

For Such a Time

by Chuck Smith

God works behind the scenes to accomplish his eternal purposes, and we must trust in him and have faith in his plan.

Duration: 35:20

Scripture: Psalm 96:1-2, Psalm 96:4-7, Psalm 96:10

Topics: "Esther"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by setting the historical context of the Babylonian kingdom falling and being replaced by the Medo-Persian Empire, with King Hashiris ruling over the world. The king decides to show off his beautiful wife Vastai during a feast for his lords, but she refuses to come, causing a crisis among the men. The speaker then transitions to discussing the importance of the coming again of Jesus Christ and the hope of his soon return. The sermon concludes with a reminder to trust in God's plan, even when we don't understand it, and a reading of Psalm 96 emphasizing the greatness and glory of the Lord.

Transcript

Shall we turn in our Bibles now to Psalm 96 for our scripture reading? And I'll read the first and the odd-numbered verses. Pastor Brian will lead you in the reading of the even-numbered verses. Let's stand as we read the Word of God.

O sing unto the Lord a new song, sing unto the Lord all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless his name, show forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among the people.

For the Lord is great and greatly to be praised, he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Honor and majesty are before him, strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name, bring an offering and come into his courts. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, fear before him all the earth.

Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth, the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved, he shall judge the people righteously. Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad, let the sea

roar and the fullness thereof. Let the field be joyful and all that is therein, then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth and he shall judge the world with righteousness and the people with his truth.

Let's pray. Father how thankful we are for the hope of the coming again of Jesus Christ. Coming Lord to judge the world in righteousness.

Lord as we look at the events in the world in which we live today, we realize Lord that it's important that your coming is very soon and we thank you Lord that you have promised and given us that hope of your soon return. We ask now Lord that you would bless the study of your word this morning. Do a special work in each of our hearts right now, opening up our hearts, our minds to the receiving and the understanding of your truth.

Blessed Father we pray as we look at your word together in Jesus' name, amen. You may be seated. This week as we move through the Bible and continue to move through the Bible, we're in the book of Esther and this morning we'll be studying the book of Esther and tonight we'll be studying the entire book as we look at this interesting story in the Old Testament of God's providential care in the preserving of his people.

God does work in mysterious ways his wonders to perform. Now people have often thought that that was a scripture. It isn't.

It's just a truth. It's a truth that's expressed in a poem. God works in wonderful ways his mysteries to perform.

I thought it was a scripture for a long time. In fact I would have sworn it was a scripture. I'd heard it quoted so many times and someone challenged me one time and I said well I'll find it for you but I couldn't.

It's just a wonderful truth. It is true. God is at work in mysterious ways his wonders to perform and surely we see that in the book of Esther.

As we study the book of Esther we see that God is working behind the scenes in wonderful ways as he is working out his eternal purposes. The story of Esther does reveal how that God is in control of our lives. He's working out his purposes in us before we are even aware of it.

I do not know why off around me my hopes all shattered seem to be. God's perfect plan I cannot see but someday I'll understand. Someday he'll make it plain to me.

Someday when I his face shall see. Someday from sin I will be free and someday I'll understand. Why is it do you suppose that God hides his purposes from us? Things happen in our lives and we look at them and we wonder why did God allow this to happen and we find ourselves many times challenging or questioning God because of our circumstances.

But what God is seeking to do is to teach us the lessons of faith. Though I don't understand it I know that he is at work and God often just says just trust me. But we find that difficult don't we sometimes just to trust him.

I think of that story of the fellow who was sliding down this hillside and he was coming to this cliff with a big drop off and as he was just getting to the cliff there was this little shrub and he reached out and he

grabbed it and as he was sort of hanging over the cliff he looked up and he cried God help me and he heard a still small voice that said just let go son trust me. He held on for a while longer and again he looked up and he said oh God please help me and he heard the voice again saying I told you son trust me just let go. He looked up once more and he said is there anybody else up there? We don't like that uh just trust me do we? We want to know why God is doing certain things in our lives.

You know it's interesting my hindsight is so clear. Looking back 2020 I can see the hand of God all the way through in the circumstances of my life and and it's wonderful to look back and connect the dots and you can see how that God was in every circumstance. He was at work.

He was there. But my foresight oh it is so blurry. I wonder so many times Lord why did you allow me to get into this mess and I have difficulty with my circumstances as I try to understand the plan and the purposes of God in the things that are not really very tasteful to me.

In fact I find them rather bitter experiences but yet in time I see that God had his hand in all of this and he was at work. He's watching over. He's accomplishing his perfect purposes in my life.

