

# Esther 1:1

by William MacDonald

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*William MacDonald's sermon on Esther 1:1 explores God's hidden presence and sovereignty amidst human choices and challenges.*

**Duration:** 55:36

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 31:17, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 7:13-14, John 10:3, Romans 8:28

**Topics:** "Esther"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by expressing trepidation about attending a conference due to the abundance of food and treats. He then shares a personal experience that motivated him to lose weight. The sermon transitions to discussing the book of Esther, highlighting how God is greater than any human ego trip. The speaker emphasizes that God is in control and will ultimately bring about justice and righteousness, showing that He works all things together for good.

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## Transcript

Well, I must confess that I had considerable trepidation about coming to the conference this year. I thought of the enormous meals that are served over here in the dining rooms, and not with content with that, but with the ice cream treat that was just announced. I know that you missionaries are living on slim rations out on the field, but they make up for it in four days here.

I'll give them credit. You say, why do you have trepidation about that? Well, it's because of a very traumatic experience I had recently. Nothing has ever motivated me to lose weight more than this.

It was the most shattering experience. You see, there's a family out there I'm very close to. They have four kids, Don and Christopher Robertson, and their four kids.

As they call me, Uncle Bill. These kids. And they're expecting number five in the family.

In fact, I called this afternoon to see the baby had arrived. But for the last few months, the whole subject in the house is babies, you know. Kids don't talk about storks anymore.

They know this baby's going to be a boy. The doctors already told them it's going to be a boy, and they've chosen the name David for the boy. And the kids are all excited about their new baby brother.

And one night, I'm sitting in the living room there, and little Maren III is on my lap. Well, you know the rest of the story. She put her hand here, and she said, do you have a baby? These kids.

That isn't bad enough. I arrive here at the conference, and dear brother Ron Harris gets up. And what does he announce for his subject? Growth.

And I scrunched down in the chair. And he began to give synonyms for growth. Wax.

And then he had to add wax fat. And I scrunched down further into the chair. And he wasn't satisfied with that.

He talked about abnormal growth. And then he went on to Jashurin. And by then, I was almost out of the chair.

But to get back to my kids again. One day, I went down with Don to the Christian school to pick up the two oldest girls. They would be about six and eight, and Rachel would be the oldest.

And when he got over to the side of the street where I stayed in the van, and when he got over to the side of the street where they were, he heard Rachel saying to some of her classmates, would you like to come over and meet my fake uncle? What she really meant, I'm not a blood relative. But Ron, what synonym would you use for that? Pseudo. Very good.

Very good. So much for my children. You all boast about your grandchildren, so I have to talk about my children.

Would you turn your Bibles tonight to the book of Esther, please? The book of Esther. And we'll read a portion of chapter one. Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, this was the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia, over 127 provinces.

In those days when King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the citadel, that in the third year of his reign he made a feast for all his officials and servants, the powers of Persia and Media, the nobles and the princes of the provinces being before him. When he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty for many days, 180 days in all. And when these days were completed, the king made a feast lasting seven days for all the people who were present in Shushan the citadel, from great to small, in the court of the garden of the king's palace.

There were white and blue linen curtains fastened with cords of fine linen and purple on silver rods and marble pillars. The couches were of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of alabaster, turquoise, and white and black marble. They served drinks in golden vessels, each vessel being different from the other with royal wine and abundance according to the generosity of the king.

In accordance with the law, the drinking was not compulsory. So the king had ordered all the offices of his household that they should do according to each man's pleasure. Queen Vashti also made a feast for the women in the royal palace, which belonged to King Ahasuerus.

On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehiland, Bithsa, Harbona, Bithsa, Abagtha, Zisar, and Carthus, seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus, to bring Queen Vashti before the king wearing her royal crown in order to show her beauty to the people and the officials, for she was beautiful to behold. But Queen Vashti refused to come at the

king's command, brought by his eunuchs. Therefore the king was furious, and his anger burned within him.

