful. Anyway, he may have been a man of immense wealth because he certainly has opportunities to increase his treasures by virtue of his manipulation from his job.

But there are other things. He probably has factored in the wealth that he would gain by confiscating the assets of the Jews that are killed, which is the common practice. In chapter 8, we'll see what happens to the properties of everybody involved there.

But at the time this was written, Persia had silver as their monetary standard. A talent of silver contained about 3,000 shekels was equal to about 94 and 3 sevenths pounds of gordopah. A Greek talent was about, as used in Septuagint, was about 82.

So a talent of gold, by the way, was twice that. But the point is 10,000 talents of silver would weigh about 13 million ounces. In today's market, it would be about 60 million dollars.

So the kind of money that Haman was able to pledge, whether it's his own money or whether it was the money he would confiscate is a debatable issue. The king, if we understand it right, probably had his treasury exhausted because of his disastrous Greek war. We talked about that last time.

And so the king took a ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hamadathah, the Agagite, the Jew's enemy. Five times Haman will be called the enemy of the Jews in this book. This is the first place of it.

And so he accepted Haman's advice, didn't make an investigation, didn't check the facts, disregarded the human lives involved, didn't even realize the people afflicted. He obviously didn't know his own queen was going to be impacted. That's really inexcusable.

But let's move on. Giving a signet ring to Haman, he was allowing the enemy of the Jews to write out anything he wants. It's like giving him a blank check.

When you take the signet ring and press it in clay, it was a form of signature. Herodotus makes reference to that and others. But anyway, verse 11.

The king said unto Haman, The silver is given to thee, and the people also. Do with them as it seem good to thee. The silver of the people is given to thee.

In other words, he took the, it would seem, the 10,000 talents from Laman as his price. Whatever Laman can collect from the people is his profit, so to speak. It reads a little funny in the English, but it's the silver is given to thee.

He means the property of the people that are going to be killed. Confiscation always accompanied execution. The goods from those put to death as cheap to the crown, typically.

And this was true in the Inquisition in Spain. It was true in Nazi Germany. It's true in America in the 90s.

When you get accused of something, all your assets, they get to be kept by the agency that's bringing the inquiry. There's no due process here. That's another nightmare.

Let's move on. In the ancient East, human life is not held much regard. And the caprices of absolute monarchs have determined the course of history.

And there's a number of massacres by Darius Hestaspis of the Magi and so forth. We'll talk about that next time a little bit. Anyway, verse 12.

Then were the king's scribes called on the 13th day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded under the king's lieutenants and to the governors that were over every province and to the rulers of every people and to every province, according to the writing thereof, to every people after their language. Remember, there are many, many languages in this empire. We saw that earlier in chapter one.

In the name of King Ahasuerus, it was written and sealed with the king's ring. So it was written in the name of the king, sealed by Haman. Done deal.

Verse 13. And the letters that were sent by posts and all the king's promises to... Notice the language. To destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish all Jews, both young and old, little women and children, in one day, even upon the 13th day of the 12th month, which is the month of Adar, to take the spoil of them for a prey.

You can tell by the excess legal language, this probably was a direct quote from the Edict. You see, it's a strange way to express it, a very changing style. To destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish.

You know, it's sort of... You see the legalese there. So all the Jews in the empire were subject to the sentence of death. The executioners were ordered to confiscate the property owned by the Jews.

The Persian system of posts, by the way, was written by Zuniphon and others. They were very much like our postal express. They apparently had one day separation of horses, fresh horses, riders.

They'd ride all day, all night. They had a very, very fast, what we would consider a postal express kind of system. It's well known in the ancient world.

Anyway, verse 14. The copy of the writing of the commandment to be given to every province was published and to all people that they should be ready against that day. That was expected in March 474 BC.

They had almost a year to get ready on both sides. This is reaching a climax here. Posts went out being hastened by the king's commandment.

The decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king, now get this. The king and Haman sat down to drink.

Here they just decided the fate of all the Jews in the empire. They sit down, have a drink. Yeah, you know, what else is new? But the city of Shushan was perplexed.

The edict bewildered the people of the city of Susa. And they've seen a lot of stuff come and go. But this really puzzled them.

What's going on here? Even in this sophisticated society, they felt this is all incredible. There are probably other minorities in the empire that started to panic. This is very much like Waco.

Where, by the way, as we watch this scene here, where was the outcry from the pulpits of America when Waco happened? Not that you agree with David Koresh's theology, heaven forbid, but subject to death, no due process. I mean, enough said. Let's move on.

What's the world's concern or even the U.S.'s concern? About the PLO's commitment to exterminate Israel. They make no secret of it. Before, during, and after all the negotiations.

Who cares? Show me anyone that's in a responsibility that shows any concern for their commitment, their agenda, their objective to wipe out Israel. How is the PLO different from Haman's plan? What's different going on here? Now, let's see. We can squeeze in chapter four.