Now the book of Esther is exciting because in the book of Esther we see how God is working far in advance as he is working out his purposes in the lives of these people until he brings us to that place of such a time as this. When all of a sudden we begin to realize why God was working and what God was doing in these situations bringing me up to this point where now it's going to be revealed why God had allowed all of these things to take place. As we look at the book of Esther we know that Satan knew that God was planning to send a savior into the world.

His only begotten son. That he was to be a descendant of Abraham and of David. God had declared that and Satan knew that and so Satan sought to thwart the plan of God.

If he can just eliminate the Jews then God's purposes of sending the savior will be thwarted. So it is Satan's desire to destroy the Jewish nation and that's the story of the book of Esther. His strategy was to kill all of the Jews so that God could not send his son into the world and this he will seek to accomplish by putting into the heart of one of the wicked leaders in the Persian empire to have such a hatred for the Jews that he will seek to exterminate all of them.

And so with this insight let's take a look at the story of Esther. All of these events are relevant as they bring us to such a time as this. The Babylonian kingdom has fallen.

It has been replaced by the Medo-Persian empire and King Ahasuerus is now ruling over the world. The 127 provinces are all under his control. He is celebrating his greatness and all with a feast for his lords and during the feast as they are all getting pretty drunk he decides to show off his beautiful wife Vashti.

So he orders her to come in and to sort of pray to herself before his friends that they might be envious of his beautiful wife. But Vashti refuses to come and of course this created a real crisis. All of the men said you know can't have this you know you're everybody will find out that the queen refused to come didn't obey your orders and hey we'll all be in trouble.

All of our wives will rebel against us and you know it'll be chaos. So you've got to do something very powerful, very strong. You've got to take action.

So King Ahasuerus actually deposed Vashti from being the queen. Cut her off. And so it was just a warning to all the women you know when your husband speaks you know jump.

And it was a thing that didn't develop until later in the history of mankind but it was preserved for those men of Persia. Now after a period of time the king began to miss Vashti and he was a little lonely so it was decided that they would have a beauty contest and the most beautiful woman in the kingdom the king could choose and she would become the new queen over Persia. In all of these things God is at work.

These are the incidents that are taking place. God is putting together the picture and working out his purposes in these things. So this man in the kingdom with this great ego who has sort of buddied himself up to the king.

The king has made an edict that when he walks down the street everybody should bow to him. Well Mordecai who happens to be a cousin to Esther because he is a Jew refuses to bow to Mordecai. It really got under his skin.

He just became enraged within because this fellow would not bow when he walked down the street. And so the Lord just again sort of setting this scene. Now Mordecai encourages Esther to join this beauty contest and she spends a year in preparation for the presentation to the king.

Baths and with oils and all and finally her time comes to go before the king and when he sees her his heart is smitten and so he chooses her to be the new queen over the Persian empire. Now Mordecai is sort of trying to call the shots from outside the palace. He hangs around the palace a lot because his cousin Esther who he raised, she was an orphan, he raised her and just sort of watch over her.

And as he was there he heard a couple of fellows plotting against the king. They were planning to assassinate Ahasuerus and so Mordecai informed Esther, his cousin, there in the palace that there was this assassination conspiracy and so it was investigated. It was found to be true and so these two men were put to death.

Now again as the scenes are coming together here's this Haman, this wicked man who is so filled with ego and all that he wants everybody you know to just bow to him. Mordecai refusing and so he devises a means whereby he might destroy all of the Jews. Not just Mordecai, he wants to get rid of all of them.

So he comes to Ahasuerus and he said you know there is a group of people within the kingdom who are always rebellious and it's just best to get rid of them and I would like to give to the treasury a large amount of money and let's set a date in which all of the Jews within the kingdom will be put to death. And to give sort of an incentive to the people to kill the Jews, whatever property or whatever possessions they had, if you killed the Jew it became yours. And so this was signed into a order by the king and Haman was planning in order that day that he would get rid of the Jews within the kingdom.

So as this day was approaching Mordecai sent a message to Esther within the palace and said you know you need to go to the king and you need to plead for your people because of this edict that we are all to be put to death on this certain day. So Esther sent a message back and said you know you just don't go in before the king, that's not protocol. If you go in and he hasn't called you to come in, if he doesn't raise his scepter to you the guards are there and they'll put you to death immediately.

