

# Esther #3 Ch. 5-7

by Chuck Missler

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*The Book of Esther is a story of God's sovereignty and His ability to use even the most unlikely circumstances to accomplish His purposes.*

**Duration:** 50:27

**Scripture:** Proverbs 3:5-6, Jeremiah 17:5-9, Daniel 4:25, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:28

**Topics:** "Esther"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Esther from the Bible. He highlights a scene where the king wants to reward Mordecai, but Haman, who wants to hang Mordecai, comes to the court. The preacher emphasizes the theme of the vanity of human greatness and the greatness of human vanity in the story. He also mentions the idea that coincidence is when God is working undercover. The sermon concludes with a review of the book of Esther and a discussion of the banquet of banquets.

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## Transcript

Tonight we continue our review of the Book of Esther. We're going to try to get through chapters 5 and 6 and maybe 7 with God willing. We're going to review the Banquet of Banquets.

And just by way of a quick review as we get into this, why the Book of Esther? Well, for a lot of reasons, it's one of the most neglected books in the Bible, but the name itself, her name herself, means something hidden. And we're going through the book first to really understand the drama, it's incredible drama. In fact, the finest of Shakespeare's plays, which of course are wonderful products of ingenuity and genius, they, even they, have to yield to these brief ten chapters, not coming close to the dramatic effect of this story, and there are five key characters.

We have the king, Ahasuerus, which most scholars believe was Xerxes, as we know him in the secular world, and of course Queen Esther, and then these two interesting protagonists, Mordecai, who was a descendant of Shemai, who was the beneficiary of David's grace, when David gave the grace to the guy who was cursing him, that in effect made Mordecai possible, and Haman, who was a descendant of Agag, Amalekite, oh, thank you, yes, we're supposed to hiss, very good, especially, yes, in a Jewish setting, whenever Haman's name is mentioned, you can boo and hiss. Keep it mild for the tape, but that's great. Even Shakespeare's villains, like Wolsey and others, are dwarfed by Haman.

He's really an architect. And of course, now, the plot of this whole thing is the extermination of the Jews. The plot element, the problem to be solved, the program to exterminate the Jews.

And one of the questions, as we study this ancient book and try to understand its drama, its literary quality, and especially its spiritual implications, ask yourself the question, what's the difference between Haman's plan and the PLO today? Interesting, see? The play itself, or I shouldn't say the play, the story of Esther, is a proclamation of the vanity of human greatness and the greatness of human vanity. The chapters we're going to undertake tonight are the climax of the book. The tables are turned.

Evil will be overcome by good. God's people will be preserved through an unlikely set of circumstances. And you're reminded of Daniel's declaration in Daniel chapter 4, verse 25, that the most high God ruleth in the kingdom of men.

And I'm actually wrong. That was in the book of Daniel chapter 4, but it's a chapter of the Bible written by a Gentile king. It's in the middle of Nebuchadnezzar's testimony.

But another wonderful line I like, we say that coincidence is not a kosher word. You've heard me quote the rabbinical quip there. There's another quote that I love.

Coincidence is when God is working undercover. Isn't that great? I like that. Anyway, chapter 5, verse 1. Now it came to pass on the third day, you may recall, she had resolved, Mordecai confronted her last time, and here's the situation.

And she realized she's going to expose herself to the penalty of death, at least the possibility of it. But Mordecai points out the reality, if you don't do it, God will find another way to accomplish His purpose. God never is limited by human failures.

But is it possible that you were brought to this point for such a time as this? And that phrase should echo in all our ears for ourselves. Are you where you are today? Because of some special purpose God has. In any case, she then asked for three days of fasting and prayer.

And now it came to pass on the third day that Esther put on her royal apparel and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house. And the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over and against the gate of the house. See, after the days of fasting and probably wearing a garb of woe, she now donned the royal apparel which is appropriate to the occasion.

And there is a propriety in dress, as in other things. Inattention to bodily attire is no sign of virtue or religion, being unattentive to one's appearance. It may be a mark of idle or slovenly spirit.

It could be a want of self-respect. It could be a vanity of itself. And it also can be a mechanism to show disrespect to others.

So I throw that out just to throw a guilt trip on a few of you and we'll move on. You're saying, Chuck, why do you look so sloppy? Well, anyway, I won't get into that. Also, she went from her chambers to the throne room.

And as I think about that, you know, sometimes a room-to-room trip can be more trying than crossing a desert. This was a very long journey from her council to go here where she could be under the Persian etiquette and the laws in the palace, subject to death. By going there unrequested, she's putting herself in

jeopardy.

