

(Through the Bible) Esther

by Chuck Smith

The Book of Esther tells the story of God's preservation of His people through the bravery and faith of Esther and Mordecai.

Duration: 1:09:14

Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:22, Romans 8:8, Romans 8:13, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 2:20, Galatians 5:24, Colossians 3:5

Topics: "Obedience To God", "Spiritual Commitment"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the story of Esther from the Bible. He begins by explaining the background of the story, including the king's unsuccessful adventure against Greece and his return home. The king decides to hold a beauty contest to find a new queen, as he misses his previous queen, Vastai. The speaker emphasizes the importance of obeying God's command to put our flesh to death and not making provisions for our sinful desires. He also highlights Esther's complete commitment to God, as she gathers the Jews to fast and pray before going to the king, saying, 'If I perish, I perish.' The speaker encourages the audience to have the same level of commitment in their own lives.

Transcript

to the Book of Esther, or our study. The Book of Esther is not in a chronological order in these books of history. If the Book of Esther were placed in a chronological order, it would have to actually come before the Book of Nehemiah.

Now, Ezra records the first return from the captivity. Some 40 years later, Esther came on the scene. And some 40 years after that, Nehemiah came on the scene.

So, the Book of Esther fits about halfway between the rebuilding of the temple, the decree given by Cyrus, and the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem, the decree given by Artaxerxes to Nehemiah. About halfway between fits in the story of the Book of Esther. And the story of the Book of Esther, though it doesn't mention the word God, yet God's overruling providence is seen throughout the entire book.

The Jews hold this as one of the most important books in the Bible. And it is a very beautiful story of God's preservation of His people. So, the Book of Esther begins with an introduction to her husband, who was the ruler of the Persian Empire, ruling over 127 nations of the ancient world.

He is the Xerxes of secular history, called Artaxerxes or called Ahasuerus or Artaxerxes, but he is the Xerxes of secular history. And he was having a great feast for the lords, the princes and all that lasted for almost a half of a year, about 180 days of feasting. And so you can imagine in that length of time, you get pretty well glutted to where, you know, what's new after that length of time.

So, he decided that he would call his wife Vashti into the feasting area. Now, in that culture, of course, the women and the men were kept publicly pretty well separated. And the king had his harem and he also had his wife, the queen, but along with her was quite a harem.

And he decided that he would send for Vashti, that she might come in and probably without a veil, so that the men could behold her beauties, because she was a very beautiful woman. And so just sort of seeking, it would seem to show off her beauty to these other men, he called for her to come on in to the feast. But Vashti refused to come, which in that culture was just something unheard of.

Women were actually considered just one step above a slave. They had very little rights. And when Vashti refused the king's commandment to come in, all of the rest of the fellows said, hey king, you're going to have to do something about this, because when we get home and our wives hear that your wife refused to come in at your command, we're not going to be able to handle the women.

And so you've got to move dramatically and drastically in this case. One of the astrologers suggested to him that as a punishment for her disobedience, she be deposed from her position as queen, that she be placed out of that royal position and no longer be the queen. And this punishment was decided upon Vashti so that she was deposed from being the queen.

And so after these things, chapter two, the wrath of King Ahasuerus was appeased and he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what was decreed against her. Then said the king's servant that ministered unto him, let there be fair young virgins sought for the king. Now, the feast that he had was the feast in preparation of his unsuccessful invasion of Greece.

And before two of the great battles of history, this feast was sort of in preparation of that so that between chapters one and two, he then went off on this expedition against Greece. And so between the two chapters, there's a lapse of about four years time. And so he went on this unsuccessful adventure against Greece and he has now returned and settling back at home again and he remembers Vashti and probably begins to miss her a bit.

And so his servant said, hey, you know, why don't you have a beauty contest and miss Persia? And gather together all of the beautiful young virgins in the kingdom and let them come before the king and whichever one pleases the king the most, let her become the queen in place of Vashti. And so there was in Shushan, which was the winter capital of Persia and there the king had his winter palace. It got too hot in the summertime.

They had a different summer palace, but it was a great place for a winter palace. And there was there in the city a young girl whose name was Esther. She was a Jew.

And her cousin Mordecai, who was actually a descendant of the same family of Saul, a Benjamite, and he had raised Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother. And Esther was very beautiful, very fair. And after her father and mother died, he took her as his own daughter.

