

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCTOBER 1ST - 2ND, 2022 // BOOK OF ESTHER

AN UNVEILING (ESTHER 7:1-6A)

Chapter 7 opens with King Ahasuerus and his second in command, Haman, feasting with queen Esther (vs. 1).

- Esther is hoping to appeal to the king about a royal decree concerning the genocide of every Jew in the Persian Empire in 11 months time.
- This decree was concocted by Haman (who hated the Jews) and agreed upon unwittingly by King Ahasuerus (3:10-11).

To request the King of Persia to reverse a royal edict was a huge ask—changing a law was considered a sign of weakness and indecision.

- History tells us that King Xerxes was a principled man who didn't take kindly to people asking him for favors (story of Pythius, Herodotus' Histories).
- Esther showed a considerable amount of bravery and courage interceding on her people's behalf!

As the three relaxed around the wine course of the banquet, the king asked Esther for her petition, just as he had done at the first banquet (vs. 2).

- Finally, Esther makes her request: "spare my life...and spare my people" (vs. 3).
- Notice the tact and great respect Esther shows in making this request—she never accuses the king, she doesn't immediately name Haman, and she doesn't initially identify herself as a Jew.

Esther explained that if her and her people had just been sold as slaves, that wouldn't have been enough to justify burdening the king (vs. 4).

- King Ahasuerus spoke up and asked, "Who is this, and where is the one who would devise such a scheme?" (vs. 5)
- The king should've known that it was actually he himself who authorized such a plan! But he did so in ignorance.

The real mastermind behind this wicked plan—the adversary and enemy of God's people—was the evil Haman (vs. 6a).

- Haman is exposed before the king for what he really was. He wasn't a faithful servant of the king. Instead, he was an adversary and enemy.
- Haman was ultimately more interested in his own fame, status, and foolish pride than he was in serving the king's interests.

RETRIBUTION (ESTHER 7:6B-10)

"HAMAN STOOD TERRIFIED BEFORE THE KING AND QUEEN" (VS. 6B)

Haman never imagined that Esther was a Jew; now, he stood before the king, being rightly accused of plotting the murder of the king's wife.

- The king's rage boils so hot that he storms off into the palace garden, presumably to consider how he should respond to Haman's treachery (vs. 7).

Haman's hate-filled, violent plot was birthed in his heart because a Jewish man would not bow down to him.

- And now, Haman is so absolutely humiliated he begins to bow down and beg for his own life before a Jewish woman (vs. 7-8).
- In his panic and desperation, Haman forgets palace protocol and breaks a very serious rule.

No men, other than assigned eunuchs and the king, were allowed within seven paces of harem women.

- In begging for his life, Haman falls upon the very couch where Esther is reclining (Targums, Aramaic paraphrase, says the angel Gabriel pushed Haman).
- The king walks in the room and sees Haman lying on the same couch as his queen (vs. 8).

"WILL HE ACTUALLY VIOLATE THE QUEEN WHILE I AM IN THE HOUSE?"

For all of Haman's pleading, he only got himself in deeper trouble—including now an accusation from the king of sexually assaulting the queen!

- Haman's face was covered as a preparation for execution, and his fate is sealed as he is ordered to be hung on the very gallows he prepared for Mordecai (vs. 9-10).

Haman is executed (either by hanging or impalement) on his gallows, and the king's anger subsides (vs. 10).

- Those who oppose God, His work, and His people will ultimately find themselves falling into their own pit (Psalm 7:14-16).
- All of Haman's wealth, glory, and earthly success couldn't rescue him from death or judgment, nor could he take any of it with him.

Haman never saw his own death coming—he'd lived as though his status, power, and personal connections would keep him safe and secure.

- And yet, when death comes, Haman isn't ready.
- What are we living for? Where do we seek our happiness? What do we put our hope in?
- Are we living for things that will last, or will death one day come and steal everything from us, just like it did for Haman?

A GREAT REVERSAL (ESTHER 8:1-8)

GOD WORKS IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS!

Just when it seemed in this story like evil was going to win, and untold suffering, violence, and death would triumph—God intervened.

- Now we see a reversal of positions happening as the story of Esther reaches its resolution.
- This all illustrates what Jesus meant when He said, "the last will be first, and the first last" (Matt. 20:16).

Even if wickedness seems to be winning in this present age, God's plan will ultimately prevail, and He will save and honor His people!

REVERSAL #1: HAMAN'S ESTATE IS PLUNDERED AND GIVEN TO ESTHER (VS. 1)

Haman's plan was to kill all the Jews across the Persian empire and then take their wealth.

- In the end, Haman is killed, and his entire estate is given to a Jewish family.