And she apparently positioned herself before the doors at the end, visualize a typical throne room with the throne at one end and the open doors at the other. And she's just outside but such that the king can't miss her, if you follow me. And then in verse 2, it was so when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court that she obtained favor in his sight.

This is where we all breathe a sigh of relief. Up till this point, and I haven't, in the interest of time, I haven't rebuilt the whole threat, but I think you've been following the story, that anyone, you know, the Persian laws, and this is confirmed, by the way, by Herodotus and other authorities, that if you went unbidden by the king, that was subject to death. They had these very, very, you and I probably have a tough time relating to the Persian court etiquette, but that was clearly the situation.

And so she did this under personal jeopardy. She hadn't seen him for a month. She hadn't been asked for a month.

Now that's not a slight on her, that's just, you know, it's just the way it was. So she's taking some risk here. She could have, but of course there is a procedure, an escape clause, and that's if he extends his scepter, that's exactly what it is.

The king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand, so Esther drew near and touched the top of the scepter. And, you know, the first braving of a very perilous situation totally relieves all the fears and anticipation. And this is the pivot point of the entire book.

And the threat of death on Esther evaporates. And we'll certainly obviously see that through all of this it's also going to be, God's going to use it for the provision of all the people, all the Jews, including the Jews that are in Jerusalem. Bear in mind, we're talking about an entire empire here, not just the local town.

So her breach of etiquette has been forgiven. Obviously the king was pleased and responded instinctively by holding out the scepter, so she's thus welcomed, and that relieves that cloud on the main thread here. And the king said unto her, What wilt thou, Queen Esther, and what is thy request? And it shall be given thee to half the kingdom.

He realizes that it was with jeopardy that she even made this appearance, and it wasn't casual, wasn't for some entertainment. She's obviously got something on her mind, so he blesses her, what will you have? Don't make too much of this expression, it shall be given thee to half the kingdom. That apparently is one of the ancient expansive expressions.

We find that twice in this book, and we also find it in Mark 6, verse 23. Remember Salome offered the same thing by Herod. It doesn't mean literally half the kingdom.

It's an expression, you know, I'll give you a blank check, what do you want? And obviously there's implicit limitations. I think there's literary justification for not taking that as a specification, but rather a greeting, just like, O king, live forever. Daniel says, that's the oriental style of the day.

Anyway, in any case, Esther answered verse 4. If it seemed good unto the king, let the king and Haman come to this day, unto the banquet that I have prepared for him. Strange, she senses somehow that this isn't the place that really lay on her heart. She recognizes a much more complex situation, because her adversary is the number two man in the kingdom, the prime minister, who's in favor with the king, and the

whole situation is complicated.

And obviously, we all presume, we understand, that the king didn't know she was Jewish. He was very careless about the authority he gave Haman in the first place. So she's got a complex thing, but her approach is to invite, what's on your mind, Esther? I'd like you and Haman to come to dinner tomorrow night.

Now the king's no dummy. He knows there's something else up, but that's certainly a great way to get started. So this part's called, guess who's coming to dinner? You know, Haman's coming to dinner.

It does speak to Haman's status. Because normally the king and queen dine separately, each in their own apartment, and to invite not just the king, but an outsider, another male guest, is a remarkable act of favor on him, on Haman. It was a very unusual honor to be invited to a banquet with the queen, because Persian style was very protective of their wives, officials' wives.

And there's no record in the verse here, but when you get later on in verse 12 from Haman's boasting, you understand the king didn't just agree. He was delighted with the prospect. For whatever dynamics were going on here, he was delighted.

So verse 5, the king said, Cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther had said. So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared. And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine, by the way, banquet of wine, I should point out, the kind of banquets here were very typically drinking and desserts.

Now some of you are nodding in great enthusiasm. That's the kind of banquet you'd like to go to. But in any case, this was, when you say banquet, it's not, you know, a big smorgasbord, you know, a huge smorgasbord, necessarily like we think of, although it might have been.

But it was called, there's a term there, it's called a banquet of wine. It's typically drinking and desserts and maybe hors d'oeuvres, like we would think with a, like a reception more than a dinner, if you, what we, in our vernacular. Anyway, the king said to Esther, What is thy petition? And it shall be granted thee.

What is thy request? Even to half the kingdom it shall be performed. There again is that phrase that he uses. See, he understood that even the banquet wasn't there, just that was, he knows there's something up, right? And so his curiosity, you see, is starting to escalate here.

You see, this is sort of the second cycle. The first thing was, what would you like to do? Come to the banquet. Okay, now at the banquet.