Then the king said to the wise men who understood the times, for this was the king's manner toward all who knew law and justice, those closest to him being, and you know the names, the seven princes of Persia and Media, who had access to the king's presence and who ranked highest in the kingdom. What shall we do to Queen Vashti according to law, because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus brought to her by the eunuchs? Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Queen Vashti has not only wronged the king, but also all the princes and all the people who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. The queen's behavior will become known to all women, so that they will despise their husbands in their eyes when they report King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in before him, but she did not come.

This very day the noble ladies of Persia and Media will say to all the king's officials that they have heard of the behavior of the queen. Thus there will be excessive contempt and wrath. If it pleases the king, let a royal decree go out from him, let it be recorded in the laws of the Medes and the Persians, so that it will not be altered that Vashti shall come no more before King Ahasuerus, and let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she.

When the king's decree which he will make is proclaimed throughout all his empire, for it is great, all wives will honor their husbands both great and small. The reply pleased the king and the princes, and the king did according to the word of Memucan. Then he sent letters to all the king's provinces, to each province in its own script, to every people in their own language, that each man should be master in his own house, speaking the language of his own people.

It's a wonderful book, really, showing the sovereignty and the providence of God. God watching over his people in difficult times. Some people wonder if it should be in the Bible.

You know, I think that these people who make these attacks in the Bible should spend more time reading the Bible, and they get the answers to a lot of their questions. They say, well, the name of God is not mentioned in the book of Esther. That's true.

It's not mentioned forthrightly in the book, but it's actually found five times in the book of Esther in a hidden form. It's found in an acrostic form. And I wonder if a couple of brothers would just come up, and maybe we could pass this out to illustrate how the name of God is found.

And we have some volunteers. And in true Scottish form, I didn't have much faith, so I have a hundred of these. Maybe couples can share them.

And I really think you see the fingerprint of God when you get this little sheet showing the acrostic in Esther. This comes from the Companion Bible, the E. W. Bullinger Companion Bible. And we'll just wait until you get these little sheets.

The name of God is found five times in the book of Esther. Four times the name Yahweh, Jehovah, and one times Eah. That is, I am in Hebrew in chapter 7, verse 5. Maybe we have enough to go around.

While we're waiting for that, maybe you could just turn in your Bible to Deuteronomy 31, verse 17. Deuteronomy 31, verse 17. There's a word here I think that's very, very significant.

Chapter 31, verse 17. This is God speaking, and He's telling what will happen if the people go off into idolatry. He says, Then my anger shall be aroused against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them.

Notice that word, hide. I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say in that day, Have not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us? God had promised that He would hide His face, and in the book of Esther you do find God's face hidden, but God is there. Just the same.

God is a covenant-keeping God. He made promises to Israel. I'll never go back on those promises.

Now, in four verses, four verses of this book, you have the name Jehovah in acrostic form. Of course, the Hebrew read from the right to the left, or reads from the right to the left. And you'll notice in chapter 1, verse 20, beginning over at the right, you have at the end of the first word, Y, the second word, the last letter, is H, the third word, the last letter is V, and the fourth word, the last letter is H. Yahweh.

In chapter 5, verse 4, reading from right to left, the last letter of the first word is H, the last letter of the second word is V, the last letter of the third word is H, and the last letter of the fourth word is Y. And here, Jehovah is spelt forward. Pretty clever, isn't it? The hand of God. Chapter 5, verse 13, the first letter of... reading from right to left, the first letter of this first word is Y, the first letter of the second word is H, the first letter of the third word is V, and the first letter of the last word there is H. Yahweh.

And then in chapter 7, verse 7, the order is reversed, in the sense that it's spelt forward the first letters of the word. And then in chapter 7, verse 5, you have this other name of God, the I Am in Hebrew, and you'll see the last letters, or at least the first letters of four words, H, Y, H, E, reading from right to left. Now, somebody has tried to show the correspondence in English, and in chapter 120, they've written this little poem, Do Respect Our Ladies All, and you'll notice there that the first letters of the first four words spell Lord backwards.

