

Esther

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 March 2018

[0:00] Around the word now, if we've got your Bible there, we'll go to the book of Esther. The book of Esther. And we've got the scriptures that we'll show on the screen. So Esther is just a little bit before Psalms and Job.

The book of Esther. It's a dramatic account of Esther, a woman of courage and character. A real story. These are actual events that happened when the people of Israel were taken captive in Babylon.

Matthew Henry has said of this book, Though the name of God be not in it, the finger of God is. Directing many minute events for the bringing about of his people's deliverance.

Interesting. The name of God is not there, but he is very much present. Very much evident. Though not named. So let me introduce the story to you and tell of two plots.

Firstly, of two plots of a time of great danger. And then how Esther handled those challenges in her life. And draw from how Esther responded three spiritual truths.

[1:16] That we can learn from Esther for our lives. That we can apply in such a time as this. In chapter one we see the king, Ahasuerus.

He gives a huge feast for the nobles. It lasted six months. A show of great glory and treasures of his kingdom. Next he had a feast of seven days to which he invited the people of the city.

There was much feasting and drinking. So six months for his princess. Then seven days for the city of the people of the city.

The king wanted to show off his wealth and all of his glory. Of his palace. And then the king requested that the queen appear. Queen Vashti. He wanted to show her off.

Just another one of his treasures that he wanted to brag about. But Queen Vashti refused the king's command. And she had more dignity than to be paraded around like that.

[2:17] But this was a big embarrassment to king Ahasuerus. No one can disobey the king. Not even the queen. And he'd been drinking, feasting.

Likely he was drunken. And in his rage he consulted his advisors. What should he do? And they were concerned that Vashti's disrespect for the king was going to be having a ripple effect through the kingdom.

And they suggested that the king make a decree that Queen Vashti no longer be allowed in his presence again. And so a marriage ends. Perhaps the king regretted his rash decision in that moment of drunken anger.

Perhaps he missed the queen. He started on a search for a new queen. He caught a nationwide beauty contest.

There was possibly some, I reckon, some 400 women brought before the king. Esther was one of them. Esther. Esther, an orphan girl. Esther had been cared for by her uncle Mordecai who had become her guardian.

[3:29] And we pick up the story in chapter 2, verse 17. Esther, chapter 2, verse 17.

And the king loved Esther above all the women. And she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins, such that he set the royal crown upon her head and the queen instead of Vashti.

He loved her more than all the others that were shown to him. She obtained grace and favour. He set the royal crown upon her head. She was crowned Esther, queen of Persia.

Esther, an orphan, now the queen of the nation. God had exalted her and used her and would use her still. Mordecai apparently followed Esther to the palace and he had a place at the king's gate.

An important role there. One day, while he was there working, he overheard two of the king's officers conspiring to kill the king.

[4:37] Here's plot number one. The first plot. The first plot. A scheme to slay Esther's husband, the king. Mordecai informed Esther of the plot that she heard about.

And she sounded the alarm about this plot to assassinate the king. And it was foiled. In chapter 2, verse 23, inquisition was made.

They made some inquiry about the matter. And it was found out. And therefore, they, these two officials of the king, they both were hanged on a tree.

And it was such an important event that they made sure to write this event in the book of the Chronicles before the king. The king had a record book and he recorded, they recorded this event of the informing by Mordecai about the plot to kill the king and how the king was saved.

Plot number one. Next up, a man called Haman enters the story. Now, when the Jewish people recount this story, when the word Haman is referred to, everybody goes, Boo!

[5:55] Yes, he's the real baddie. He's the real bad character of the story. Haman. Boo! And in chapter 3, Haman appears. He is highly honoured by the king.

He's given this position of senior authority in his kingdom. We see that in verse 2 of chapter 3. Haman is exalted.

And it says that all the king's servants that were in the king's gate, they bowed and revered Haman. You know, whenever Haman came on the scene, everybody had to bow down and show respect to him.

For the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence. Mordecai did not bow to Haman.

