

Esther 06-05-02B

Let's pick up our study now in this final section of the Book of Esther. We saw where the feast gets its name, Purim, the casting of lots, and sort of the thought that follows hard upon that title, because you have to ask yourself whether or not it is a simple reference to good fortune, or luck, or whether you believe that God is active and at work in the events of life. What do you think? What do you think about your life and your circumstances and your situation? Do you think God is at work? And if you do, do you pay any attention? One of the things that we can do as a part of our meditation, which we are commanded to do, to take some time, carve out a little time, and think about who we are and why we're here, is to ask ourselves why would God send the circumstances, the situations, the challenges, the prosperities, the blessings that He sends.

What am I to do? How am I to act? How can we act and analyze ourselves? And I conveniently organize human thought under the categories of goals and values and priorities, and you can apply those in any specific area. Here I am in school. Here I am at work.

Here I am in my family. Here I am with this particular requirement. Here I am with this particular task.

What's my goal in this situation? What's my goal in this relationship? Why am I pursuing this person? Why am I pursuing this person's good opinion? What is my goal? What are my values? What are my priorities? And when we analyze ourselves in that light, remembering that God is in His heaven, that God is orchestrating the events of our lives, this creates the occasion for the application of the Word of God. We won't have a clue what God might be up to. We won't have a clue the way we ought to act, or what our goal or our values or our priorities ought to be if we haven't spent time in God's Word.

But when we have, as you all have, you come faithfully, you listen, you memorize Scripture, you think about the stories and the events and the teachings of God's Word, God the Holy Spirit can take those things and say, this is what you ought to be thinking. Remember Esther. Remember Mordecai.

Remember Joseph. Remember the Lord Jesus. Remember the Apostle Paul.

Remember Moses. Remember the people in the wilderness. Remember King David.

Remember Daniel. Remember Ezekiel. Remember Job.

Remember John as he goes through future events in the book of Revelation. There are many things that can be brought to our minds because we spend our time in God's Word. And there's no better way to spend time than learning the Word of God and in reflecting on it, going back and reviewing and remembering and reminding ourselves because this life will soon be over and a long, long time is ahead.

And that long time is going to be determined by what we learn and what we come to understand and come to appreciate here. And if you think, all of us have situations where somebody tried to tell us, I remember when I was in high school and people tried to tell me

about dating and tried to tell me about relationships with girls and, well, this is what you want to look for, don't just go for the pretty ones, go for the ones that have character. You know, you struggle with the advice that people are trying to give you and they say, well, you shouldn't drive a flashy car, you ought to drive a reliable car.

You shouldn't go for this job that sounds like a lot of fun. You know, there was a time when everybody wanted to be a video game designer. Not too many years ago, everybody going through school, well, I want to design video games because I love to play them.

And that's not practical advice. There was a time when everybody wanted to be a website designer because, hey, I can sit at home in my pajamas and make a mint, make a fortune. And come to find out that that is not a job that just anybody can do and there's not opportunities when there's a glut in the market of 5,000 people all saying, I can do your website, then it's not so easy.

And so we have to back up and try to get in touch with reality. That's what this book encourages us to do. Look at verse 26.

They called these days Purim after the name Pur, because the words of this letter, what they had seen concerning this matter and what had happened to them, the Jews established and imposed it upon themselves and their descendants and all who would join them, that without fail they should celebrate these two days every year according to the writing and according to the time. You have some extra words in there. It's just according to the writing and according to the time.

You watch the calendar. When the season for Purim rolls around, 12th month, 13th, 14th, 15th days, there you go. These days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province and every city that these days of Purim should not fail among the Jews and the memory of them should not perish among their descendants.

Like everything else in the book of Esther, this is the one feast on the calendar of Israel that is not instituted by God. How did Passover come into being? And God spoke to Moses saying, How did the Feast of Unleavened Bread come into being? And God spoke to Moses saying, How did the Feast of Firstfruits come into being? How did the Feast of Pentecost or the Feast of Trumpets or the Feast of Booths or the Day of Atonement and all the other feasts, how did those come into being? God spoke to Moses and said, Tell the people this is what they are to do. Where did God speak anything about celebrating in the month of Adar here? God didn't say word one about this, did he? Whose idea is this celebration? Mordecai.

Mordecai thought it up. Mordecai said you all ought to remember this. Make it an annual thing.

I'm second in command. I'm going to make it a civil edict. I'm going to send out a letter.

And because I'm the big cheese among the Jews, this is what you're going to do. And everybody said, hey, that sounds great. So it was sort of feast by committee.

Now, let's think a little bit about this book. By the way, it says in verse 29, Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim. And Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews, 127 provinces.