So it came to pass when the king's commandment and decree was heard and when many of the young girls were gathered together unto Shushan the palace to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also into the king's house to the custody of Hegai, the keeper of the women. And she pleased him and obtained kindness of him. And he speedily gave her the things for purification with such things as belonged to her and seven maidens, which were necessary for her out of the king's house.

And he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women. For Esther had not showed her nationality nor her family, for Mordecai, her cousin, had charged her that she should not show it. Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house to know how Esther was faring and what had become of her.

Now when every maid's turn was come to go into King Ahasuerus, after that she had been for twelve months, according to the manner of women, so were the days of their purifications accomplished. That is, they spent six months bathing with oils of myrrh and six months with sweet odors and with other things for the purifying of the women. So, can you imagine a beauty shop of that caliber spending twelve months to fix you up? And afterwards then it came every maiden unto the king and whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house.

So they were brought in, spent an evening with the king and then they were placed in the harem. And they were not called, they were just taken care of and all as a part of the king's harem, but they may never see the king again unless he was pleased and would call them back, but they just became a part of the harem. Now when it came Esther's turn to come into the king, she required nothing special, only that which Hegai, the king's chamberlain, told her that she should wear, as far as the apparel, all she just left it up to him.

And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all of those that looked upon her. And Esther was taken unto the king Ahasuerus into the house royal in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth in the seventh year of his reign. And the king loved Esther above all the women and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he had set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

Then the king made a great feast unto all of his princes, all of his servants, even Esther's feast. And he made a release to the provinces, he gave gifts according to the state of the king. And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat at the king's gate.

And Esther had not yet showed her family nor her people, as Mordecai had charged her, for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai like when she was brought up with him. Now it so happened that in those days, Mordecai was hanging around the gates and he heard a couple of the king's servants plotting to assassinate the king. And so Mordecai reported to the king, actually to Esther, and Esther certified or told the king using Mordecai's name.

And so they had a big inquiry and they found out that the assassination plot was for real. Therefore, the two men who were plotting against the king were hanged on a tree and it was recorded in the chronicles of the king. And as we get into chapter 3, after these things, the king Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the son of Hamadathah, the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above all the princes that were with him.

And the king's servants that were with the king's gate bowed and revered Haman, for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence. Then the king's servant which were in the king's gate said unto Mordecai, Why do you transgress the king's commandment? Now

it came to pass, when they spoke daily to him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman to see whether Mordecai's matter would stand, for he had told them that he was a Jew.

And so when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then Haman was full of wrath, and he thought scorned to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had shown him the people of Mordecai, and he sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai. So in the first month, that is the month of Nisan or April, in the twelfth year of the king Ahasuerus, they cast purr, now purr is a lot, and so they cast lots before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, and that is the month of Adar. In other words, he was wanting to set a day for the extermination of the Jews, and this was in the first month, and they began to cast month by month the lot to see what month they should exterminate them, sort of following a superstition, and the lot fell on the twelfth month, which would be the month of March, because they started with the month of April, so it brought them around to the month of March that the lot finally fell on that month, the month for the extermination of the Jews.

Now, before we go any further, I want to point out something that to me is fascinating. This fellow Haman, notice it says of him that he was an Agagite. Now, Agag was of the nation of Amaleks, and the Amaleks, or the Amalekites, were always a type of the flesh in the Old Testament.

Now, you remember when Samuel came to King Saul, he said, God wants you to go down and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all of these people. Don't leave anyone alive of the women, of the children, or don't take any prey or any loot, not even their cattle, their sheep. Don't take anything.

Utterly destroy everything. And so Saul went down against the Amalekites and God gave to him a victory over the Amalekites. However, he did not obey the voice of the Lord, but he saved alive the best cattle, the best sheep, and also he saved alive Agag, the king, and no doubt others of the king's family.

So as Saul was coming back from the battle, Samuel went out to meet him. And Saul greeted Samuel saying, As the Lord liveth, I have done all that God has told me to do. And the prophet Samuel said, If you did all that God told you to do, how come I hear the cattle? And how come I hear the sheep? He said, Oh well, you see, they were so nice, fat, good animals.

We decided we would bring them back and sacrifice them unto our God. And Samuel said to obey is better than to sacrifice and to hearken more than the fat of lambs. And he said, You have done foolishly and because you have rejected God from ruling over you, so God now has rejected you from ruling over his people.