Second, what is it you'd really like, kid? Lay it on me, you know. And then answered Esther and said, My petition and my request is, everybody holds their breath, right? If I have found favor in thy sight, in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do tomorrow as the king hath said. Now you say, what's going on here? Wait a minute.

She's going to invite them to a second banquet. Some of you are saying, she's my kind of gal, you know, right? Well, there's a couple of conjectures. Maybe Esther sort of lost her nerve.

She wasn't quite ready to spring what's really on her heart. Maybe she sensed that the king's mood was just not perfect. You can make all these conjectures.

Commentaries are full of various contrived conjectures. But here's the real point. Whatever were her instinctive reasons, God needed a 24-hour interval to accomplish his purpose.

And I'm sure she didn't necessarily know that. But as you stand back with 20-20 hindsight and see what's going on, you realize this, whatever it was that led her, you can dignify this and say the spirit led her to have a second banquet, give 24 hours here. Okay, I'll buy that.

In any case, prudence always works patiently. And Haman is really getting set up. If you were writing a play, I'm really mystified why this hasn't become a major player movie because it's incredible the way this all develops.

But anyway, verse 9. So there's a second banquet. Can you imagine how this sat with Haman? I mean, he is, again, the prime minister, invited to the banquet with the king and the queen. I mean, come on.

His thumb is under his suspenders. Man, this is all right. Verse 9. Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart.

Have you heard this expression, the fly and the ointment? Do you know where that comes from? Solomon. Did you know that? It comes from Solomon. It's in Ecclesiastes, chapter 10, verse 1. Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savor.

So doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honor. Interesting. We all heard that expression.

You don't realize how many of these have their roots in the Holy Word. So here's Haman. He's got a glad heart.

He's thrilled. But, see, here's the fly and the ointment. When Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up or moved from him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai.

Here's Mordecai, who just will not show any respect to the prime minister. It's so typical of human nature. The entire empire bows when he comes by.

Haman, because he's Mr. Big, right? Except one. Who immediately becomes the most important guy on his horizon? The one guy that's obstinate. Mordecai the Jew.

While pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall, Proverbs warns us. Verse 10. Nevertheless, Haman refrained himself, and when he came home, he sat and called his friends and Zeresh his wife.

See, Haman's so upset, he can't enjoy his position. Mordecai's opposition poisoned his joy and his happiness and his peace. Now, so what did he do? He gathered his friends and spent time boasting of his wealth and the family he'd raised.

Remember, he had ten sons. Sons was a major wealth in those days, and so he has ten sons. Those ten sons are going to be dealt with before the thing is over, too.

But anyway, verse 11. Haman told them of the glory of his riches. And he must have been well-heeled.

We covered that before. To offer what? Fifty, sixty million dollars to the king to do this little stunt. And the multitude of his children and all the things wherein the king had promoted him and how he had advanced him above the princes and the servants of the king.

And what speaks of his children, those are his sons, his ten sons. But anyway, verse 12. Haman said, Moreover, yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself.

And tomorrow am I invited unto her also with the king. Wow, that's twice as good. Well, Jesus warned us, Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought of the things of itself.

Sufficient of the day is the evil hour. Boy, Haman, that should have been echoing in his ears, unfortunately. Jeremiah 17 is an interesting passage because it suggests that God sends blindness to those that he means to destroy.

So if you find you've got some blindness, boy, I'd take that to the throne. Jeremiah 17, starting by verse 5, Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, and he shall not see when good cometh, and he shall inhabit the parched places, and the wilderness, and salt land, and not inhabit.

Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord, and his hope the Lord is. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, and spreadeth her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, and her leaf shall be green, and shall not be anxious in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. And this is the passage that continues all of them.

Remember verse 9, of course, The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked in the King James. The actual word means incurably wicked. Who can know it? Well, let's see what happens here.

Verse 13 in Esther, Haman continues, Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate. See, he admits that his wealth and his position has availed him nothing. He's obsessed with Mordecai, poisoning his exuberance.

Anyway, there's an old Wall Street proverb, by the way. Bulls get some, bears get some. Bull being someone who's optimistic on the market, and bear being someone who's pessimistic on the market.

You can win either way. Bulls get some, bears get some. Hogs don't get any.

The Greeks have a proverb, Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad. We have forces of evil underlying the fact story here as it's going. Immoderate ambition, intense worship of self, rankling unforgiveness, and a greed that had grown even more greedy from the getting.

An appetite that in effect increases with feeding. That's Haman, right? I got bad news for you. That's all of us, to varying degrees.

Don't we share the larger, bolder, blacker portrait of Haman? You want to frame a portrait of Haman, labeled Haman, just put a mirror on the wall. There go all of us, to some degree. So there's a larger application, I'm going to suggest, lurking behind this story.