L-O-R-D backwards. Do respect our ladies all, shall give their husbands great to small. And if you read chapter 1, verse 20, it says for it, it's great.

All wise will honor their husbands, both great and small. It says it like that. And then it says, And ill to fear decreed, I find, toward me in the monarch's mind.

And there, the last letters of those first four words spell Lord forward. Marvelous. And so I think it's really very significant that although the name is not spelled outright in the book of Esther, the name of God, it's hidden, hidden five times in this marvelous, marvelous book.

The absence of the name of God teaches us that behind the visible events of history, there's an almighty and a faithful love that cherishes and protects the broken and scattered people of God. I think this book is filled with encouragement for those who are on the front lines for the Lord Jesus, those in the battle lines. And I can't help wondering if James Russell Lowell didn't have the book of Esther in mind when he wrote those memorable words.

Careless seems the great avenger. History's pages but record one death grapple in the darkness to expose systems and the word. Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne.

Yet that scaffold sways the future. Isn't that lovely? That scaffold sways the future behind the dim unknown stand of God within the shadows keeping watch above his own. There were some Jews who did not return to Judah under the decree of Cyrus.

And of course, Esther and Mordecai were among those who did not who did not go back. And most commentators think this is an indication of their spiritual declension. They really look down their theological noses at Esther and Mordecai.

They say, well, after all, prayer isn't mentioned in the book. And that's interesting, isn't it? There's no mention of prayer in the book of Esther. Although it's strongly implied in the emphasis on fasting.

It's inconceivable to me that they would go, for instance, Esther and her companions would go three days of fasting without prayer. I can't think of it. And Esther is often used as an illustration of a woman who was out of fellowship with the Lord.

First of all, she, a Jewess, wanted to be the queen of a pagan king. And not only that, but she concealed her nationality. And not only that, but she ate non-kosher food, violating the dietary code of the Mosaic law.

The idea seems to be that her Jewishness seemed to be a matter more of birth than of her own conviction. And Mordecai also comes in for his share of criticism as well, because he concealed his identity and commanded Esther to conceal hers. What do you think about that? Well, first of all, I'm very low to criticize these two dear people.

We have a tendency to look at some of these Old Testament people through Christian eyes, and I don't think that's fair. They didn't have the Holy Spirit permanently indwelling them. They didn't have a copy of the Scriptures the way we have.

But I think it's good for all of us as we grow older in the things of the Lord to mellow a little. And just think of the wonderful way that God used these people and not be critical of them. I'd rather side with the people who turn back to the book of Ezra, chapter 1 and verse 5, and there's a nice little expression there.

Ezra chapter 1 and verse 5. It says, Then the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites, with all those whose spirits God had moved, arose to go up and build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem. All those whose spirits God had moved. I don't believe he moved Esther's spirit and Mordecai's spirit to go back at that time.

He had a purpose for them. There was a reason for them to remain there in the land and God was going to use them in a wonderful way. But in either case, whatever the right decision is, God was hidden but in a wonderful way he was still watching over his people.

What a comfort, huh? What a comfort to know that in times of life when the heavens seem to be brass and God seems to be absent, he's probably never more present at a time like that. Spurgeon said we can't always trace his hand but we can always trust his heart and how true that is. Now first tonight, I'd like to go through the book of Esther, not all tonight, but... And I'd like to look at it from God's standpoint.

We're going to go to heaven as it were and we're going to look down on the earth and we're going to be thinking of the providence of God and the sovereignty of God and working out his own purposes in Shushan the palace. Reminding ourselves that this is something that's going on all the time in the world.

God the master player moving the checkers on the checkerboard or the chessmen on the chessboard and working out all of his great sovereign purposes defeated by nothing.