All of this is a bit iffy. These verses, 29 through 32, have indications that maybe somebody stuck them on after the fact. The word second in particular doesn't make any sense because the letter they're sending out is the second letter.

You don't send out the second letter to confirm the second letter. It's kind of weird. And it adds Mordecai the Jew lending his authority to this feast and it adds Queen Esther.

There are specific things that Esther does and there are specific things that Mordecai does up in the preceding context, and then they are mixed down here. And it doesn't really add any new information. 29 through 32 is just kind of repetition.

And when you go to some of the earliest texts and the Syriac translations, and I won't go into all the gory details, but just trust me on this, you might want to just put parenthesis around 29 through 32 and a big question mark because it does not appear to be original. And I'm going to skip it. We're going to go to chapter 10.

Then it says, King Ahasuerus imposed tribute on the land and on the islands of the sea. Now all the acts of his power and his might and the account of the greatness of Mordecai to which the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia? And the answer to that question is yes. Unfortunately, the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia has perished.

But at the time that this account was written, those books were still in existence. Now, when do you think the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia perished? When would they have lost their library and their royal records? Alexander the Great comes in and burns down the Persian Empire and takes it for himself and subsumes it. And it tells us that the writing down of this account is early.

Because there is no record of anybody seeing or reading or making reference to or annotations from the books of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia after Alexander. And once again, I would suggest to you that Mordecai wrote the original account and it has come down from him. It says, King Ahasuerus imposed tribute on the land and on the islands of the sea.

Why do we need this detail? It seems to come out of left field, out of nowhere, as if by magic. Right? Because then it says, well, if you want to know anything else about Ahasuerus, go back and read the chronicles of his empire, which of course have now perished. So everything we need to know about him is in this book.

And one of the things is that he imposed tribute on the land. Well, why would he do this? What had Haman promised him back when the decree went out? Oh, wipe out the Jews, big money is going to come into the treasury. Well, Esther comes and says, we want another decree where the Jews can defend themselves.

And they defended themselves and wiped out these Persians and they didn't take any of the spoil. So Ahasuerus says, well, Queen Esther, that's great. You're protected.

Your people are protected. Everything is great. But I had already budgeted for this big influx of cash and I didn't get any.

And I've already started spending it. Me and the counselors, we had 11 months to say, oh boy, look at all this money coming in. We're going to build these ships and we're going to equip this army and we're going to expand into this province and new aqueducts and libraries and public schools and sewer systems and who knows what all they had budgeted in.

And they started all this stuff on the assumption that the cash was going to come in. So how did he replace what Haman did not provide? He just upped the taxes through all 127 provinces and made up whatever his shortfall was, which is fine. But why do we need to know it? Well, think about this.

King Ahasuerus and Mordecai and Haman foreshadow in certain ways, not in all ways, but in certain specific ways they foreshadow future events. Who does Haman foreshadow? Satan. Satan trying to wipe out the people of God.

Who does Mordecai foreshadow? Who is supposed to be hung up on this cross and killed, but instead wins the victory and his enemy is obliterated. And the sons of his enemy are obliterated. And all of the followers of his enemy are obliterated.

So who does Mordecai foreshadow? Lord Jesus Christ. Who is the only one in this story that has authority greater than Mordecai? Ahasuerus. And who does Ahasuerus therefore foreshadow in certain aspects? God the Father, right? And after this victory is won, after the people of God are secure and they're celebrating and they're feasting and they're enjoying peace, there is a tribute.

What does that imply? How do you get tribute from people? What do they have to have for you to tax them? They have to have stuff going on, right? They have to have crops coming in. They have to have businesses running. They have to be doing imports and exports.

They are busy doing things. And the king gets his portion. His glory and his riches are enhanced because his subjects, his people, are doing what they're supposed to do.

They are prospering. And he is raised up. He floats on the sea of his treasury in the literal sense.

What does this tell us about God the Father in the times of the millennial kingdom? He is going to be glorified. His people are going to be busy. They're going to be active.

They're going to be doing things. And the things they do are going to reflect the glory of God. They're going to add righteousness, as it were.

They're going to add glory into God's treasury. So, that's the suggestion here. After the deliverance, everybody doesn't just kind of lay back and say, ah, and the story is over.

There's an ongoing civilization. There are things going on here. But for the rest of the acts of his power and his might, things that happen subsequent to this, you've got to go to another book.

What is God going to do in the eternal future? Jared and I were talking on the break. In Revelation, toward the end, it quotes God. And God says, Behold.

He says, Look. Pay attention. Open your eyes.

Gaze at this. I am creating new things. All over the place.

All the time. And the people of God are going to be intimately involved as agents and as servants and as those who carry out this future work of God. But that's going to be for a future Bible, a future book.