And the kingdom is going to be taken away from you. Because of his disobedience, not utterly destroying Amalek, saving Agag alive. Now here, interestingly enough, this fellow Haman, who several years later, some 600 years or so later, Haman now is seeking to exterminate the Jews.

Now, why would God make, first of all, such a horrible kind of a command to utterly destroy them all? Looking at the picture in Samuel, it seems like maybe God is very cruel in his demand. Yet, because God can look down the road and see what lies in the future, he realized that if he didn't destroy them all, there would arise one day one of the descendants that would seek to destroy all of God's people. Had Saul been obedient to God, Haman would have never existed.

And his edict and his attempt to destroy God's people would have never been. God could see that far in advance. But when you get into the type, it becomes even more obvious because Amalek is a type of our flesh.

The flesh life. Living after the flesh. And God has ordered that our flesh be put to death if ye by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh, then ye shall live.

Know ye not that your old man was crucified with Christ? God does not have any program of reform for your flesh. Paul said, I know in me that is in my flesh there dwelleth no good thing. And God has ordered the complete extermination of the flesh.

Not to live after the flesh. Not to walk after the flesh. But to reckon that old man, the old nature to be dead.

And to give no place to the flesh to fulfill the lust thereof. And God has provided that through the cross of Jesus Christ, I might be able to reckon my old man to be dead with Christ. As Paul wrote, I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I. But Christ liveth in me, and the life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

The truth is this. God has ordered your flesh to be put to death, crucified. Reckon it to be dead.

Give no place for it. If you as Saul fail to obey the command of God and seek making, and you continue to make provisions for your flesh, just continue to live after the flesh, or you allow an area, well that's just a little area where I'm indulging my flesh. You can be sure that your incomplete obedience to God's command of the destruction of the flesh will come back some day to destroy you, and to destroy your spiritual walk in life.

We are to make no provisions for the flesh to fulfill its desires, its lust. We are to walk after the spirit. We are to live after the spirit, making no provisions for the flesh.

So, here Saul's disobedience, allowing the flesh to still remain, is now coming back to haunt his descendants years later as Haman the Agagite was placed in this position of prominence by Ahasuerus, and the command given that whenever he walks by everybody should bow and do him obeisance. But this Mordecai refused to do it. Now, the Jews took very literally the law of God that you're not to bow down and do reverence to any graven image or any likeness.

And Mordecai was carrying that one step further. He wasn't going to bow to any man. He would only bow to God, only bow his knee before God.

He would only show that kind of reverence to God. And so, those that were standing around said, Hey man, how come you're not bowing? You know, it's the law. And he just would say, I'm a Jew.

We don't bow to anybody. We only bow to God. And so, someone called Haman's attention to it because they wanted to have a test case to see if the law would stand.

And so, they called Haman's attention to the fact that this Jew wouldn't bow. And so, Haman then took notice of it and he became extremely angry. And there is where he plotted to put to death all of the Jews.

Not just Mordecai. He was going to kill them all. And so, seeking then the guidance of the spirits, they cast lots to see what would be the most appropriate month to carry out this edict.

And so, they cast Pur. It fell on the twelfth month, which is in the Jewish calendar, the month of March. And Haman said unto the king of Asherah, there is a certain people that are scattered abroad and dispersed among the people of all the provinces of your kingdom.

And their laws are diverse from all people, and neither do they keep the king's laws. Therefore, it is not for the king's prophet to allow them to remain. And he said, if it pleases the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business to bring it into the king's treasury.

Actually, he was offering here a bribe of about nineteen million dollars. Now, what he was planning to do is kill the Jews and confiscate all their goods, and so he was going to pay it with that. He was just going to rip them all off after he killed them.

And so, the king took off his ring that had the signet, and he gave it to Haman, and he said, make the proclamation and sign it, or put the signet on it. And let the post, the messengers, go out throughout all the provinces. Now, Darius is the Persian king who set up an excellent postal system throughout the Persian empire.

And so, go ahead and proclaim it throughout the empire that these people are to be put to death. On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month. And so, the letters were sent by the post throughout all the king's provinces to destroy and to kill and to cause to perish all Jews, both young and old, little children, women, in one day, even the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of March, to take the spoil of them for a price.

So, go ahead and kill them, and you can have whatever they have. The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all the people that they should be ready against that day. And the post went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace, and the king and Haman sat down to drink.

But the city of Shushan was perplexed. When Mordecai perceived all that was done, he tore his clothes, he put on sackcloth with ashes, and he went out into the midst of the city, and he cried with a loud and bitter cry. And he even came before the king's gate, for none might enter into the king's gate who was clothed with sackcloth.