By racial barriers or by unbreakable decrees or anything else. God is greater than them all and he's going to work them out. So we're going to as it were sit beside God looking down upon the world and seeing him working in the hearts and lives of people and bringing them out to a joyful end.

And then secondly after that I'd like to go through the book bit by bit and draw out spiritual lessons in the meetings to follow. The book opens rather routinely. We look down and we can see people scurrying all around the courtyards of the palace and rushing through the halls and going about their daily routine.

Nothing very remarkable about that. And then we see Ahasuerus embarking on a king sized ego trip. He's going to put on this tremendous feat.

What's he going to do? Show his marvelous power. Really amazing. And God looks down.

Now God isn't responsible for that is he? We're going to see God moving people in the book. He's not responsible for that. And so you have right away the combination of God's sovereignty and man's free will.

God in his sovereignty allows Ahasuerus to plan that feast. It lasts for 180 days. I'm talking about eating.

But just let me quickly explain. I don't think the same guests were there 180 days. Do you? I think that means that the guests were coming like in contingency during that time.

I hope. Otherwise it would be terrible. But God isn't responsible for that.

There you have man's free will. God in his sovereignty has given man that liberty to do that. That's what he wants to do.

Sinful as it may seem allows him to do it. Somebody said to Spurgeon once how do you reconcile God's sovereignty and man's free will? And Spurgeon said I never try to reconcile friends. And I think that's a good answer.

And you see them both here in the book of Esther. If you don't see them I don't think you understand the book at all. So he throws this enormous feast.

It's rather typical of the rulers of Persia. I remember some years ago I don't remember what year it was when the Shah of Persia celebrated an anniversary of the kingdom. And I read in the magazine and I don't think I ever saw such a display of glory in anything that's happened on earth that's happened there in my lifetime in Iran.

So he had good precedence for doing it. Now for 180 days Ahasuerus dazzles his guests with the glory and splendor of his reign. And the wine is served in golden vessels and no two of them are alike.

That beats your bone-shining cups and saucers mother. And the women are not to be left out. Queen Vashti also had a feast for seven days and there's nothing he does that for the palace women and there's nothing wrong about that.

Well in Ahasuerus' second feast God looks down and he doesn't like what he's seeing now. He doesn't like it. Because the king orders his servants to go and bring Queen Vashti first of all the king himself is

feeling pretty high at this time.

You know that very clear from the record. And most of the guests are inebriated and he brings this he wants to bring in the queen and show off her beauty to the guests. Not exactly spiritual I'd say.

And she refuses to do it. I don't doubt but God exercised a little control on her intellect and her emotion and her will. I don't doubt that.

I think she was a woman of character but I think God might have given her a little nudge too. To stand firm. She was taking a position of righteousness and he didn't want her to abandon that.

God had his purposes. God knew the future. He knew what lay ahead and I think he encouraged her to take this stance.

It's no wonder that God wrote in Proverbs 31, 4, and 5 It's not for kings to drink wine nor for princes intoxicating drink lest they drink and forget the law and pervert the justice of all the afflicted. And so there is Ahasuerus acting in disobedience to the law of God and God says well I'll let him do it but I'm going to harness his sin for my glory. Now that's wonderful isn't it? I tell you to me one of the great things in life and in history too is to see God allows the man to have his sin but God has his way.

He super abounds over the sin of man and brings blessing to his people. And so he controls Vashti's conscience and so she refuses to stand up there before those people. You know she was a great woman and she knew that her beauty was not for those men it was for her husband and she just refused to become a sex symbol to them.

Probably God is saying to her good for you Queen Vashti you're going to have to pay dearly for the stand you've taken but don't you worry I'll honor you for it. You'll be honored for your rectitude and your modesty. Was she honored? Of course, her name is mentioned in the book here.

It's mentioned in the Bible for all posterity for all generations. What a wonderful reward that was. Well the palace is thrown into panic.

Here we have the first case of militant feminism. Nonsense. Absolute nonsense.