We'll be dealing with that very specifically subsequently, but we need to realize that no amount of education, culture, or even religiousness can eradicate evil. That's the tragedy of humanism, which presumes it can. No, uh-uh.

Because it's in our nature. Only a new birth can deal with that. By the way, 50 cubits is about 75, 80 feet.

I mean, that's up there. And by the way, the word is etz in the Hebrew. It means tree, wood, timber, stick, staff.

It's not really likely to be a gallows. That's really, in effect, an unfortunate translation. It really was something to be impaled upon, and many scholars even suspect it was a cross.

The Persians are the ones that invented crucifixion. They did it only as exceptional cases. That was passed on to the Greeks under Alexander.

Then it was adopted by the Romans, and the Romans were the ones that used it very widely on non-citizens that were guilty of some particularly heinous situation. As an extreme form of example, it was very painful. It took several days, typically, for someone to die.

And they left them up there until it rotted as a warning to others. That was the whole appeal of it to the Romans. Not only was it very, very cruel, very painful, but also the kind of execution that made a public impression.

And so they were very well known for it, but it really got invented by the Persians. And so the most scholars that take this seriously believe that that's probably what was involved here. Certainly impaling, not a gallows hanging kind of thing that we imagine, but that was a translational issue in 1611.

But, by the way, why was the gallows made? Because God needed it. God needed it. And it fascinates me how He uses the hands of unrighteousness to accomplish His purposes.

And an example of that is in Acts 2, verse 23, where Jesus was delivered by determinate counsel and the foreknowledge of God that ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. And in Acts 4, 28, we have the same sentence here. For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

It's interesting how God's always in charge. Even at the Last Supper, Judas was part of a plot to betray Christ, right? They knew they did not want to do it on a holiday. Why? Because there's crowds and problems.

That's the wrong time to do it. There's too many people around. The plan was not to do it on a holiday.

But Judas comes to the Last Supper, and Jesus announces to him in front of everybody that you're going to betray me. Judas is in panic because it's now or never. The word's out.

If they're going to do it, it's got to be tonight. So he races out. It's got to be tonight.

Who's in charge? Not Judas. Jesus is. He controlled the timing.

God's in control. We need to remember that. Chapter 6. It's interesting to discover in this chapter that the entire course of history for the Jewish nation was changed because a pagan king hundreds of miles away

from Jerusalem couldn't sleep.

The real issue, biblically, is in Jerusalem, the rebuilding of the temple under Ezra and all that business. No, no. What changes the history is a king, a pagan king, who couldn't sleep that night.

By the way, there was another Persian king that couldn't sleep. Back in Daniel 6. There was a hereditary priesthood under the Medes. Remember, it was the Medo-Persian Empire.

The Medes had a hereditary priesthood called the Magi. Darius, as a favorite of Daniel, puts him in charge of the priesthood, which is hereditary, but he's a Jew. They plotted to get him killed.

That's what the lion's den is all about. And the king was tricked into signing the decree. Then he realized what he'd done.

He could not undo it, just like the situation in Esther. The guy that couldn't sleep all night, well, Daniel's in the lion's den as the king because he was worried for Daniel. He loved him.

He was the one that rushed in the morning. Daniel, are you okay? Interesting story. You don't realize it until you understand the dynamics behind it.

And, of course, Daniel was in charge of the Magi. He set up a secret cabal that watched for a star five centuries later. And when you see the Magi come to Jerusalem, there's a whole secret behind that that we do in a briefing package, and I'm already going to be messed up on time, so I better keep moving here.

Okay, anyway. Chapter 6, verse 1. On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles, and they were read before the king. Now, historians that were attached to the Persian court, they attended the monarch wherever he went and recorded what he did.

And this is even mentioned in Ezra, chapter 6. We find them in Herodotus, several places, recording even Xerxes, what he was doing and so forth. They kept a record, and also the Roman emperor did the same thing, typically. You keep track of what these guys are doing.

And so, there's a whole bunch of historical references. I'll spare you. Let's move on.

Verse 2. It was found written, he's having the chronicles, he can't sleep, so he has his chronicles, come and read to me. It's found written that Mordecai had told of Bacchanath and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. Remember, we talked about that, you know, a couple chapters back, where Mordecai found out about the plot, tipped off Esther, who tipped off the king, and these guys were apprehended, and taken care of.

Now, it's interesting, of all the texts that the librarian might choose to read, they happen to, of 12 years of rule, by the way, that Xerxes has been in charge. Happen to pick that point. What a coincidence, right? By the way, footnote, Xerxes, the king, will later lose his life through a conspiracy formed by Artabanus, the captain of the guard, and Asmatmetras, a eunuch and chamberlain.