And Mordecai sent the message back to Ruth and said to her you know don't think that if this edict goes through you're going to be spared. For if you, he said in verse 14 of chapter 4, if you all together hold your

peace at this time their deliverance will arise from another place. In other words God's going to take care of his people but you and your father's house will be destroyed.

And who knows whether that you have come into the kingdom for such a time as this. How do you know that this isn't the very purpose of your existence? How do you know that God didn't create you for just such a time as this? So Esther sent the message to her cousin Mordecai and said have all of the people pray for me and I will go before the king and if I perish, I perish. A commitment, I'll do it and I might perish but if I do I perish.

So Esther went in before the king and he raised to her the golden scepter and she came and kissed it and he said what is it that you want sweetheart? I'll give you anything to the half of the kingdom. And she said I want you to come to a feast that I have prepared for you and for Haman. And so Haman went home and he said to his family my you know I am in such great favor that Esther has invited only me and the king to come to her feast.

And so he was just really very excited about that. And so he came with the king to the feast that Esther had prepared and so at the end of the feast the king again touched by the beauty of Esther and all said you know tell me what would you like me to do for you? I'll give you anything to half of my kingdom. And she said I want you to come tomorrow again with Haman for another feast that I will prepare.

And so Haman went home again and bragging to his family you know the position and power and all that he had. And that night the king couldn't go to sleep. He had one of those restless nights where he just couldn't drop off to sleep.

So he decided to have the fellow there read him the chronicles of the kingdom. And as the fellow was reading the chronicles of the kingdom he read of this attempt to assassinate him by these men. And how it was reported by Mordecai that this plot was going on.

And so he said what did we do for Mordecai? And the fellow said well it looks like there's nothing in the records. Looks like we didn't do anything. He said well we can't let that go.

And so just about that time Haman came in and he said to Haman what should I do for a man that I would really like to honor? And Haman blinded by his own ego thought to himself who would the king want to honor more than me? And so he said well I would say that you should let him put on the king's robes and ride on the king's royal steed through the city. And as he does let a man go before him and cry to the people behold the man that the king wants to honor. So the king said splendid idea.

Haman get my steed and take my robe and put it on Mordecai and you go before him and proclaim the man that the king wants to honor. Oh he was just chagrined but had to do it because it was the order of the king. He went home afterwards and told his family oh man you can't believe what happened to me.

You know this is horrible. You know and they said well you're a big trouble man. You know the it's a serious matter here.

So they called him and said you know the queen is feast is ready and you have to show up. So he went to the feast and as they were feasting at the end of the feast again the king said to Esther tell me what you desire. I'll give you anything to the half of my kingdom.

And she said all I want is my life and the life of my people. And the king said what are you talking about? He said she said there has been a conspiracy against my people to put us all to death and you know to take our fortunes. And the king said who would do such a thing? And she said this wicked man Haman here at the table.

And the king was so upset he went out and began to walk and pace in the garden. And as he did Haman grabbed hold of Esther and began to say you know help me help me. And as the king came back in she he was holding on to her and sort of shaking her.

And the king said what in the world is this? Are you trying to rape my wife right here in the palace? And they covered Haman's face and they took him out. And he had prepared a gallows for Mordecai 75 feet high. And they said hang him on his own gallows.

And so that's where that idea comes. The man was hung on his own gallows. That was Haman.

And as God was protecting the Jews from his desire to destroy them. So there are some interesting lessons that we can gain from this story. God is working his eternal purposes in our lives through circumstances that we often do not understand.

And we don't often recognize that in these things God is actually working behind the scenes. God's often years ahead of us. He's working out a plan that we won't really understand for years to come.

The events of today I may not understand today. I may not understand them until years later. And then as I begin to look back and connect the dots I can see oh yes I can see what God was doing there.

Oh yes I see it now. But we don't always see it when it's happening. So it is teaching us to just trust in the Lord.

As the scripture said all things are working together for good to those who love God. And so though you're facing situations that seem to be so wrong and you can't understand them just trust the Lord. Just let go the Lord says it and just trust me.

And though I can't see what God is doing I know that God is at work and will be at work in my life using the circumstances today for his glory as he accomplishes his eternal purposes in me and through me. Now there is one interesting postscript to this story I would like to point out. Haman we read was an Agagite.

Who were the Agagites? Well the Agagites were the descendants of King Agag who was the king of the Amalekites. Who were the Amalekites? Well the Amalekites were a race of people who when the children of Israel were first coming out of their bondage in Egypt they met them to seek to destroy them. And they fought against them and God gave victory to these slaves freed slaves with their sticks and with their stones against the fort against the army of the Amalekites.