That's what they thought, wasn't it? They thought, wow, this story is going to spread and it's going to go through all the kingdom of Persia and women will become disobedient to their husbands and where will that leave us? And so they resorted to the law to enforce loyalty and enforce faithfulness. They all said with one voice, the queen must go. Vashti must be deposed and so an unalterable decree, the law of the Medes and the Persians was drawn up and she lost her crown.

And you know, they think it's a great victory for their own wisdom and power. And God says they're only doing what I would have had to do anyway. I had to get Vashti out of that place.

I have to get a Jewish maiden named Esther in there. Why? Because God knew what lay ahead. That's wonderful to realize that, isn't it? Things happen in our lives.

Why did that happen? God knows the whole picture and you don't. That's why it happened. Beautiful.

He makes the wrath of man to praise him. As a remainder of wrath he restrains. I'm reminded in that connection of the blind man in John chapter 9. And to me this has always been especially beautiful.

You know, this dear guy, he was saved but he wasn't completely well taught. And the more that the religious leaders questioned him, the more he zapped them with the wisdom of his answers. And pretty soon they become completely irritated.

And they say in verse 34, chapter 9 of John, verse 34, you were completely born in sins and are you teaching us? And they cast him out. What does that mean? It means they excommunicated him from the synagogue. They cast him out.

And God said, thank you very much. And you turn over to John chapter 10, verse 3, it says, to him the doorkeeper opens and the sheep hear his voice and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. You know, all they did was they did what the Lord Jesus would have done anyway.

He would have led him out. Beautiful, isn't it? And this is God working out his purposes in his masterful weaving of circumstances and timing and sequence of events. So God says, well, here it is.

I let that man, I let that man have his wickedness and all of those princes have their wickedness but I'll have my way at last. And of course that starts the search for a new queen. And this enormous beauty contest is going to take place there in Shushan the palace.

And men are sent throughout, delegates are sent throughout the kingdom to search for the most beautiful women in the kingdom to bring before kings. But you know the ironical thing is the decision's already made in the purposes of God. And there's no question about it.

The thing's all settled in the purposes of God. And there's a young fellow named Hegai and he's in charge of the king's harem. And as these beautiful women are brought to him, he supplies them with all of the beauty that's found in bottles.

And he gives them a course in charm and in culture and in courtesy and how to act before a king. And now Mordecai's name is mentioned. He's out there.

He may be some sort of an official there because he's sitting out by the gate of the palace. He's a cousin of Esther. The weaving is coming together.

God mentions, it just mentions his name almost in passing here. But there he is. He's a cousin of Esther but in a sense he's her adopted father too because she was orphaned years before and he really raised her.

And God is looking down on all that's happening now in Shushan and he sees this Hegai and he controls Hegai's eyes and his mind too. He sees a lot of beautiful women in Esther but just one of many. I don't know whether she was the most beautiful.

I don't think that's the point. The point was Hegai took a special liking to her. Nothing happens by chance in God's dealings with people.

There are no accidents in God's dealings with people. And he accepts her right away as a candidate for queenship. And God starts to work on Hegai's emotions so that he really gives extra attention to this, not in a bad way, not in a sinful way, but he'll supply her with anything she wants and he'll give her seven maidens to wait on her hand and foot and he gives her the best quarters in the house of the queen.

Just a little nobody. Just an inconspicuous insignificant Jewish maiden. How is this happening? Not by chance.

Not by chance at all. And now God sees Mordecai down there and the bush telephone works well there at the palace, you know. It really works well and the word is passing around and Mordecai has a message and he sends it in by bush telephone to Esther.

Don't reveal your identity. Don't tell them that you are a Jewess at this time. God said that's right.

Mordecai didn't lie. He didn't tell her to lie. Really, you don't have to tell everything you know, do you? That's all she did.

She didn't tell all that she knew. She didn't lie either. And Hegai's charm school has now lasted a year and it's time for Persia's most beautiful women to parade themselves before the king.