In history, later on, that's the way Xerxes finally does die, is by a plot, by two guys. But that's not these two guys, but you get the idea. Anyway, verse 3. The king said, What honor and dignity hath done to Mordecai for this? Remember, at the time, through some kind of a screw-up, they never awarded Mordecai, who was the guy that unearthed all this thing.

Then said the king's servants, that ministered to him, There is nothing done for him. Gratitude is a duty as well as a virtue. Five years had passed without recognition.

Can you imagine how Mordecai must have felt? He did this big deal, saved the king's life, and he's got nothing. See, God's timing is always perfect. When we get impatient because something isn't happening right, who's in control? God is.

He may have a reason. And because of this, by waiting now, now's the time, there's gigantic leverage, as you'll see shortly. And by the way, it was also a breach of Persian law.

Royal beneficiaries were a distinct class that had their names on special lists according to the records in Herodotus. See, I think this is the reason, whether Esther knew it or not, that there was a 24-hour delay because there's an event that takes place this day that'll blow you away. Let's just get into this here.

This is fun. By the way, obviously, there was a huge bureaucratic oversight. When I read this, I couldn't help but think, I wonder if the oversight had to do... I don't know this.

It's not important to the story particularly, but the fact that Mordecai was a Jew. The reason I call your attention to that because in Paris, there was a guy by the name of Alfred Dreyfus, an officer that was accused falsely. Gigantic trial, gigantic miscarriage of justice.

I won't bore you the long... But there was someone watching that that was so upset because it was so obvious, just anti-Semitism in this situation. And there's a lot more to the story, but the main point is a guy by the name of Theodor Herzl, watching that in Paris, realized that until there's a Jewish state, they'll always be in jeopardy. And it's from that that started what we call today the Zionist Movement.

But it was prompted by the Alfred Dreyfus case in Paris. And it's very famous for a lot of other reasons too, but I find that interesting. But anyway, the main point, if Mordecai had been rewarded immediately, of course, there'd be no opportunity for this elaborate plan that starts to unfold that is about to be carried out.

Now, this coming scene from verse 4 is one of my favorites. You really got to visualize the reality of this. The king said to the... Who is in the court? He's got to do... The king wants to do something.

This is an injustice. This guy, Mordecai, has got to be rewarded. Who's in the court? And who comes walking this early in the morning because he wanted to get to the king early to do what? Get permission to hang Mordecai, right? Right? In comes Haman.

Haman has come into the outward court of the king's house to speak to the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that had been prepared for him. Verse 5, the king's servant said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth at the court. The king said, Let him come in.

Haman came in. The king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor? I got somebody I want to really honor. You got some ideas? How would you go about this? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to honor more than me? You know, he obviously has me in mind, right? I love this.

He who loves himself will have no rivals, right? Verse 7, And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honor, let the royal apparel be brought, which the king used to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head. Now by the way, to wear

the apparel of the king under normal circumstances would be a breach of Persian law, but the king could allow it. Anyway, Haman continues, And let this apparel and the horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, Ooh, is he going to be sorry he said that, that they may array the man with all whom the king delighteth to honor, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor.

So Haman lays out this grandiose plan, thinking he of course is the beneficiary, and that the guy should have appearance of royalty, just appearance of course, but still appearances of royalty, with a kingly robe and a royal steed and all that business, that he should be served by one of the most noble princes, and this noble prince should lead him through that town. I mean, this is the whole package. See, Haman didn't need any money, but he was really seeking honor, and so he lays this out.

It's interesting, Haman's lust for respect is what got him in trouble in the first place. But anyway, verse 10, And the king said to Haman, I want you to picture, can you just picture Haman's expression? He's ready for this. This is going to be great, right? The king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horses thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate, and let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken.

Whoops! Can you imagine? I don't know, if I was an actor, how you could pull that off. I don't know. If you're in charge of casting, who do you have to pick to handle this? Because that's got to be a scene.

And make haste. The delay's been already too long. It's very interesting.

He says, Mordecai the Jew. We get the impression that may have been the very words in the records. It's almost like an appellation there.

Verse 11, Then took Haman the apparel and the horse and arrayed Mordecai and brought him on horseback through the street of the city and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor. Boy, this couldn't happen to a more deserving couple of fellows, right? I mean, Mordecai deserved it. So did Haman.

I mean, the contrast here can only come from God. As I study the scripture, I'm fascinated to notice all through the scripture, God's sense of irony. Jacob deceives his father with blood on a coat.