We got 10 minutes. Okay. When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city and cried.

Mordecai now makes no secret. He's a Jew. He rents clothes, sackcloth, and ashes.

Very similar to what Daniel did in Daniel chapter nine. What the king of Nineveh did in Jonah chapter three. An expression of the deepest grief possible.

So now he's in mourning. And so there's a crisis, of course, for the whole nation. And he apparently, the word money is going to be very clear here.

It's clear that the money was a big part of it. Apparently, he knew the amount of the money, because he apparently had a hard copy of the of the edict that went out. In any case, verse two, it came even before the king's gate, for none might enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.

Every province were with us, whoever the king's commandment and decree came. There was great mourning among the Jews, fasting and weeping and wailing, and many lay in sackcloth and ashes. It's very interesting to notice in the book of Esther.

You never find the name of God. You also find them praying, but it never says so. Were they just fasting? No, they were fasting and praying, but it doesn't say that.

It's almost as if an editor had edited out all those references. Some scholars even speculate there was some reason, some local reason why they did that, or it might be the Holy Spirit posturing this in a very special way. We'll talk about that later.

But anyway, every place the Jews heard this, they knew they were under the sentence of death. So they're obviously praying very, very fervently. Verse four, so Esther's maids and chamberlains came and told it to her.

Then was the queen exceedingly grieved. She sent raiment to clothe Mordecai to take away his sackcloth from him, but he received it not. And so she apparently, we'll discover in verse 11, she had not been in the presence of the king for a month.

That doesn't mean she's in disfavor, but she's obviously out of touch with the king, but she's also quite secluded in the harem. So she doesn't really know what's all going on here. And so she found out, she heard about Mordecai's mourning.

So she assigned her one of her aides to find out why Mordecai was carrying on this way in public places. She may have been embarrassed by him. She may have been concerned for his welfare.

So she sent new clothes. She didn't know what was going on. Verse 8, and he gave him, that is the emissary, a copy of the writing of the decree that was given to Shushan to destroy them and to show it to Esther and to declare it unto her and to charge her that she should go unto the king to make supplication unto him and to make request before him for all, for her people.

He wanted her to give, tell all, but he says something that you may miss here. He's talking to one of the eunuchs or chamberlains of Esther and he makes reference to, verse 8, to charge her that she should go to the king and make request before him for who? For her people. So this was a secret, that Esther was Jewish.

But at least now her attendance, the word is out. How far it goes, we don't know, because certainly the king doesn't find out until some very special events. But the point is, at this point, it's no longer, it's now, you know what a secret is? A secret is something you tell one person at a time.

And so, so anyway, verse 9. And Hattach came and told Esther of the words of Mordecai, and Esther spake unto Hattach and gave him commandment unto Mordecai. So they're using him as a back, you know, to communicate. All the king's servants and the people of the king's province do know that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come into the king, into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such, to whom the king should hold out a golden scepter, that he may live.

But I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days. That sounds strange to us, but the Persian monarchs, like many of the ancient nations, protected their monarch from unwanted intrusions or visitors. And so Esther's reminding Mordecai of this rule.

She can't just go. She has to be summoned. To go not being summoned is to risk death.

And the king had the power to execute anyone that did. In fact, Herodotus records that the law accepted six special people, but confirms, it confirms the general rule of this. And you got to remember, we think of Esther as a queen.

She was the wife of the king, but probably not the only one as such. So to assume that she had some special access is a presumption on our part. So since Esther hadn't been summoned for a month, she didn't know what his attitude would be to her.

And so she was concerned. So anyway, they told Mordecai Esther's words, and obviously Esther's response was not encouraging to Mordecai. Then verse 13, Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, think not with thyself that thou shalt escape the king's house more than all the Jews.

In other words, you're Jewish, don't forget it. You're going to be incorporated in this before you know it. So Esther, you better understand that.

So he's saying, see Haman's edict would even reach the throne. Verse 14, so if thou altogether holdest thy peace, this is a very key verse here. One of the key verses in the book of Esther.

If you hold your peace at this time, there shall be an enlargement and deliverance, a rise to the Jews from another place. But thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed. And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? By the word, the word enlargement here is a poor translation.

The word means respiration or breath. There shall be a spirit or breath and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place. See, Mordecai's got faith.

Esther, if you don't do this thing, God will find another way to save his people. That's what you see. Mordecai isn't putting that all on her, so to speak.

But he's pointing out that you don't know that you are, this is your destiny. This is your point in his kingdom, that you're here for what? For such a time as this. That would be a neat little subtitle for a commentary on the book of Esther.

You and I are sitting here right now, listening to this study. And you don't know what God may call upon you to do that may be unique to you and your place. Not that God would be dependent upon you, but that he may give you the opportunity to be a participant for such a time as this.