They can wear whatever clothing they want and whatever cosmetics they want. Anything that they think will move the king to choose them. Must have been a scene, huh? Must have been a scene.

Everybody trying, all those women trying to attract the attention of the king. God is saying in effect, Esther, you don't have to wear anything special. I'll take care of it.

I'll take care of the mind of the king and of all those that are around him. And I'll control him. And so Hegai is allowed to give her anything she wants, but I don't think she chose too much.

Poor Esther is sitting there and she's thinking, what chance do I have? A poor Jewish girl. And all of these beauties from all over Persia, here at the palace, really the chances are very slim. God is saying, the king's heart is in the hands of the Lord.

As the rivers of water, He turns it with us wherever He will. I tell you, God knows how to weave and how to bring things together in His wonderful purposes. Don't you worry, Esther, that you're just a Jewess.

I'm greater than any of those racial barriers that men might seek. Finally, the day comes for Esther to make her appearance before the king. What happens? She loves her more than all the other women.

Now, I don't think the Poles would have predicted this. I really don't think so. I don't think they would have ever predicted that this is the way things would turn out.

But God was working behind the scenes. He loves her more than all the other women and He takes and He puts the crown on her head. Imagine it.

What's this all about, anyway? God knows what it's all about. She has to be there for the accomplishment of God's purpose. She didn't know why it was all happening the way it was happening.

She had no insight into what was all leading up to. God knew. And I think this is tremendously encouraging for Esther.

There's mystery in life. You've had mystery in life. I'll bless the heart that guided, I'll bless the heart that planned when thrones were glory dwelleth in Emmanuel's land.

God is saying to what I do, you don't know now. But you'll know hereafter. And we sit back and we say, as for God His way is perfect.

It's the Lord. Let Him do unto me as it pleases Him. And so they have another great feast.

What a book of feasting the book of Esther is, isn't it? And it's called The Feast of Esther. It's a great book for decrees and a great book for feasts and other things are repeated over again. And dear friends, everything is moving according to schedule.

God's trains all run on time. Doesn't seem that way to us. When you're praying and praying and praying, God's trains all move in time and our prayers are never in vain.

Would you believe this? I didn't plan to say this, but when I was in the Navy, I witnessed to a fellow 1946 and he came home from the war and he married and had three lovely daughters. He's still unsaved. You know, I got a letter from him the other day asking me for an explanation of the verse, the kingdom of heaven is among you or within you.

He said, what should it be, among you or within you? Imagine, I mean you wouldn't like his conversation if you heard him. But you know, 46 94 prayers all those years. God's working.

Encourages you to pray on for him. Maybe you've been praying for somebody for a good number of years. Don't give up.

Don't give up. I'm greatly encouraged to continue praying for him. You know, what's really neat about this or as young people would say, what's really cool is that nobody in the palace knows that Esther's a Jewess.

It's a well kept secret, isn't it? Esther knows, but nobody knows that the new queen of Persia is not a Persian. What a coincidence. What a coincidence that a Jewish maiden should be chosen above all the beautiful women of a vast world empire.

That's exactly what it was. And God is saying, no coincidence at all. I just brought it to pass.

Oh, there's nothing too hard for me. And then there's Mordecai down there and he's down in the court of the palace there, you know. And God works on his mind and says, Mordecai, do you see those two fellows over there? Bigfan and Teresh, do you see them? Why don't you just amble over a little? Don't get too close to them.

Just amble over a little closer so you can hear what they're saying. You talk about timing. Just as he gets close enough to hear what they're saying, what does he hear? They're making a plot to assassinate the king.

Wow. What a marvelous converging of circumstances. Marvelous converging of circumstances.

Making a plot to assassinate the king. Do you think it was chance that Mordecai was just there at the right place at the right time? Come on. That wasn't chance.

It's God. God that placed him there. And so he sends in words to Esther about the plot.

And duly recorded in the records of the kingdom, period. Period? No, better put a dash there. Because it's not the end of the story.

