

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCTOBER 8TH - 9TH, 2022 // BOOK OF ESTHER

DELIVERANCE (ESTHER 9:1-17)

UP TO THIS POINT, THE BOOK OF ESTHER HAS BEEN FULL OF TENSION, SUSPENSE, AND CLIFFHANGERS.

Chapter 3 ends with the city of Susa thrown into confusion by the king's edict to destroy all Jews.

- Chapter 4 ends with Queen Esther agreeing to risk her life to go before the king.
- Chapter 5 is full of tension as Esther delays her request to the king, and Haman constructs gallows for Mordecai.

Then overnight (quite literally), everything begins to change!

- Haman is forced to honor Mordecai the way he wished to be honored, and he ends up dying the exact same way he hoped to kill Mordecai.
- Mordecai is given Haman's position, and he writes a decree which allows the Jews to defend themselves.
- Now we see the events of that fateful day in verse 1 of chapter 9.

Surprisingly, the events of the entire day are laid out without any suspense, cliffhangers, or tension in one single verse (vs. 1)!

- The rest of the chapter gives us the details, but we're told how the story ends before we see how it actually plays out.
- The end of this story was never really in question—God was always going to save, protect, and preserve His people.

GOD PROMISED THE JEWS...

He would be their God, and they would be His people (Jer. 32:36–38).

- He would gather them from all the countries in which they were spread out and make them dwell in safety (Ezek. 37:20–28).
- He would send a King to His people from the tribe of Judah to rescue them and establish an eternal Kingdom (2 Sam. 7:1–16; Matt. 1:21).

This story was always going to end with God keeping His promises, His people being delivered, and His enemies being judged.

- But there still is a lot of drama, tension, and uncertain details in the events of the story.
- We also know the end of our story.
- There will still be a lot of drama, tension, and uncertain details in the real-time events of our lives! But we trust in God's faithfulness!

FIGHTING FROM VICTORY, NOT FOR IT (VS. 1–5)

Even though the Jews had the power and resources of the king of Persia on their side, they still had enemies that wished to destroy them completely.

- We also have spiritual enemies who come against us daily through temptation, discouragement, and other kinds of spiritual attacks.
- But with the King of Kings on our side and our victory secure, we fight FROM the victory that is ours in Christ.

ENEMIES FROM ALL OVER THE PLACE (VS. 6–10)

Various enemies of the Jews came against them from the city of Susa and other places—God gave them complete victory.

- No two spiritual attacks are quite the same: they are often formed against us in various ways and differ by our season, our weaknesses, and our position.
- God is faithful and has promised us victory and a “way of escape” (1 Cor. 10:13).

COMPLETE VICTORY OVER THE JEW'S ENEMIES (VS. 11–17)

Esther is not willing to settle for partial victory—she goes before the king and asks permission for Haman's sons to be executed (vs. 13–14).

- Haman and his sons were descendants of the ancient Amalekites (1 Samuel 15:8–33).
- God commanded Saul to execute the full extent of God's judgment against the Amalekites. Saul disobeyed and failed.

Now we see that this conflict between Israel and the Amalekites (which began with Joshua) is finally finished by Esther and Mordecai.

- If we aren't fully committed to total victory by completely killing our sin, it will remain and grow into a deadly force in our spiritual lives.
- We must be willing to deal with the seemingly insignificant issues: they'll grow!

THE CELEBRATION OF PURIM (ESTHER 9:18–32)

After this incredible act of God's protection and salvation in delivering them from their enemies, the Jews rested and celebrated (vs.18–19).

- What follows is a description of the institution of the feast of Purim, which is still celebrated today by Jews around the world.
- Purim is to be celebrated by feasting and rejoicing, by giving gifts, and by giving to the poor (vs. 22).

This feast is called *Purim* because of the dice (Pur) that Haman had cast in order to determine the best date to annihilate the Jews (vs. 26).

- Even the name of the feast is meant to remind us that God is able to take even the darkest days and events of our lives and use them for good.
- The feast of Purim is all about hope: the hope we have is in our God because of His faithfulness and promises toward His people.