And his own sons convince him that Joseph is killed by blood. I mean, as you watch all through Genesis, you always see irony everywhere. But this is incredible.

Mordecai the Jew, it occurs five times in this book. And Mordecai, whom Haman hated, has to be honored by Haman at the very time that Haman had assumed he'd be presiding over the hanging of Mordecai. He that wanted respect from Mordecai had to give respect to Mordecai.

Anyway, verse 12. Mordecai came again to the king's gate, but Haman hastened to his house mourning and having his head covered. Interesting.

Irony continues. Earlier, Mordecai was grieving for his people. And now Haman is grieving for his own humiliation.

He left his wife in the morning elated. And he comes dragging home with the bottom falling out of his world. Verse 13.

Haman told Zeresh, his wife, and all his friends everything that had befallen him. Then said his wise men, I think that were Magi, by the way, that's the term. And Zeresh, his wife, said unto him, If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shall surely fall before him.

What an ominous prognostication. It's not clear whether they know that Esther was a Jewess. If the queen is Jewish, Haman is in deep yogurt anyway.

He is clearly very politically incorrect at this point. All the foregoing things of that day, humiliating though they were, they recognized were omens of what's coming. He hadn't seen the half of it.

Before 24 hours are up, the drama is continuing. I won't give the whole background of the Magi, but anyway, we'll go on here. Off to the crucial banquet.

What a send-off. To be sent off to this big banquet by your friends who are warning, Boy, are you in trouble, fellow. Verse 14.

And when they were yet talking to him, the king Chamberlains came and hastened to bring Haman to the banquet. He was probably going to send his regrets. Sorry, I can't make it right now.

No, no. They came and got him. His world is crashing around his head.

And then he's hustled off to the second banquet. And what he originally aspired to, now he dreads. And by the way, I think Haman stands for all the anti-God activists who oppose God's people.

And we need to trust him. These historical figures which really happened, I think are indicative of much larger proportions. We could go through Israel's whole history of examples when men tried to set aside God's promises to their nation and yet failed.

Remember, the king couldn't sleep that night, right? But he that keepeth Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. Psalm 121 tells us. But in chapter 7, so the king and Haman came to the banquet with Esther the queen.

And as I indicated, again, this might have been a full banquet or it might be again one of these banquets with wine, who knows. But if Haman knew the connection between Mordecai and the queen, he must have been in really panic. It's not clear whether he knew that then yet or not.

He must have been terrified about going to this banquet. Verse 2, the king said again to Esther on the second day of the banquet of wine, What is thy petition, Queen Esther? And it shall be granted thee and what is thy request? And it shall be performed even to half the kingdom. There it is again, okay.

Now, this is the third time he asks her. She's played this very cool because he's really curious. He's anxious.

Boy, what is it she wants? You can have it. Tell me what it is. Esther apparently knew her timing.

She got right to the point. Verse 3, Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favor in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition and my people at my request. Now, she's identifying with the Jews.

So, whether it's obvious yet or not, she's announcing she's Jewish. Verse 4, For we are sold, I and my people, destroyed to be slain and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage.

What she's saying is if it was just sending slavery, she wouldn't bother the king. But even so, there's so much damage here that the king's enemy could never offset the damage it's going to do to his kingdom. She just throws that in.

And she points out her people had been sold. But to whom? To Haman. He paid what? The 10,000 talents for it, right? In other words, the king was bribed.

Haman put what? What was it? Sixty million dollars into the Democratic National Committee to get this all done here. Okay. Now, she's still probably apprehensive because she doesn't know what the king's reaction is going to be.

You remember when Vashti in the early chapter of Esther did something much more subtle. The king flew off in a drunken rage. Of course, he was drunk.

I assume he's not drunk here. But the point is he's capricious. He's dangerous.

Now, her pleading is very powerful. It's delivered at the right time very powerfully. For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, to perish.

This is rhetoric going on. This is articulation. She's doing quite a job.

Verse 5. Then King Azariah answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he? And where is he that durst presume in his heart to do so? King has picked up the ball here. He at once chooses to make her enemy his enemy. That went over big with Haman.

Can you imagine the look of terror on Haman's face? He's about to be exposed before the most powerful man on the face of the earth that had threatened his queen. Haman, big trouble. Verse 6. And Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman.

And then Haman was afraid before the king and queen. Boy, I imagine that's one of the big understatements in the King James English. Now here's an interesting thing happens here.

The king, arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath, went into the palace garden. The presumption we have is he was so angry that he had to go cool off. I visualize him actually shaking with anger.

