

Esther 06-05-02A

This is the second of May, 2006. We continue and conclude tonight our study in the book of Esther. We pick up in the latter part of chapter 9. Let's take a moment, as is our custom, to exercise our individual priesthood as we go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we are grateful, as always, for this opportunity to receive nourishment for our souls and the ministry of your spirit as we study together the truth of your word. We thank you for each one who is here and the spiritual gifts that you have bestowed upon each of us and the blessings that are given and received when we gather in this way. We ask your blessing on our study.

May we find in the conclusion of this book those truths that will contribute to our preparation and our equipping for every good work. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

We saw last time that as a result of Esther's request, her skillful exploiting, if you will, or her skillful dealing with her opportunities, she gains for her people an equal footing. The decree of Haman would have brought about their death. But the subsequent decree, sponsored by Queen Esther, under the seal of Ahasuerus and with the promotion of Mordecai to the place once occupied by Haman, and even exceeding that of Haman, because Mordecai is now second in the kingdom, much as Joseph was the vizier or the second in command to the Pharaoh many years earlier, now the Jews, while the first decree is not revoked, they have an equal opportunity.

They have an equal footing, equal authority to defend themselves even as these others attack. We saw what happened on the 13th and on the 14th and on the 15th of the month when death had been decreed, death had been predicted, death had been planned. Instead, a great victory is accomplished.

And we know that because of the Lord Jesus Christ, the plotting and scheming of our adversary, Satan, and all of his forces, all of his policies, all of his efforts to bring about and secure our death, our neutralization, have instead, because of the Lord Jesus Christ, been converted from defeat into victory. And we, even though we are lesser, even though we are made lower than the angels, and our battle is against principalities and powers and rulers who would seemingly have an easy victory over us because of their superiority, we have been placed on an equal footing. And rather than simply handing us salvation and handing us deliverance, the Bible tells us to work out our own deliverance, work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

We recognize the strength of our opposition. We recognize the difficulty of the challenge. And yet, it drives us into the arms of God.

It leads us to the place of faith. So, the Jews in Shushan and the Jews throughout the 127 provinces of the Persian Empire, on that terrible day, the 13th of the month of Adar, when the greedy Persians attack them and try to take their stuff and snuff them out, find themselves opposed by motivated and armed and prepared Jews who defend themselves. And instead of being slaughtered, they wreak slaughter on the enemy.

And they, in the capital city, slay 500 of their enemies on the first day. Esther makes her request and the king says, you can do the same thing tomorrow. And they slay another 300 enemies the next day.

The remainder of the Jews, it tells us in verse 16 of chapter 9, in the king's provinces gathered together and protected their lives, had rest from their enemies and killed 75,000 of their enemies. These are the people who sought their destruction, who sought their obliteration and elimination. These are people who didn't just arrive at this policy and this attitude in a day.

These people have been hating the Jews for years. They have been looking askance at the Jews for years. They have been looking for an excuse and looking for an opportunity to upset them, to upturn them, to uproot them, to dislodge them, and to do them some kind of mischief and some kind of harm.

And Haman provides them the opportunity. They seize it and that becomes the means of their own undoing. What does this remind you of? Think about the millennial kingdom where the people of God are dwelling in the land and dwelling in the city in peace and safety for a thousand years.

But near the end of that time, Satan himself is released from the bottomless pit. And there have been people all along who are tares amongst the wheat. They are subjugated, they are held in place by the authority of Christ, by the authority of His Prince Regent, and they obey and they exist and they don't do anything rash and they don't do anything destructive.

But what happens? When Satan is released and Satan gives them the excuse, they gather in an innumerable multitude like the sands of the sea and surround the camp of the saints. Have you ever heard anybody talk about Gog and Magog? Well, that's what happens at the end of the millennial kingdom. These people have been just quietly perturbed and grouching and upset and unhappy and chafing under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ expressed on earth through King David, through the King who sits in Jerusalem and rules with a rod of iron.

And when Satan is released, they say, this is our chance and it's just like what happens in the Persian Empire. They want to wipe the people of God off the face of the map. There are people who are going to want to wipe us off the face of the map for various reasons.

Motivated by Satan. How many times have we reviewed it? Our warfare is not against flesh and blood. It is the principalities.

It is the powers. It is the rulers. Do you think that the Islamic terrorist extremist factions are stirred up and trying to wreak havoc and produce all kinds of ruin on us as an accident? As just sort of a historical confluence of circumstances? Not at all.