And in every province, wherever the king's commandment and decree had come, there was a great mourning among the Jews and fasting and weeping and wailing, and many lay in sackcloth and ashes. So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and they told her, and the queen was exceedingly grieved and she sent clothes to Mordecai. And she said, take off that sackcloth, but he received it not.

Then Esther called for Hetak, one of the king's chamberlains, who was appointed to attend her, and she gave him a commandment to go out and find out from Mordecai just what was going on. So Hetak went forth to Mordecai, out in the streets, and Mordecai told him all that had happened unto him. The sum of money that Haman had promised to pay the king's treasury for the Jews to destroy them.

Also he gave him a copy of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to show it to Esther and to declare it unto her and to charge her that she should go in unto the king and make supplication unto him and to make a request before him for her people. So Hetak came and told Esther the words of Mordecai, and again Esther spoke to Hetak and said, go out and tell Mordecai all the king's servants and

the people of the king's provinces know that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king, into the inner court, who has not been called, there is one law and that is to be put to death, except such as to whom the king shall hold out the golden scepter that he may live. But I've not been called to come into the king for thirty days.

And so they went out and told Mordecai Esther's words. So Esther hears of the cousin of hers and is wailing and lying out there in sackcloth and ashes. So she says, what's wrong? He sends back one of the copies of the decrees that has gone out and suggests that Esther go in to her husband.

Now can you imagine that kind of a relationship, husband and wife relationship? He hadn't called for her for thirty days and if she just appears on the scene she's put to death. Unless he would raise the golden scepter towards her and then she is spared. Quite a weird kind of a relationship to say the truth.

And so she was hesitant to go in. And then Mordecai sent to her this message. Don't think within yourself that you're going to escape because you're in the king's house more than all of the Jews.

For if you altogether hold your peace at this time then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place but you and your father's house shall be destroyed. And who knows whether you are come to the kingdom for such a time as this. Number one, don't think that just because you're in the palace you're going to escape the king's edict.

You're a Jew. It'll reach you there. Also, if you fail here God is giving you the opportunity of being the instrument of saving the people and if you fail God will use someone else but you'll be destroyed.

You and your father's house will perish. God will bring deliverance. God's purposes are going to stand.

God has to keep the Jews alive through whatever persecution and all they may go through. God has to preserve them. God will preserve them.

Their enlargement and deliverance will arise from another quarter but you're going to be destroyed with your family. And who knows maybe God has brought you to the kingdom for such a time as this. All of these circumstances are not just coincidences.

So often I hear people say you know the strangest coincidence happened to me but coincidences really don't exist in the Christian vocabulary. God has his hand upon our lives and he has a plan and a purpose for each thing that takes place. And many times what we look upon as great tragedies are really methods by which God is bringing certain things to us.

I look back on my own life and I can see how that the hand of God has been upon my life from the beginning. Now I must confess there were many times in my life that I thought I was pretty well forsaken by God. I thought that God had forgotten me completely.

I was certain that God wasn't interested in me or my welfare. And I have had some very discouraging experiences. Difficult times.

I've gone through a lot of hardships. And yet as I look back on them now I can see that God was using each one of those experiences for a definite plan and a purpose as he was preparing me. And as he was leading my path into that which he had in mind for me from the beginning.

And that all of those disappointing experiences all of those years of struggle in the ministry all the years of hardship all the years of just skimping to get by trying to survive were all a part of God's plan to prepare me for the work he had in mind for me to do. Number one he allowed me 17 years of failure in the ministry to thoroughly condition my mind to the fact that I could do nothing so that when God did begin to work I wouldn't try to take credit for what God was doing. And after 17 years of my best efforts my best years young, innovative, energetic dark wavy hair God let it all go let me get over the hill and then he began to work so that I am wise enough to recognize the difference between my work and God's work.

And I can look back at the 17 years of ministry and show you my work my best work and it ended in failure. And I can look now at God's work and stand with the next guy just overwhelmed and amazed at what God can do. But it was all necessary because I had a lot of self confidence I had a lot of ideas I had a lot of innovations and God had to let me sort of waste them in 17 years of trying until I gave up.

And now it's so beautiful because it's God's work and I don't have to worry about it. I don't have to stay awake nights and pound the pillow and plan and what are we going to do and how are we going to do it and all it's God's work. It's the Lord's church.