Now God said to Moses at that time I'm going to have a war with the Amalekites. When you come into the land that I give to you and you're established and you become strong then I want you to come back and destroy the Amalekites completely. And so it came to pass when Saul became the first king over the Israel.

And as the kingdom was established in Saul's hands the Lord spoke to the prophet Samuel and said the time has come for my vengeance against the Amalekites because they're attempt to destroy you. And so

the Lord gave to Samuel the orders to tell Saul to take the army of Israel and go down and utterly wipe out the Amalekites. Don't leave any of them alive.

Destroy their everything even their livestock. Don't leave anything living. Utterly destroy them.

So Saul went down with the army and God delivered the Amalekites into his hand but he disobeyed God. He didn't utterly wipe them out. He brought back many of the cattle and many of the sheep.

And when Samuel came out to meet him he said as the Lord lives I've done everything the Lord told me to do. And Samuel said if you did everything the Lord told you to do how come I hear the sheep and how come I hear the cattle. And of course he had brought King Agag alive from the Amalekites.

And so King Agag tried to talk his way out of it but Samuel took care of him. But it was a lie on Saul's part. He did not destroy the Amalekites.

He did not destroy the descendants of King Agag. And here we find years later this descendant of King Agag, Haman the Agagite, is now again seeking to utterly destroy the nation of Israel, the people of Israel. In the Bible the Amalekites are a type of the life of the flesh, living after the flesh, being controlled by your fleshly desires.

God has ordered us to utterly wipe out the flesh life, to crucify it, to reckon the old life to be dead, crucified with Christ. Mortify, the Bible said, or put to death the deeds of the flesh that you might live. There are a lot of people that are hesitant to deal so severely with the flesh life.

There are things of the flesh that we sort of coddle, we want to hold on to, we don't want to give up. But you can be sure, as with the children of Israel, with Saul's incomplete victory, not obeying God fully, leaving a part of the Agagites alive, ultimately it will come back and seek to destroy you. That is why it is so important that in dealing with our flesh we give no place for the flesh life, to fulfill the desires thereof, but we reckon it to be dead, crucified with Christ, that we might have victory over the flesh life.

It is a constant problem with the believer. The flesh, the Bible said, is lusting against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, and these two are contrary. We don't always do the that we would.

We have a, it seems, lifelong battle with the flesh. It's a problem that all believers do experience, whether I'm going to yield to my fleshly passions and desires, or whether or not I'm going to yield to the Spirit of God. And God orders, reckon the old flesh to be dead, crucified with Christ, and that is God's answer to the flesh life.

So, as Paul wrote to the Galatians, they that are Christ have crucified the flesh with its affections and with its lust. May God help us to do that, not to hold on to part of the flesh life and say, well, I'll give up everything but this, but I need to hang on to this. No, you don't, and don't try, because it will ultimately rise up to destroy you.

Father, we thank you for the victory that we do have over the life of the flesh, and we pray, Father, that we might just really indeed deal harshly, severely with the flesh life, giving no place to the flesh to live after the lust thereof. And may we, Lord, just really walk after the things of the Spirit and live a life, Lord, that is pleasing in your sight. We realize, Lord, that there are those here today that are sort of holding on to some of the aspects of the old life of the flesh, unwilling to give it up, unwilling to let it go, and Lord, not realizing how destructive and how destroying it can be to their spiritual walk.

And so, Lord, today we pray, Lord, that as you deal with us, we might be willing, Lord, to just really give up the life of the flesh, that we might live after the Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen. Shall we stand? The pastors are down here at the front to minister to you today, and it could very well be that there are areas of the old flesh that you're sort of hanging on to, and it's time to let it go, time to reckon it to be dead, crucified with Christ, that you might live.

Otherwise, look out, because if it isn't utterly destroyed, it will come back to haunt you and to defeat you. So, I would encourage you as we're dismissed, come on forward and just say, would you pray for me? There's an area in my life that I need to surrender to the Lord, and I've been holding on to it, but I want to just give it up today and surrender it to Him. And they'll be very happy to pray for you, and you can go home today with real victory in your life, knowing that the old life, the life of the flesh, reckoned dead, and now living after the Spirit, a life that is pleasing to our Lord.

And so may the Lord be with you, may He bless you, may He guide you, and may you be strengthened daily by His power and His Spirit working in your life. In Jesus' name, the Lord bless thee, and keep thee. The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee, and be gracious unto thee.

The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. God bless you.

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