This is the latest satanic attack. And I don't care how politically incorrect it is. There are lots of different kinds of Christians and there are lots of different kinds of Muslims.

But those who of any faith or any persuasion who seek to actively destroy other people who do not abide by live and let live, it isn't any more right for the Muslims, the extremists and

the terrorists to try to get their way by breaking the law and by murdering people. It isn't any more right for them to do that than it was for the quote-unquote Christians back in the days of the Crusades or the church during the Inquisition to take the rights and the privileges and the lives of other people to further one's own agenda. It's never right.

Unless you have a direct mandate from God to go in and slay the Canaanites, we pursue our faith and we let other people pursue theirs. It's not our place to wipe anybody off the earth. And anybody who thinks they can, they're operating just the way Haman and these greedy Persians do.

So it says in verse 18 as we move through the final verses of this book, The Jews who were at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth day as well as on the fourteenth. And on the fifteenth they rested. And they made it a day of feasting and gladness.

Therefore the Jews of the villages who dwelt in the unwall'd towns celebrated the fourteenth day of the month with gladness and feasting. They wiped out their enemies on the thirteenth. They had one day of wiping out their enemies and the next day they celebrated.

It took two days in the capital city. Five hundred one day, three hundred the other day, and then everybody celebrated. And what does this tell you? The conflict is more intense in the capital.

The capital is the place of influence. The capital is the place of political intrigue. The capital is the place where God put his best people, Esther and Mordecai.

And the conflict is more intense. Listen to me now. The closer you get to the new Jerusalem, the more intense your conflict will become.

Where does Satan assemble the swarms of disaffected, grumbling ne'er-do-wells that have been chafing under the authority of God for a thousand years in the millennial kingdom? Where do they assemble? Where do they go? They don't go to Hawaii. They don't go to Florida. They don't go to Peru.

They don't go to Australia. Where do they go? They surround the camp of the saints, the holy ones, at Jerusalem. They want to attack the heart.

They want to attack the strong point. They want to defeat the best and brightest of God's people who are dwelling in the city of Jerusalem. God's best and brightest are dwelling here in Shushan.

And that's where the attack is redoubled on a second day. It requires two days to exterminate the enemies because that's the locus. That's the focus.

That's the emphasis. That's the nerve center. That's where it's really happening.

And all those who desire to live godly in Christ will get persecuted. Count on it and smile about it. The tougher your opposition, that just means you're doing what you're supposed to do.

Satan's starting to get worried about you. He's starting to pay more attention. Allocating extra demons to try to throw you off your stride.

If you're an apathetic, indifferent weakling off bumping into things, he doesn't need to expend any effort. In fact, he may encourage you. He may bless you and hope that you do more of the same.

You have people who get false healings and things from the whole Pentecostal, Holy Spirit, faith healing movement. And a lot of that is demonic. When somebody waves their hand in front of your face and you get pushed over backwards and fall down, that's not God pushing you over.

What is it saying in the Bible? God's going to knock you off your feet. Can you think of a single time when somebody in the New Testament got healed by Jesus or any apostle and fell over backwards? It's satanic. When you stumble and fall, that's not from God.

God stands us on our feet. He doesn't knock us flat. Satan knocks us flat.

And it's so ironic that people who think they're being healed by the Holy Spirit are getting knocked flat by Satan. Well, Satan is happy to encourage and continue to deflect and distract and neutralize people who are ignorant and don't know the plan and purpose of God. You are learning the plan and purpose of God from God's Word.

And you can expect that a measured amount of opposition is going to be let through the angelic barricade that surrounds each one of us. The concept of guardian angels and angels who watch over the people of God is biblical. It is sound.

There's nothing to say that there's one poor, raggedy, individual guardian angel who's trying to do everything, fend off cars and watch for germs and all that. But God allocates angels to watch over His people. There are angels who behold the face of the Father who watch over God's little ones.

And if you are headed for the kingdom and if you are headed for entrance into the city, you are one of God's little ones. Jesus said, unless you become as one of these little ones, you can't enter. What does that tell you? Those who are qualified to enter are those little ones.

And their angels, Jesus said, are always beholding the face of the Father. So, there are angels. And God will decree that a certain amount of opposition come through.

Why? Same reason the doctor injects weak germs under your skin on purpose. He gets some cooked up, half-dead remnants of a fatal disease and shoots them into your body. Why do we do that? Why do we get vaccinations? The body sees those and attacks them and kills them and becomes strong.