But it took me a long time to come to that. So, all the way through all of these things God was working putting me in this place to meet these people moving me here to meet these people all the way along God was guiding and directing though at times I thought that I was forsaken by God. Yet, God was working things out.

The first time I went to Corona to pastor we had just two children when we first went there and we had 16 people in church. I gave it two of my best years working hard, knocking on doors doing everything I could and after two years we had 17 people in church. Our son Jeff was born in that period of time.

Oh, that was a hard place in the ministry. And I really felt rejected by God. I ended up there resigning from the ministry.

Then a gracious bishop talked me into trying again. But God's hand was in it. You see, while I was there I met people though they never did come to my church.

I met people who later on became a very important part of my being freed from denominational ties. For people that I met while I was there who never did attend my church while I pastored there. Years later when I got discouraged and just quit the ministry again.

They said, why don't you come out and start a Bible class in our home in Corona. And so I went out and started a Bible class in their home which grew into a church. And I began to see God work.

But you see, had I not spent the two bitter years there and met these people I might still well, I'm sure I wouldn't be in the ministry today because I'd had it. But God's hand I can see it all the way along. And He was working even as God is working in your life.

And you may tonight feel like, oh, how could God be in this mess? But yet God is working out His purpose and who knows but what God hasn't brought you into the kingdom and that just right around the corner you're going to begin to see God's work after all of your futile efforts and all your struggles when you finally turn it over to God you give God a chance to work. You see, that was my problem. I was so stubborn.

I was going to do it. I knew I could do it. And I kept trying.

And I didn't turn it over to God for years. Oh, what a joy now that I finally learned to turn it over to God. And if you'll just learn to turn it over you can find God's work in a very special way.

Who knows? Who knows what God wants to do? Who knows what God has in mind for you? Who knows the plans of God for your life? So Esther said, gather together all of the Jews in the city. Fast and pray for me and I will go in unto the king and if I perish I perish. That's a commitment.

That's a complete commitment. That's the kind of commitment that God wants from your life. Lord, all the way.

If I perish, I perish. Lord, I'll do it. I'll go for it.

And so Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther had commanded him. Now it came to pass on the third day that Esther put on her royal apparel and she stood in the inner court of the king's house. And the king was sitting on his royal throne in the royal house and it was so when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court that she obtained favor in his sight and 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. No doubt some kind of a protocol or ceremony. Then the king said to her, What do you want Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given to you to the half of the kingdom.

And Esther answered, If it seems good to the king, let the king and Haman come this day to a banquet that I have prepared for him. And the king said, Cause Haman to make haste that he may do as Esther hath 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, What is your petition? It shall be granted to you. What is your request? Even to the half of the kingdom it will be performed. Then answered Esther and said, My petition and my request is if I have found favor in the sight of the king and if it pleased 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 tomorrow, as the king hath said.

Then Haman went forth that day joyful with a glad heart. He really thought, Man, I'm in, you know. The queen is inviting only me to come with the king to this banquet.

He was just really exalted until he got to the gate and everyone was buying and he saw that Mordecai standing. Just wiped him out. Oh, he got angry.

He saw Mordecai at the king's gate and he stood up and he did not move for him. He was full of indignation. Nevertheless, Haman refrained himself and when he came home he sat and called his friends and Zeresh his wife.

And Haman told them of the glory of his riches and the multitude of his children and all the things wherein the king had promoted him and how he had advanced him above all the princes and servants. And Haman said, Moreover, yes, Esther the queen didn't let any man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself and tomorrow I am invited unto her also with the king. And yet all of this avails me nothing as long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.

Then said Zeresh his wife and all of his friends to him, Hey, why don't you build some gallows seventy-five feet high and string that little guy up when the day comes and just swing him from the gallows seventy-five feet. That will satisfy you when you see him swinging from that gallows. So it pleased Mordecai.

The idea sounded great to him and so he had built a gallows seventy-five feet high in which he was preparing to hang Mordecai. Now, that night King Ahasuerus couldn't go to sleep. Just lying there restless.

No doubt God was in the restlessness. And so he said, Bring to me the chronicles, the history. Read to me.

What's more boring than history? Read to me the history books. Probably figured he'd go to sleep while they were reading. And as they were reading the history, the records, he came to the place where Mordecai had warned him of the assassination plot.