REVERSAL #2: MORDECAI IS EXALTED (VS. 2)

Haman weaseled his way into his position as 2nd in command of the kingdom, and then his hatred of Mordecai led to his downfall.

- Now we see Mordecai entering into the king's presence as a member of the royal family and given the same position as Haman.
- In the end, Mordecai became the owner of all to which Haman had aspired.

REVERSAL #3: HAMAN'S EDICT IS REVERSED, AND MORDECAI'S EDICT IS PASSED (VS. 3-8)

Even though Esther's life has been saved, Haman has been executed, and Mordecai has been promoted, she still wanted to make sure the king's decree (that by law couldn't be revoked) was not carried out.

- How could God's people be preserved when a decree of the king couldn't be revoked?
- The king could not revoke the previous decree, so he simply gave Mordecai the authority to pass another decree that nullified the first.
- In our sins, we not only have an enemy (Satan), but we also have a legal decree from a righteous God against us.
- The righteous decree of God that demands our death: the soul who sins shall die (Ezekiel 18:4).

God solves the problem, not by compromising His decree for eternal justice, but by fulfilling justice in taking the punishment we deserved.

- God's counter-decree saves us; that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Romans 3:26).
- But it's not enough for us to receive God's mercy and forgiveness for ourselves—we must proclaim this decree across the earth!

GLADNESS, JOY, & HONOR (ESTHER 8:9-17)

As the new prime minister, Mordecai drafted a new decree that gave Jews across the Persian empire permission to assemble together and defend themselves against anyone who would try to kill them and take their property (vs. 11).

- This didn't allow Jews to become the aggressors; it simply empowered them to protect themselves against those across the empire who wanted to destroy them as a people group.

Mordecai's edict was precisely written and translated in the languages of all 127 provinces of the Persian empire.

- Couriers on horseback rode out in haste to issue this message across the land and proclaim it in the city of Susa.
- There was an urgency and a unified effort to get this life-saving message out! It was the most important task at hand!

The mission of the church (the people of God) is to get the word out about a very important decree of the King.

- We are couriers of this decree that the justice of God has been satisfied in Christ and that humanity can be saved from destruction and death.
- But do we have an urgency about this? Are we willing to work together to get the word out?

When the people of God heard this proclamation, they responded with shouting, rejoicing, and celebrations of gladness, joy, and honor (vs. 16-17).

- Their joy was based on their confident trust in the faithfulness and salvation of their God.
- The Jews had been mourning and fasting, but now they were ecstatic with joy and worship.

The outcome of the joy and worship of God's people was that "many ethnic groups of the land professed themselves to be Jews" (vs. 17).

- As unbelieving Gentile nations saw God working on behalf of His people, they wanted the same relationship with God.
- The greatest witnessing tool we have is our personal testimony: not just principles about how God works in theory, but a real story of how God has worked to save us!

A STORY WITHIN THE GREATER STORY.

- The story of Esther is set within the context of a bigger and greater story: the story of the gospel.
- Humanity is under the curse of sin and death because of our sin, but Jesus came to reverse that curse and give us forgiveness, eternal life, and a new kind of life in His Kingdom.
- All of human history is moving towards the climax of this story.

THERE WILL BE AN UNVEILING.

- Right now, we see "through a glass darkly" (1 Cor. 13:12)—we have an obscure or imperfect vision of reality in this present age.
- There is a spiritual world and a spiritual war.
- The real enemy behind all of the evil, wickedness, and destruction in our world will someday be exposed.
- The real King (Jesus) will someday be recognized.

THERE WILL BE A RETRIBUTION.

- Death is coming for all of us.
- After death, there is coming a final day of judgment in which our deeds will be exposed before the God who knows and sees all.
- The unrepentant and those whose guilt has not been atoned for will be punished.
- No one's status, power, or personal connections can save them on that day.

THERE WILL BE A GREAT REVERSAL.

- Those who have lived their lives to love and serve God (even when it didn't pay off in this life), will be rewarded.
- Those who lived to love and serve themselves will lose everything.
- The humble will be exalted, the last will be first, and the meek will inherit the earth.
- The life of faith is one of patient perseverance.

THERE WILL BE GLADNESS, JOY, AND HONOR.

- In this life, we will have trouble, pain, affliction, and sorrow as we labor to serve the King in a world that's run by an imposter king ("the ruler of this world," "the prince of the power of the air").
- Someday, all pain will cease, and perfect joy will be ours forever.
- But even now, we can have gladness, joy, and celebration in Jesus because we know that our salvation is secure because God is faithful!

DO WE BELIEVE ALL OF THIS? IF SO...

- Where is our urgency? Where is our trust and hope in God's faithfulness?
- Where is our joy?
- Where is our peace?
- What we believe about this Story (the gospel) shapes the trajectory of our entire life.