He went out of the garden to catch his breath and think this through for a lot of reasons I'll come to. See, the king is faced with some interesting problems because this also highlights his own culpability and recklessness in giving Haman this authority in the first place. He realizes he'd been pretty stupid.

And he's an accomplice in effect. So he's in the jam in a sense that he's got to fix. So he's out there wrestling with this.

What's going on inside? Verse 7. The king, arising from the banquet in his wrath, went out in the palace. Then Haman stood up to make a request for his life to Esther the queen. For he saw that his life, that evil was determined against him by the king.

Haman figured out this was going to come to no good. He's panicked. So they all reclined while they're eating.

But he apparently got up to plead with Esther. Verse 8. Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine, and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther was. She's reclined.

They eat reclining there. And Haman somehow in pleading with her was not on her but close to it. He's on her divan or whatever.

And he is obviously intensely concerned. The king comes in and notice what the king says. Will he force the queen also before me in this house? He chooses to view the situation as if Haman is attacking the queen.

Now whether it looked that way as an unfortunate compromising position is one possibility, or he might have even been seeking an excuse because that will solve his problem to nail this guy. As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. The plural there is indicative.

You need to recognize that in this room there weren't three people. They were royal. So there are attendants, people serving, bodyguards.

In the margins there are attendants. And when Haman says, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? What do you think happened? It probably rained bodyguards. And they covered his face which is the classic Persian, Greek, and Roman technique for covering the face of a dead man.

He's a dead man whether he knows it yet or not. First of all to hide his face that he will not see the king. The king won't see him.

But it was also very symbolic in terms of getting ready. So he was begging to spare his life and he was in big trouble. Now the contrasts here are hard to even list.

Esther's darkest hour turns to light. Haman's day ablaze with light and confidence and boasting is now clouded in a fatal storm. Mordecai is pulled out of the sentence of death and given the highest honor throughout the kingdom.

And these contrasts are not only blessed, they're sudden. This all happened. The whole thing, all this stuff happened in 24 hours.

Verse 9, And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also the gallows fifty cubits high which Haman had made for Mordecai and who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. By the way, it's pretty obvious that some of these guys are probably glad to get this arrogant, egocentric guy out of the picture. So they jump on this right away.

But they add a piece of information you and I missed. Where are these gallows? In Haman's front yard. Then the king said unto him, Hang him there on.

And so anyway, it adds a certain barbarousness to Haman to think that he was going to, he'd only want Mordecai hung. He wanted it in his front yard. That's where apparently the gallows or the cross or the impaling stake, whatever it is, was standing.

Verse 10, So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai, and then was the king's wrath pacified. It's interesting, Haman was degraded just when he thought he had reached the goal of his ambition. It's interesting that he perished on the very stake that he established for his enemy.

Haman was characterized by boundless pride, boundless ambition, boundless cruelty. But as the poet says, the mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly small. With patience he stands waiting, but with exactness grinds he all.

It's kind of interesting to see this pattern. Pharaoh wasn't satisfied with the plagues where he finally released Israel. He had to chase them into the Red Sea where they all drowned.

I mean the Egyptians drowned. We have Ahab who not only was killed, the dogs licked the blood of Ahab as the prophets had indicated. Remember Herod was eaten with worms while on his throne, we discover.

And on it goes. Well, this is great. This is sort of, in a plot sense, the peak.

You see, at the close of this act we have an intermission and go out for whatever, but we're going to come back because there's still more to the story. See, this is chapter 7. We've got 8, 9, and 10 left for next time. There's a remaining challenge here because even though Haman's out of the picture, there's a date set.

Remember that date set almost a year away when the Jews throughout the empire were in jeopardy. That's still hanging out there. And the king can't undo that, strangely.

So it's a major problem. The Persian decree could still cause great slaughter of innocent people all because of the wicked actions of a now dead person, but it's still there. So stay tuned.

Film at 11. But as we talk about this, I found I got, gee, I read it pretty well. I got a couple minutes.

Let me make a couple of other comments here. We watch Haman plot against the Jews and we watch this drama with great fascination because it's just great drama, great literature, unequalled anywhere I know of. But there's a worse enemy than Haman plotting not just against the Jews, them too, especially, but also you and I. We have such an enemy.

And a worse fate than massacre awaits those who fall into his snare. And God has warned us to flee from the wrath to come. Now Esther, as she grew up, never dreamed, I'm sure.

She's obviously very comely, very attractive. She's probably aware of that. But she probably never dreamed that she would be in a position where God could use her in this kind of an opportunity.

But the hour did come for her and she did succeed. Had she not succeeded, God would have found another way. But the point is that's what occurred.