There's going to be other accounts of what God does in the future that we don't have yet. And it's like the books of the Chronicles of the Kings of Media in Persia. That's for a future time.

Something we don't have access to right now. Mordecai the Jew was second to King Ahasuerus and was great among the Jews and well-received by the multitude of his brethren. Isn't that significant? What did Jesus say? He came unto His own and His own received Him not.

The first time, right? He said, I want to come back the second time. You won't see Me until you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Mordecai here after the conflict, after the defeat of the enemy, after the resolution of the conflict.

Now, Mordecai the Jew is second only to the King. He's received among the Jews and well-received by the multitude of his brethren seeking the good of his people just like the Lord Jesus will do and speaking peace to all his countrymen. You couldn't get a more perfect, succinct summary of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Millennial Kingdom and beyond than what you have spoken of Mordecai here.

Now, how would we wrap up and summarize our study of this book? What would you say if I stopped talking right now, handed you a little piece of paper and said, okay, pop quiz. It's got one question on it. What is the overarching theme of the book of Esther? What's the main idea of this book? Well, I won't put you on the spot.

I'll tell you what I think it is and what many others think it is. It is the providence of God. It is God's watch-care over His people.

God arranges for Mordecai and Esther to be on hand as faithful believers. God arranges for Esther to be extraordinarily beautiful and extraordinarily intelligent. And as a faithful member of the household of Israel, she is in the right place at the right time.

And Mordecai says, who knows but that you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this. And Esther, by the way, who does she marry? Ahasuerus. Who is pictured in the Scriptures as the wife of God? It's a nation of Israel.

Same people, the same family as the Lord Jesus Christ. He is of the Jews, right? In Revelation, you have the woman giving birth to Him. Well, God says to Israel, you're like My wife.

And even though you've been unfaithful, I'm going to bring you back and restore you to Myself. And in the same way, you have Esther here. So in this scheme of representation, who does Esther represent? It's the nation of Israel.

The overcomers, the purified, the faithful believers in Israel. Those who are going to be qualified to enter the land and to live in Jerusalem and to surround the throne and the tabernacle and so on for that thousand years. Those faithful remnant.

Those who don't receive the mark of the beast at any time in history. Well, what is the flip side of this? If it is the providence of God in preserving His people, it also tells us the folly of human power and human schemes, doesn't it? Haman has every advantage. He's a Persian.

He's a buddy of the king. They go out and play golf together and they eat at fine restaurants together. And Haman worms his way into the king's confidence and into the king's inner circle and into the king's intimate acquaintanceship.

And he's got everything going for him. He's got the inside track. He's powerful.

He's intelligent. He is talented in his own way. And he's a plotter and a schemer and a manipulator.

But as we are seeing in the book of Daniel, chapter 11, with that history going down to Antiochus Epiphanes and all of those kings who are coming after Ahasuerus, all of these manipulations fail. Those Greek generals and subsequent kings of the four empires, they haggle, they fight, they dispute, they plot, they scheme, they poison one another, they fall off their horses, they have all kinds of things happen. And all of the ingenuity and all of the energy of human strength fails against the providence of God.

Have you ever been discouraged because it seemed like people were getting over at your expense? Makes me smile because I know for certain, for many of you, that it has. You find yourself disadvantaged because people have schemed and plotted and have used human strength and human energy and have seemed to prevail and have seemed to get over and have seemed to get ahead and get an advantage and leave us behind and leave us dangling, leave us short, leave us wounded, leave us in pain. Happens all the time.

What does this book tell us? Just be patient. The providence of God is going to beat the power of man every time. If you are a child of God, if you are one of those trying to walk the narrow road, the providence of God beats the power of man every single time.

You just have to wait. People here in Persia had to wait 11 months from the time that Haman's decree went forth until the counter decree from Esther went into effect. They had to wait 11 months before they could do anything to deliver themselves.

It seemed like things were hanging in the balance. King David got anointed to be the next king of Israel years before he ever went to Jerusalem. Years before he ever founded Jerusalem as the capital.

Before he ever became king. And even when he became king, it wasn't a sure thing. Only Judah accepted him and the northern tribes didn't want to.

And it was a while before all of the nation came to him and recognized him as king. And yet he was the anointed one of God years and years before that. If you don't remember anything else from the book of Esther, remember this.

The providence of God, the provision of God for His people will defeat and destroy the power of man against us every time. Every time. It never fails.

And they have to wait. They have to be patient. And that's the time for faith.

That's the time for hope. That's the time to look out in love. To practice humility.

To meditate on the things of God. Be that tree planted by the rivers of water and wait for your season to come where you're going to bear fruit. That tree bears His fruit in His season.