So it's an interesting confession of faith, actually. It's interesting that even here in this declaration of faith by Mordecai, you don't find the name of God. It's implied.

I find that very interesting. He mentions Esther, your father's house, which means that Esther was not an only child. She had her own family to think of also here.

Esther then bade them return Mordecai this answer. Here's Esther's response to all of this. Go gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan and fast ye for me, and neither eat or drink three days or night or day.

I also and my maidens will fast likewise, and so will I go into the king, which is not according to law. And if I perish, I perish. What can they do to you? They can only kill you.

Fasting, I believe, also implies prayer. And Esther looks to God, not Mordecai or man or even the king for the answer. She's trusting the Lord.

And that's the long and the short of it. I have a question for you. Do you fast? Well, I pray.

Well, great. Do you fast? Our Lord fasted 40 days at one time, at least. The early Christians fasted Acts 13, 14, 2nd Corinthians 6. Our allusions to that.

But another haunting thing here, haunting phrase that hits us. Why three days? Isn't that an interesting number? Three days. Jonah three days, three nights in the belly of the earth.

I mean, belly of the whale and the Lord three days in the belly of the earth. Interesting. One greater than Esther gave his life that we all might have.

Life everlasting. And again, it was a three-day thing. Verse 17.

So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded him. Now, his influence, of course, would have led to fasting and prayer throughout the entire community. So you didn't think we'd make it, did you? Make chapter four.

Okay. So now, I have some issues for you to think about. Book of Esther.

Ancient book. I mean, come on. Way back there, right? Persian Empire.

What's the difference between Haman and his schemes and plots and Yasser Arafat and the PLO? How did this group of gangsters... Bear in mind, they're gangsters. They were thrown out by King Hussein out of Jordan. That's what led to the Black September and all that business.

They're renegades. They were outcasts even within the... What shall I call it? Palestinian community. The Arab community.

They were in Tunis going broke until Clinton bailed them out and insisted upon using them to be the channel through which he's negotiating on the cause. Prior to that, many people said the Arab issue will never be solved as long as the PLO is negotiating for them. And there are dozens of other groups to choose from.

This has been created by our side, strangely enough. Well, you can think about that. What's going to happen next time, the plot now is really going to turn and we're going to see some very, very interesting

dramatic climaxes.

Dramatic in the theatrical sense. We're going to see a scepter of grace that will lead to the banquet of banquets. Not one, but more than one.

And why? What's going on there? Some strange stuff. You're also going to see what has to be the most ironic scene in theater. If you were just looking at this as a theatrical production, I think most of us who are interested in that sort of thing understand irony and how it's used.

This has to be one of the most fascinating twists of irony in all of literature forthcoming, where Mordecai is going to receive his overdue honor for the episode way back there, end of chapter one or two, whatever it was. And Haman, the gallows that he built, are going to receive its first victim. The way that plays out is, to the best of my awareness in literature, biblical or otherwise, I can't think of anything more fascinating the way that whole thing plays out next time.

And then, of course, there's some very, very provocative denouements to that. And as we get through the book of Esther and understand the book of Esther, what we're going to do then is we're going to double back and peel in under what's behind the text and discover a whole fistful of surprises. So that's sort of the basic plan of attack on our study of the book of Esther.

Unless you and I stand for a closing prayer. Well, Father, we thank you that you are so visible to us in our day. We thank you, Father, that you have committed yourself to our provision.

And we thank you, Father, that you have gone to such extremes to redeem us and further to call us into an awareness of your plan of redemption. We thank you, Father, that in your kingdom there are indeed no lots, no coincidences, no accidents, that every detail is working out in accordance with your infinite knowledge and wisdom and your infinite care on our behalf. We thank you, Father, that you make no mistakes.

We thank you for your word, Father. And we pray, Father, that you would give a sensitivity to your handiwork, that you would increase in us confidence and faith in the working out of your plans. For ourselves, for our country, and on behalf of your chosen people, Israel.

We look with anticipation, Father, as your hand will once again turn to those people. We pray, Father, that you'd make us ever more sensitive to the possible roles you'd have of us in a time such as this. We do bring before your throne, Father, the spiritual warfare that's going on in our country.

We look with grief at the fruits of our own negligence, our own presumption, our own ingratitude, as we watch this tragic travesty unfold before our eyes. And yet, Father, we put it all before your throne, pleading the blood of Jesus Christ on our own behalf. We pray, Father, that if it be your will, that you would make your name magnified in this country again, that you would move in such a mighty way, that the moving of your hand would be unmistakable, that you would make it impossible for the enemies of God to blaspheme over all these things.

We pray, Father, that you'd make each of us sensitive to what you would have of each of us in these days, that we might be more responsive to your will and more pleasing in thy sight, as we commit ourselves into your hands, indeed, in the name of Yeshua, Yeshua HaMashiach. Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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