He refused to kneel down to Haman. He would rather honour God than to honour this man in such a way.

[6:53] And 5 of chapter 3, it says, When Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath. He really got annoyed by this.

This just really irked him how Mordecai did not bow. And in his anger, he plotted the execution of all the Jews in the kingdom.

Here's plot number 2. Plot number 2. Plot number 2 is Haman's scheme to murder Esther and her people. Whilst it was not known that Esther was one of the Jews, this would include her.

She hadn't made it public. Verse 6 of Esther 3. He, Haman, thought scorned to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had shown him the people of Mordecai.

He thought, No, I'm not just going to stop it. Haman, I'm going to wipe the whole lot of them out. Mordecai and all these people, all these family, friends, neighbours, all of the people of the nation of Mordecai, I'm going to slaughter them, he said.

[8:07] Wherefore, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai. He didn't just stop at Mordecai, he wanted to kill the people of Mordecai, the whole kingdom, throughout the whole kingdom.

Now, Haman was known as Haman, the Agagite. That's a practice that word. Agagite. The Agagites had a long-held grudge against the Jews.

Way back through to the book of Exodus. It began when the Amalekites attacked Israel after they left Egypt. And God had Saul to kill all the Amalekites.

That's what he told them to do. Kill the Amalekites along with all their animals. But Saul saved the best of the enemy's sheep. He liked the look of their sheep.

You know, a bit of lamb stew. And he also spared the king, a man named Agag. And the Agagites, descendants of the Amalekites, got their name from that king, the king that Saul didn't kill.

[9:15] There's a lesson here for us. When God tells you to do something, do it. Just do it. You know, get the Nike. Just do it. Just do what God says to do.

Just do it. Don't argue. Don't debate. Don't pussyfoot around. Just do what God tells you to do. But Saul did not, and we've had trouble ever since.

Haman's evil plot was about to be hatched. He went to the king in verse 8 of chapter 3. And Haman said unto king Azarus, here's what he said, there is a certain people scattered abroad and

dispersed among thy people in all the provinces of thy kingdom.

And their laws are diverse from all people. Neither keep they the king's laws.

Therefore, it is not for the king's prophet to suffer them. Don't put up with it, king. These people have got their own laws, their own way of living.

[10:21] They're diverse. These people are different. These people are not like all people. They're different from all people. there's something special, there's something different about them.

And so, they don't keep your laws, king. So, it's not to your prophet to let them live. And so, he goes on in verse 9, if it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed.

And I will pay 10,000 talents of silver to the hands of those that are at the charge of the business to bring it into the king's treasuries. let it be written that they may be destroyed.

And the king agreed. The king agreed to this plot. He agreed to make this decree. And Mordecai heard of the decree. And when he did, there was great mourning among the Jews.

There was great weeping and sorrow and grief. In verse 3 of chapter 4, it says, And in every province with us, whoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews.

[11:29] And fasting and weeping and wailing and many lay in sackcloth and ashes. This was terrible news. This awful decree. It was the destruction of a people.

A genocide. Really, Haman was the Old Testament Hitler. He wanted to wipe out the Jews. And word of this awful decree came to the hearing of Queen Esther.

Queen Esther heard of it too. Mordecai appealed to her to make a direct appeal to the king himself for her people, the Jews.

Now, as I say, the king was unaware at this time that Esther herself was a Jew. She could talk with the king, but she had not been summoned by him.

So there was a very real danger for Esther here to approach the king uninvited. This was unheard of. This was not something that was appropriate.

[12:33] It was against the law, really, against the expectations. Now, there's certain protocols with royalty, isn't there? Certain protocols that must be followed.

When William and Kate came to this fair city, William and Kate were treated with appropriate protocols. There were certain rules that had to be followed, certain ways that were appropriate how you deal with royalty.

There's all these rules and regulations. There's one of them that I wasn't aware of at the time, and I broke the rules myself, because I was in the crowd as Princess Kate and Prince William were walking along the row of people that were just gathering along the side of the road as they were walking to their appointment with the mayor, and I reached out my hand and shook Kate's hand, and that was really wrong.