I think that's thrilling. Really, it wouldn't have been worth, it wouldn't have worked good at all if Mordecai had been rewarded at this time. This was not the time for him to be rewarded.

And that's tough. I mean, you serve people, you pour out your life for people, and the only place you can find gratitude is in the dictionary. Isn't that right? God is at work.

God is a good record keeper. And nothing that's ever done for his glory, for the good of his people, goes unrewarded. Well, then the plot, of course, begins to thicken, and this wicked man, Haman, comes upon the scene.

If the king, had a king-sized ego, I don't know what to say about Haman, really. He was certainly a representative of the devil there in the palace of Shushan, that wicked Haman. And he goes in, and he succeeds in winning the confidence of the king.

Incredible, isn't it? That a man of his character would ever get close to the king and be able to do what he was doing. Now listen, man's free will. Not God's sovereignty now.

God in his sovereignty allows Haman to do this. You say, but why? Why? It's a myth. It hasn't come to the last chapter.

Why? Because the Jewish people would be better off at the end than they would have been if it hadn't happened. I think that's wonderful. We're better off in Christ than we ever would have been in an unfallen Adam, aren't we? We are.

We're better off in Christ than if sin had never entered into the world. Unfallen Adam would never have known what it meant to be justified, and pardoned, and forgiven, and sanctified, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and an heir of God and a joint heir of Jesus Christ. He never would have known what it would have meant to be conformed to the image of Christ for all eternity.

In Christ the sons of Adam boast more blessings than their father lost. I think it's thrilling. And so here's Haman in Persia, and God looks down and he's saying, in effect, I can't stand that man's pride and arrogance, and sooner or later I'm going to have to prick his balloon, which he will do as we see.

He wants everybody to bow down and worship him. Who does he think he is? God? And so there he is, and pretty soon word comes to him that there's one fellow that won't do it. His name is Mordecai.

And as far as the record's concerned, he's the only one in the kingdom of Persia that won't do it. How do you like that? Pretty something to stand alone, isn't it? When the whole kingdom is going the other way, when the whole kingdom is swimming against the tide and Mordecai refuses to do it. God is saying to him, don't you ever do it, Mordecai.

Don't you bow to a man whose breath is in his nostrils. You only bow to the true God. He's the only one to be bowed to.

And if anybody challenges you for your insubordination, you just tell them you're a Jew and you worship only one God, the true God. You have to obey me rather than men. And it was a momentous decision that Mordecai was making because the lives of all his people in the kingdom depended on it.

I mean, it was one thing to make a decision that affects you alone. It might mean your death. But it was more than that.

It was more than that. It affected everybody in the kingdom. And now, of course, the word has reached that swaggering Haman.

He said, there's no use of taking out my wrath on Mordecai alone. All the Jews are like him. They've all got to be destroyed.

That was his reasoning in a case like this. And there was a measure of truth to it as well. I don't say there weren't any Jews that wouldn't bow.

But if they're all like Mordecai in the kingdom, then they all must be eliminated. And so he resorts to a little superstition now. Actually, we don't know the details of it, but he's going to try to fix a date for the execution of the Jews in the kingdom.

And through some superstitious strategy, he was looking for some omen. How's it going to come out? How's it going to come out? Well, they cast lots, you know. I don't know what the lots were like.

Just think of them being a couple of dice being thrown on the table. Just remember that every movement of those dice through the air was controlled by the hand of God. Do you believe that? It's true.

It's true. I often think of that in these marvelous cases of automobile accidents where people stand there and say, nobody got out of that alive, and a man next to them says, yes, I did. I've been in an accident where that happened.

And people said, nobody could get out of that alive. A fellow said, I got out of it alive. A Christian.

I think it's wonderful. I think it's absolutely breathtaking, mind-boggling to think of God controlling those dice. What was the result? The date was about a year away.