So what you and I need to do, I suggest, is to wisely use the present so that when that hour of opportunity comes for you, you will also be able to speak to suffer or to save. A couple of other things that we could go through this chapter again and pick out all kinds of lessons. I'll just suggest a couple here.

It was interesting to observe carefully how Esther approached the royal throne. She, first of all, was attired properly. You and I have the opportunity to go before the throne room of the universe, but we should also be in the proper attire, clothed with humility, Peter tells us in his first letter, among other things.

It's interesting that she approached the throne not by the law. It was unlawful for her to do what she did. She approached not by law, but how? By grace.

You got it. She also approached the throne in a certain sense in confidence and knowing what pleased Him. She prepared herself in a way that she knew would please Him.

Hebrews chapter 11, verse 6 tells us to do the same thing. Now, one thing she needed, we don't. If you study her petition before the king, it was if this and if this and if that and if that, right? There are no ifs with us in our approach to the king.

We can approach him much more boldly and confidently. We should approach him as a suppliant, as a sinner, and we do approach the king by way of a mediator, his very son. So those are all some thoughts.

Now, we've used our time to get through three chapters, and I didn't want to break it because it would be almost unfair. Those three chapters hang together to be, in my mind, one of the most exciting dramas just in terms of classic theater, if you will. But it really happened, and it teaches, there's a great deal we can learn about God's dealings, but the very fact that all these coincidences are manipulated by one who doesn't play dice.

Even Einstein pointed out that God does not play dice, or somebody else quipped if he did, God would win. So we, I think, learn a lot that there are no real coincidences in God's kingdom, and as we mature spiritually, we'll begin to discern coincidences that are indications of his leading and what he would have us do. But there is more to come.

The main problem is also still ahead of us in the book of Esther. So what we're going to do, we'll cover the rest of the book next time that we meet. After that, we're still not through with the book.

We're going to spend one session on unraveling the codes that are hidden in the book of Esther. Luther, Martin Luther wanted Esther thrown out of the Bible because it didn't have the name of God in it. Luther did not know how to look.

He wasn't Jewish. Hidden in the book of Esther are five classic acrostics that are mentioned in the ancient rabbinical literature. We'll show you those, but we've also recently discovered through Rabbi Yaakov Ramsel a handful of others.

There are encryptions hidden. The book of Esther means something hidden. And then our final session on the book of Esther will be to review the book in a totally different way and discover that the book of Esther can be viewed as the book of Romans, theologically, in some fascinating ways.

Now, Haman is pretty easy to identify. He's the flesh. Who is Mordecai? Who is Esther? Who is the king? And we'll sort through some of that and see.

We'll just try it on, see if it fits, and that will give us a whole another slice, if you will, through this incredible little ten-chapter book that's just fun to read. It's just incredible. You just can't help but want to dramatize it in your imagination.

It's a gripping, gripping tale. And early every year, the Jews still celebrate the Feast of Purim in which it celebrates the book of Esther. The book of Esther is read and they still celebrate that to this day.

And we'll talk all about that next time. Let's stand for a closing word of prayer. And let's bow our hearts.

Well, Father, we thank You to come before Your throne. We're grateful for Your Word. We delight in its variety, Father, from heavy exhortations and prophecies and poetry and so many forms that You've chosen to communicate with us, but we enjoy particularly the drama of the book of Esther.

We thank You, Father, that of all the lessons it teaches, we thank You, Father, that You do indeed never fail to watch over Your people, sometimes very visibly and sometimes in the quiet stillness of coincidences You provide for all of us. We pray, Father, for Your people in Your land that are under threat from the world, from the forces of darkness. We thank You, Father, that You that keep Israel neither slumber nor sleep.

And we do pray as You've instructed us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. And yet, Father, we pray that knowing that there will be no peace until the Prince of Peace is on the scene. But, Father, we also thank You for the many lessons in the book of Esther, lessons to sense the time, realization that all of us may be being positioned for a time such as this.

We would pray, Father, for discernment of the times and for courage in our own resolve for the kingdom challenges that stand before us. We would pray, Father, indeed, that through Your Holy Spirit You would draw us ever more deeply into Your Word and make us ever more sensitive to what You would have of each of us in these days. We would indeed ask, Father, that You would help each of us to be prepared to grow and grace the knowledge of the Lord and Savior, to discern and put on the whole armor of God for the challenges that are on our immediate horizon.

We thank You for Your Word, Father. We thank You for Your Spirit. And above all, we thank You for the redemption that You've provided for each of us in Jesus Christ.

For indeed, we commit ourselves into Your hands, pleading His shed blood on our behalf, the blood of Yeshua HaMashiach, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. God bless you.

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