And that's what we are to do. The opposition that God allows through. Why did God let Haman get as far as he did with his plot? Why didn't Haman, as soon as he started having evil thoughts about Mordecai, just keel over with a heart attack? Seems like it would have been a whole lot simpler.

Oh, that Mordecai, I'm going to kill him. I'm going to kill all this people. Oh, and then he just falls over dead.

No strain. Not a lot of problem there. Why didn't it happen that way? God let those Persians get riled up and let them pick a day and let them grab their swords and head out and gave the Jews not instant deliverance.

All of the Persians, these 75,000 plus 800 in the capital, didn't just fall over dead. God could have killed them all, couldn't He? He's the one holding their atoms and molecules together. They could have just gone poof and there would have been a little cloud of vapor that drifted away on the wind.

People say, oh, I wonder what happened to all... And then name all of those sons of Haman. Why not? We benefit from conflict. We benefit from opposition.

We push against resistance and we get stronger. So, as the Apostle says, do not be surprised at your trials. Peter says in his first epistle, you get in these fiery trials and you act surprised.

You shouldn't be. These are the things that are refining us. How many times have you heard that analogy of the metalsmith who takes the gold that's got a lot of impurities? What does he do to get the impurities out? So, you get a little pick and say, oh, I see a little grain of sand there and start trying to pick it out.

What does he do? He just puts it in a pot and starts heating it up. And as he heats it and the metal gets more and more liquid, surface tension reduces, molecules are moving around. Those impurities, because gold is heavier than just about everything, those impurities start floating up to the top.

He skims them off. Then he heats it up a little hotter. Smaller impurities with less difference between their specific gravity or their density, they float to the top.

God scoops them off. That's what he does to us. He heats us up to refine us, puts us in the fire to refine us, to distill out of us those elements of faith and elements of righteousness that we need to dwell with him in the eternal future.

Well, that's what he has done with his people here. So, the Jews gathered together and feasted and they celebrated. What are we going to do after our day or two of conflict, of hacking our enemies into small cubic pieces? If you swing your sword straight, you're going to make nice straight slices, aren't you? Slice and dice.

Just hack them up. We have to think of it in those terms, because if you get bogged down and start looking at life the way the world looks at it, you're just going to get depressed. We have these challenges and we face them and after we prevail, there is celebration.

We have a thousand year celebration coming up when the Lord Jesus returns for us and takes us to be with himself and we are refined and the wood, hay and stubble is incinerated and the gold and the silver and the precious stones that no one ever saw, your decisions that you made when nobody was looking, your faithfulness when nobody seemed to be paying attention, your diligence when nobody said thank you, your patience when people were abrasive and unkind and discourteous and inconsiderate and you said, you know, this

treatment is nothing like what they did to the Lord Jesus and he could look down at people who crucified him and say, Father, forgive them. I've just suffered a little minor personal insult. I've just had a little inconsideration directed toward me.

Can I not endure this small thing when the Lord Jesus had people spitting in his face and yanking out his beard and mocking him and deriding him and he didn't have a sinful thought in all of that time. Never got angry, never got bitter, never called down angels to torture them, to burn them alive. A single word, he could have said one word and those people would have had their words shoved back in their faces.

Jesus didn't do it. Our trials are minor compared to his. The glory that awaits us is great because it is his.

So we have a day of gladness and feasting and holiday ahead of us. This is a great analogy, these people that God gave the ability to defend themselves, to work out their own deliverance and then to celebrate God's providence. That's really the theme of this book.

Now look at verse 20 of Esther chapter 9. Many people have speculated, well, I wonder who wrote the book of Esther. Maybe it was Ezra, maybe it was Nehemiah, maybe it was some unknown guy later on. What does it say in verse 20? Mordecai wrote these things.

So, if I was handed a test by some angel, he says, well, who wrote the book of Esther? You know what I'd say? Mordecai. Who else knew all the details? I think he's as good a candidate as any. I think he certainly provided the information.

He may have, since he was second in command of the Persian Empire, 127 provinces. Can you imagine the United States that had 127 states and you were the vice president? Well, Mordecai had a whole palace full of scribes and scholars and the Persians were fond of writing things down. Remember Ahasuerus? Couldn't sleep and he said, bring out the books and read me some history because they wrote things down.

So, do you think Mordecai couldn't have had some scholar come in and write this down for him as he dictated it? I think he probably did. Mordecai wrote these things and he sent letters to all the Jews near and far who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly the 14th and 15th days. A commemoration.