I think if we knew all the facts of the case, according to the strategy used, the date couldn't have been further away than it came up. Doesn't it make you glad you're on the Lord's side? Makes me glad. Makes me glad.

I'll tell you, I'd be a nervous wreck if I didn't know that he was in absolute control. Of the most minute things in life, such as the casting of dice, it gives the people almost a year to prepare or to make other plans. The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing is of the Lord.

What a wonderful God we have. It means that he controls every bullet flying through the air. Doesn't it mean that? It means he controls every germ, every streptococcus germ that there is, as far as his people are concerned.

What kind of a God we have. How we should praise him and worship him forever. Well, Haman thinks he has the perfect plan.

The law of the Medes and the Persians is absolutely unalterable. So he gets the permission of this unwitting king to sign a decree I really get a kick out of this to destroy, kill, annihilate, and exterminate the Jews. How do you like that? You can hardly get anything more complete than that.

I mean, their goose is cooked and their stuffing is overdone, you'd think. Makes me think of dear George Landis who used to be here on the ground in a house still here. Dear George, there was one thing he didn't like.

He didn't like apricot pie. And he came to Chicago one time and he was at an assembly there and for dessert the dear sister had slaved over the stove and prepared an apricot pie. And she wasn't content with that.

She said to him at the end of the meal, how did you like the pie? He said to himself, I hate, loathe, abominate, and despise apricot pie. So when she asked him what would he say, he said, that was a pie, wasn't it? Well she got on the phone and she called all the sisters and she said, if you want to give brother Landis something he likes, give him apricot pie. Well that made me think of this loathe, hate, despise, and abominate.

Kill, annihilate, exterminate the Jews on the 13th of Adar. 11 months later. 11 plus.

Actually Haman is somewhat disappointed. He wishes a date could have been sooner. He offers to contribute 20 million dollars to finance the project.

How did he like that? He really means business doesn't he? You know, they say money speaks. And that's what he offered to the king. 20 million.

I don't know where he was going to get it unless it was through the confiscation of the wealth of Jews. I don't know. So that's what he offered, 20 million.

I forget how many tons they figure that. Something like 250 tons of silver. It's really something, isn't it? And then with unusual speed and efficiency this decree is taken out throughout all the land of Persia that the Jewish people are going to be exterminated.

And Haman is satisfied and he and the king go to the bar and have a couple of drinks to celebrate. And people will wonder, you know, if there's a god, why did this happen to his chosen people? Wait a minute. I haven't heard the last chapter yet.

God is saying it wasn't my directive decree. I permitted it. It isn't what I would have what I would have willed.

But the last chapter hasn't been written. And I'll teach that cruel man that I'm greater than any unchangeable decree. And I'll show him that his evil will recoil on his own head.

And I'll show him that the way of the transgressor is hard. And I'll show my people that what I do is absolutely right, just, fair. He says in effect, I'll show my people that I'm working all things together for good to those who love me.

Marvelous, isn't it? What a wonderful god he is. That's why I can never feel casual about the book of Esther. Because it's such a revelation of the greatness of God.

Brother Sharp used the word awesome. It really is awesome to know that he's working behind the scenes with infinite wisdom. And that he never does anything but what you yourself would do if you had his wisdom, love, and power.

God nothing does, nor suffers to be done, but what thou wouldst thyself, couldst thou but see the end of all he does, as well as he. What happens next? Come back tomorrow night, shall we pray. Father, we thank you for this wonderful book, but mostly for the revelation it gives us of yourself.

Not visibly present in any way, but hidden. Hidden in a sense from your people, but never resting. Never resting.

You neither slumber nor sleep. And here are your people, kept by the insomnia of God. How we do worship and praise you tonight.

And we ask you that in our lives of service and witness for you that we might have this consciousness that no matter what happens in life, it didn't happen by chance. It wasn't a case of fortune, but you were working all things together for good. That we might be conformed to the image of your Son.

We pray that these thoughts might go with us and that we might have greater and greater thoughts of yourself as the days go by. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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