And he said, What was done to reward that man who warned me of the assassination? And they said, Nothing. He said, Well, surely he should be rewarded. And so in the morning when Haman came whistling in, the king said to Haman, Haman, what should the king do for the man that he seeks to honor very highly? Man, I love the way God turns the tables.

You know, I just... And oh, Haman thought, Now, who would the king want to honor more than me? You know. I mean, at this time he was really pride puffed up and blind. Who does the king want to honor more than me? And so, thinking that the king was referring to him, he sort of expressed what was in his heart really.

Let the king's royal robes be put upon him and the king's crown upon his head. And let him be driven in the king's chariot through the city. And send the couriers before him crying out, Behold, the man whom the king delights to honor.

And so the king said, Good idea. You make the arrangements and do all that you've said for Mordecai. See that nothing is lacking.

So, Mordecai had the king's robe put on him, the king's crown, and he went through the streets and the chariot as they cried out, Behold, the man whom the king delights to honor. And Mordecai headed for home. You can't believe.

You can't believe what's happened to me. And of course his counselor said, Hey, you know, this is a bad day. Your star is in bad position, man.

You know, this doesn't look good. Your star is descending. And so while he was there and just, you know, talking of his problems, they came in and said, Hey, you're going to be late for the queen's banquet.

You better get going. So Haman came in, but he was really troubled by this whole experience. And so Esther prepared another beautiful banquet for the king.

And again the king in his generous mood said, Esther, what do you want? Half of the kingdom, whatever it is, your petition, your request. And so Esther said, All I want is my life and my people, the life of my people. For we have been sold.

I am my people to be destroyed, to be slain and to perish. But if we had been sold as slaves, I wouldn't have said anything. I would have kept quiet.

Then King Ahasuerus answered and said to Esther, The queen, who is he? And where is he that dares to presume in his heart to do so? And Esther said, The adversary, the enemy, is this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen. And the king, arising from the banquet of wine and his anger, went to the palace garden and Haman stood up to make a request for his life to Esther the queen.

For he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king. And then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine and Haman had fallen upon the bed where Esther was. And the king said, Are you going to rape my wife before me in my own house? As the word went out of the king's mouth, they took and covered his head with a cloth which signified, of course, his impending death.

And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said to the king, Behold, there are 75 feet gallows that Haman has made for Mordecai who spoke the good for the king. And they're in his backyard. And the king said, Hang him thereon.

So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified. God turning the tables.

And it so often happens. You remember when Joseph was sold by his brothers to slavery, to the traders going to Egypt. And he was weeping.

He was crying. He said, Oh, don't do this. And as the traders were taking him off towards Egypt, he was just a teenage boy crying, begging his brothers.

But they had steeled their hearts against him years later when they had to come down to Egypt to buy provisions in order to survive. And they didn't recognize Joseph, the man who was in charge of the provisions of Egypt. But Joseph recognized them and began to give them a bad time, speaking roughly to them through an interpreter.

And they turned to each other, talking in their own language, which, of course, Joseph could understand. And they said, You know, this sin has happened to us because of what we did to our brother Joseph. Don't you remember his tears and all, and we didn't pay any attention? Now it's coming back on us.

But then later, when Joseph did reveal himself, they were even more frightened. And they began to beg Joseph for mercy and so forth. And he said, Look, I know that you meant it for evil, but God intended it for good.

God is so often able to take those things that were intended for evil and turn them around for good. It happens over and over and over again. That is why the Bible says, concerning you as God's child, No weapon that is formed against you will prosper.

This is the heritage of the children of the Lord. God won't allow any weapon formed against you to prosper. God's going to take care of you.

God's going to watch over you. God's going to turn the tables on your enemies. And he is so clever.

And I love the book of Esther because it has all of this interesting intrigue and table turning and the whole bit. So on that day, did King Ahasuerus give to the house of Haman, the Jew's enemy, unto Esther the queen? He gave the house to her. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told what he was to

her.

So Esther said, Mordecai is my cousin. And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and he gave it to Mordecai. And Esther sent Mordecai over the house of Haman.

And Esther spake yet again before the king and fell down on his feet and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman, the Agagite, and the devices that he had devised against the Jews. And the king held out the golden scepter toward Esther. So Esther arose and stood before the king and said, If it pleases the king, if I have found favor in your sight and the thing seems right, and I be pleasing in your eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hamadath of the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews, which are in all the king's provinces.