Jews still celebrate this event, this deliverance. How many years has it been? 2,500 years, roughly? 2,500 years and they still celebrate what God did. Why? If God had not done this and Haman had succeeded and the Persians had wiped out the Jews in all the provinces, which includes the province where Judea is located, there wouldn't be any Jews around today.

Just like if Hitler had succeeded. If he had kept his little Third Reich going there, kept the ovens burning, why, the great majority of Jews who lived in Europe would have all been incinerated. If he had managed to lick the United States and come over here and done the same, then there wouldn't be any Jews.

And why would that be a worthy goal? Do you think Hitler personally and individually cared anything about the Jews? Where did he get that idea? Where did he get that anti-Semitism? Straight from the Prince of Darkness. Satan would like nothing better than to prevent the fulfillment of God's plan. And God's plan cannot be fulfilled without the Jews.

They have to be a people. They have to be twelve tribes. They have to be around to be persecuted by the Antichrist.

That's going to be Satan's last big attempt, second last big attempt to wipe them out. He's going to try again at the end of the Millennial Kingdom. So, Mordecai wrote these things and said, Celebrate this deliverance as the day on which, verse 22, the Jews had rest from their enemies as the month which was turned from sorrow to joy for them and from mourning to a holiday, that they should make them days of feasting and joy, of sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor.

Kind of like Christmas. And interestingly, it was in their twelfth month, just as Christmas is in our twelfth month. A little bit of a shift in the calendar there.

Their calendar year begins in the spring with the month Abib or Nisan, and this is the month right before that. So, in the calendar year, in our modern calendar year, what's the first feast the Jews pay any attention to? It's this one. It's Purim.

This one in a January to December calendar precedes the spring feast cycle. And so, in a modern calendar, it comes first. So, the Jews accepted the custom which they had begun as Mordecai had written to them because Haman, the son of Hamadathah the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to annihilate them and had cast poor, that is the lot, to consume them and destroy them.

But when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letter that this wicked plot which Haman had devised against the Jews should return on his own head and that he and his sons should be hanged on the wood, on the tree, on the cross. That's a nice summary of everything we saw in the preceding eight chapters. So, they call these days Purim after the name Pur.

Now, this is an interesting clue to the meaning and significance of this book and of this event. Why is it that the Jews did not get wiped out? Remember in Little Big Man, there's that old, old Indian. He talks about how the white men came and his people got rubbed out.

He said, all of my people got rubbed out. How come that didn't happen to the Jews here? Was it because of a lucky toss of the dice? This is really kind of an innuendo. It's symbolic of the whole book of Esther because what controls the throw of the dice? What controlled the fall of the lots that Haman cast? That's the question.

Was it just luck? Was it just a happy coincidence? Or is there a power in the universe that oversees the affairs of men and looks out for his people? And so, when you call this feast Purim, lots, what are you saying? Well, are the lots random? Are they just a random number generator there? Or is there something in the heavens controlling what seems to be random in the world? This has a lot of implications when you start thinking about evolution and the fossil record and people talking about well, what a happy accident it was that these animals

are symbiotic and the whole circle of life and how everything fits together and nature is so well organized and the universe and the solar system and the planet Earth is so well situated. They're so stunned by it. Scientists, unbelieving, godless scientists call it the anthropic principle.

What does anthropic mean? What's anthropos? Man, it's the Greek word for man. They call it the man principle. They look at nature, godless, pagan scientists look at nature and they say there are so many fortuitous coincidences that allow human life on planet Earth.

It's the man principle, the anthropic principle. Well, is it the anthropic principle or is there something behind that? What does Purim mean? And that's all dependent on whether you have ears to hear, whether you have eyes to see, isn't it? If you're limited in your vision, you say, well, gee, that's lucky that we have a moon to stir the oceans and we've got the right amount of sunlight, we're at the right distance, we've got the right temperatures, got the right atmosphere, happen to have the right soil, the right land, the right sea, the evaporation, condensation, rivers, fresh water. What a lucky happenstance that life could emerge all on its own and just build itself up into vastly complex and well-designed and ordered life forms.

Wasn't that lucky? Wasn't that a great fall of the Purim? Well, we have to ask ourselves when we look at the events of our life, well, did this just happen or is God in it? Is God orchestrating and superintending the events of our lives? And if he is, then we need to pay attention to what we're supposed to do by way of response, just as the Jews did, just as Esther and Mordecai did. Well, we're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to summarize and give ourselves a final overview of this great piece of literature.