You've got to wait for the season. You say, hey, where's my oranges? Where's my ripe citrus fruit? Well, it's the dead of winter. You've got to wait.

You've got to be patient. Wait for God's time. Wait for God's provision.

Wait for God's season. The provision of God overcomes the power of man every time. God told the Israelites, God told these people of Judah, if you are disobedient, you are going to be disciplined.

And I will hide my face from you. Remember that? Get over there in the end of Deuteronomy. Keep your finger in Esther and turn over to the end of Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 31. This is after that section. You can see it as you leaf through.

Chapter 27. The curses that were pronounced on Mount Ebal and then the blessings on obedience that were pronounced from Mount Gerizim. And then there's more curses on disobedience.

And by the time you flip over to 31 and verse 18, what does it say? I will surely hide my face in that day. That day of disobedience. That day of apathy and indifference.

God says, I will hide my face because of all the evil which they have done in that they have turned to other gods. Interesting statistic on the book of Esther. How many times has God mentioned? Zero.

His face is hidden. Do you know how many times the Hasuerus is mentioned in the book of Esther? It's a book of really nine chapters. Ten is only a few verses long and those verses really should have been in the place of 29 through 32.

It's a book of essentially nine chapters. Hasuerus is mentioned in there 192 times. God's face is hidden.

The face of human power is all over the place. 192 times this godless king is mentioned. Who prevails? Who controls that king? Who makes sure that the decrees fall as they should? Who decides how that lot of Purim is going to fall or those lots of Purim are going to fall? It's God.

He's hidden. He doesn't seem visible. He doesn't seem near.

And yet he is still working on behalf of his people. Now, why would God's face still be hidden at this date? At this time? We reviewed back in the introduction to this book that this is the time when the decree of Cyrus has long since gone forth and people have long since returned to the land. Nehemiah has already gone back to Jerusalem.

This book, by the way, falls, if you want to make a note in your Bible, right between Ezra chapter 6 and Ezra chapter 7. The events of the book of Esther shoehorn right between Ezra 6 and Ezra 7. If you read the last half of Ezra, you're in the days of Artaxerxes. And you know who he is. That's Vashti's son.

She comes back and kills Ahasuerus. I would imagine at that point, if Esther is still around, she and Mordecai bugged out. CSMO, as we say in the artillery, collect your stuff and move out.

They see the time has come to maybe head back toward the land of promise. And Vashti comes back and she puts her son, Artaxerxes, on the throne. That's where Ezra chapter 7 picks up.

So, you have people who have heard the decree of Cyrus that allows them to go back in the land. And what do we discover? At the time that that decree of Cyrus goes forth, you have about, I've got it written down here somewhere, how many went back. I can't read my own writing.

That's what I get for writing in longhand. There are only a handful, relatively speaking, that go back into the land. The bulk of them stay in Persia.

God had commanded them to go back to the land. God had told them in Jeremiah and in Isaiah, once your 70-year discipline is complete, return to the land. Return from Babylon, O my people.

And they didn't go. So, these are people who are really not where they're supposed to be, not really doing what they're supposed to do. And yet, God providentially preserves and protects and defends them anyway.

God does not wait for us to be perfect. You don't have to throw up your hands and say, well, there's no point. I mean, I mess up all the time.

I'm just going to forget about the whole plan of God. We pick up where we are and we move in the direction of God's grace and God's mercy. You don't have to be the Apostle Paul.

You don't have to be Moses on the mountain. You just have to move in the direction of God's grace and God's mercy. These people, it never mentions that they pray.

It never mentions a sacrifice or an offering anywhere in the book of Esther. These people have long forgotten. They make up their own feast.

They have the feast of Mordecai. It doesn't say they observe Passover or any of the other feasts, but they observe this feast. They're at least looking in the right direction, aren't they? They fast and they look toward God.

And that one glimmer of positive attitude toward God is all God needs to deliver the entire people. That's what God is looking for from us. Where is your first glimmer of positive response? And once you have that, then build.

Grow. Grow in grace and knowledge of the Savior. What is the first doctrine for immature believers, new believers, infant believers? It tells us in 1 John 2. We don't have time to turn there, but John talks to the children, he talks to the young men, and he talks to the fathers.

And he says, little children, I speak to you because you have turned toward God. I speak to you young men because you've overcome the evil one. These people have turned toward God and they've overcome the evil one.

That's what God is looking for from us so that we can move into that maturity bracket. Well, this has been a great study for us. We see the context of our individual circumstances and God's plan through this great book.

Let's close in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truths that we've learned through this study. May God, the Holy Spirit, impress them in our hearts.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.