For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come to my people? How can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred? Now, there is an interesting law of the Medes and the Persians, and that's once the king has made a decree, he can't change it. Once a decree has been made and sealed by the king, that decree stands. It was a law of the Medes and the Persians.

You remember, Daniel got tripped up by this law of the Medes and the Persians when Darius was snookered by these guys who wanted to destroy Daniel. And they said, you know, let the king make a decree that whoever prays to any other god or person for the period of 30 days will be put to death and so that the people might know how important and how wonderful you are, you know. So the king made this proclamation, signed it, and so then Daniel went to his home, and as was his custom, the windows opened towards Jerusalem, prayed three times daily, and these guys were outside in the bushes.

They ran back to the king and said, hey, we've got a guy who violated your proclamation. And so they brought Daniel in, and Darius and Daniel had a close relationship. And Darius sought all day some way to reverse it, but because the laws of the Medes and Persians cannot be reversed, they cannot be changed, they cannot be altered.

Once it has been set, you cannot reverse it. Thus Daniel had to be tossed into the lion's den, but Darius assured him, Daniel, the god you serve, is able to deliver you, you know. And so that same situation with the decree that Darius made, we'll get that when we get to the book of Daniel.

Now, can't change the decree. However, he let Mordecai make another decree that on the thirteenth day of March, the Jews would be able to defend themselves from against those that would seek to kill them. And so they could also take vengeance on those who were seeking to destroy them.

So he gave them the right to defend themselves and also the right to destroy any who would seek to destroy them. So when this day came, there in the city of Shushan, there were 500 men that were slain by the Jews, men who were seeking the evil of the Jews, and so they were able to take their vengeance upon their enemies. And throughout all the provinces, actually, there were a great number of people that the Jews actually put to death as they defended themselves.

Seventy-five thousand were destroyed. On the fourteenth day of the same month, they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness. But the Jews that were at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth day and on the fourteenth day, and on the fifteenth day they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

Therefore, the Jews of the villages that dwelt in the unwalled towns made the fourteenth day of the month of Adar the day of gladness and feasting and a good day of sending portions one to another. Now, here was then instituted the feast of Purim. Remember the word Pur means lot and I-M is like an S. It makes it a plural in Hebrew.

And so, the Purim means lots. And so, the feast of Purim is actually a feast of lots because Haman had determined by casting lots which day the Jews would be destroyed. And so, to the present day, on the thirteenth day of March in the Jewish calendar, they have a day of sort of fasting and all.

But then on the fourteenth day in the villages and on the fifteenth day of March in the city of Jerusalem, the walled city, they celebrate the feast of Purim to the present day. Now, they've modified the celebrations quite a bit. And the children dress up in costumes much like Halloween costumes.

And the little girls will usually dress up like Esther and some of the boys will dress up like Haman, the bad guy. And others, of course, will dress in cowboy outfits and everything else just like you see kids here at Halloween. Rather than trick-or-treating, they invite their friends over and as it says here, they were feasting in gladness.

They invite their friends over and they have cookies and goodies that they share together and they have parties much like Halloween parties with the children all in costume. And it is a time of festival and all. In March, they're in Israel.

We have been over there the last two years during the feast of Purim and have seen the little children in their costumes and they have cookies that they make that they call Haman's ears. And they're good cookies. But, you know, they will a lot of times have little plays and the children will play act the story of Esther and, you know, the villain, wicked Haman and so forth and they have these plays.

And, of course, it's very colorful and very interesting. The feast of Purim, which was inaugurated here in the book of Esther and is celebrated to the present day over there in Israel. One day in the villages on the 14th and on the 15th within the city of Jerusalem.

So, it stretches out the holiday a little bit. Now, chapter 10 just deals with now the exalting of Mordecai. He was made more or less prime minister over the Persian Empire.

He was given pretty much the office and the role that Haman had had. And it is no doubt because of Esther and Mordecai and their position that when Esther's husband Ahasuerus died, his son, also called Ahasuerus in the Scriptures, became the next king. But Queen Esther, no doubt, had a great influence upon him, her stepson.

And it was he who gave to Nehemiah the permission and all to go back and rebuild the city of Jerusalem, to restore the walls and all. And gave Artaxerxes the steps... He was actually a stepson to Esther is the one who gave that very important decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, the decree from which the beginning date of the prophecy of the coming of Messiah, 483 years after that date the Messiah would come. So, that is no doubt because of the influence that Mordecai and Esther had.

Now, this brings us now to an end of a major section of the Old Testament.

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