The message of Purim is that even when things seem uncertain and it looks like evil is winning, we can trust God because our salvation is certain in Him.

- God is actively participating in the events of human history and working out His perfect plan, even when we don't know what He's doing.
- God doesn't ever want His people to forget this message (vs. 29-32).

WE'RE CALLED TO BE PEOPLE OF HOPE.

“According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...” (1 Pet. 1:3–4, ESV).

- We're not called to be people of fear, panic, anxiety, worry, or doom and gloom.
- In Christ, we have hope that the best is ALWAYS yet to come!
- God loves us, He's for us, and He's on the throne.

WE'RE CALLED TO BE PEOPLE WHO TRUST IN OUR GOD.

“Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth” (Psalm 46:10, ESV).

- We are invited as children of God into a deep, abiding, resting trust in the sovereign wisdom, provision, and protection of God.
- Even in the drama, tension, and uncertainties of our life—we can be still, let go, and just trust Him.

POSTSCRIPT (ESTHER 10:1–3)

There's a rather odd detail included in the post-script about a tax imposed throughout the land (vs. 1).

- This detail seems to be included to highlight and emphasize Mordecai's position in the kingdom.
- Like Joseph before him, Mordecai helped a Gentile king bring prosperity to the crown.
- Mordecai's glory, power, and majesty were even noted in the records of the Persian kings (vs. 2).

GOD WORKS IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS!

An unknown employee of the imperial workforce in Susa pursues the path of righteousness and humility, and willingly embraces obscurity...

- ...and God exalts him as a trusted and powerful ruler alongside the king.
- Mordecai becomes an advocate for the Jewish people at the highest reaches of political power and influence (vs. 3).

The drama, tension, and cliffhangers in Esther are all over, and God's purposes have prevailed.

- God preserved the Jewish nation so that the promised Messiah King, Jesus, could be born from the tribe of Judah.
- Like Mordecai, Jesus also pursued the path of humility and obedience, and God exalted Him above every other name (Phil. 2:9–11).

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE BOOK OF ESTHER?

1. The hand of God often moves in an ordinary yet supernatural manner.
 - Think of how many “coincidences” occurred in the story of Esther.
 - These divine arrangements of God often happen in the ordinary events of everyday life.
2. God's sovereign hand in history never rules out our actions. God is completely sovereign, yet we are responsible and held accountable for our actions.
 - God's will is always accomplished, and yet humans are perfectly free agents. Somehow, God works out His eternal plan through it all.
3. In His perfect wisdom, God sometimes allows His people to be tested. Tough times and trials, even when they're painful, are part of God's design.
 - Tough times and trials are opportunities for deeper trust, intimacy, and refined priorities.

THE DETAILS ARE UNKNOWN, BUT THE OUTCOME IS CERTAIN.

- Your story will be full of unknowns, mysteries, and complexities—you will not have all the answers and reasons this side of eternity.
- However, if you have trusted in Jesus, your story ends in the most glorious way possible.
- God isn't calling you to know the unknowable—but simply to trust Him with your next step.

WE FIGHT KNOWING THAT THE BATTLE IS ALREADY WON!

- Even though Satan's future is certain, he's no quitter: he comes against the people of God daily through temptation, discouragement, and all sorts of spiritual attacks.
- But you have the power and resources (Eph. 6:10–18) of the King of all Kings on your side. You fight FROM victory, not for it!

THIS LIFE WILL HAVE ITS TRIALS, BUT WE HAVE HOPE.

- Sometimes in our places of greatest pain and heartache, we assume that a thorough explanation for why it's happening would somehow make it better.
- Sometimes we just don't know—but we have hope that it isn't meaningless, and that God sees us, loves us, and works it all for our good.

WE HAVE BEEN INVITED SIMPLY TO TRUST GOD AND OBEY HIM, EVEN WHEN WE CAN'T SEE WHAT HE'S DOING.

- Everything in our lives—even that which is tearful, confusing, and hard—has gone through the hands of a perfect God who loves us.
- His invitation is for us to let go, release our delusions of control, and simply trust that He knows what He's doing as we obey Him.