I learned afterwards you don't extend your hand to the princess or the prince, she or he has to extend their hand to you before you shake their hand. So, thankfully there wasn't a decree to put me to death for breaking the rules with royalty that day, but there was, in Esther's case there is, this rule, this danger for Queen Esther, even the queen herself, to approach the king was not the done thing.

She had to be summoned by him, but she had not been summoned by him. So there was a very real danger for Esther to approach the king uninvited. Now, Princess Kate did shake my hand, but she was very gracious, even though I broke the rules, but it was required that Queen Esther had to wait to be called, but there was no time to sit and to wait at such a time as this.

[14:30] Esther knew of this law, of the danger she faced, and as she said in verse 11 of Esther 4, all the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces do know that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death.

Except to whom the king shall hold out the golden scepter, you know the symbol of his rule, the scepter, that golden staff with the display upon it, that was a sign of his royal authority, if he would hold that out, hold out the golden scepter, then that person could live.

But Esther said, I've not been called to come unto the king these thirty years, so it seemed like there wasn't any way for her to get word to the king other than to break the rules as it were. And Mordecai sent her back word in verses thirteen and fourteen. Mordecai says to Esther, think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house more than all the Jews, for if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall the deliverance arise to the Jews from another place.

So what he's saying here is if you hold your peace, if you don't speak to the king, then will there be some deliverance from another place.

[16:08] God will overrule, God will make a way if it be his will to use somebody else. And then Mordecai says, So in other words, as much as this is great danger here, perhaps it is such that you are come into this position of influence and authority as the queen for this purpose, for this time, for such a time as this, that Esther is in a time of crisis and danger, yet it was God's placing her there at this time, and in that danger, for such a time as this, that Esther was chosen by God to fulfil his plan in this time, in this time of crisis, this time of danger, a time of attack, of trial of her faith, how would she respond?

How should we respond when we are in such a time as this, when we threaten, when we're endangered, when our faith is tested and tried, when we're to step over the line and to stand for God, when it's not convenient, when we face great opposition and real threat, how would we respond?

How should we respond? God has placed you where you are today for such a time as this. He's got his plan, his purpose.

Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this. Now we've seen the two plots. We've seen the plots.

What were the plots again? What was the first plot? The plot to kill the king.

[18:23] I need your help here. I've got my grey matter is not as youthful as it used to be. And then we see the second plot is the plot against Esther and the people to kill the Jews.

So the plot was against the king. Now the plot is against the people. Esther's people. The people of God. We've seen the two plots. Now we'll move to the three spiritual truths.

Three spiritual truths that we can learn from Esther. What stands out about Esther here is that firstly Esther seeks God. When you're in such a time as this number one seek God.

Esther calls the people to prayer and fasting. Now it only says fasting but we can take it as understood when you fast you pray. They go hand in hand.

We don't just abstain from food if the Lord puts it on our heart to fast. Fasting is in combination with praying. Of course they go hand in hand.

[19:26] Whilst it's not said here we can understand she called the people to prayer to seek! after God. She wanted to seek God to wait upon him to seek his guidance to know his direction so that she could act wisely to deal with the situation.

Now I had it in my mind to preach about Esther and I met a woman who was telling me how she does fast and how she was really seeking God for things in her life and such that she would actually fast.

I know there's other people here amongst us who are particularly moved with God to fast from time to time. Now it's as the Lord leads! But the point is pray through, pray seriously such that even food would be put aside so that you can concentrate on that time of prayer.

That is the vital truth here to seek after God. That's what Esther did. She waited upon him, she sought his guidance, to know his direction so she could act wisely in such a time as this.

And so we read here in verse 16 of chapter 4 Esther says, Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan and fast ye for me and neither eat nor drink three days night or day.

[20:53] I also and my mayors will fast likewise and so will I go in unto the king which is not according to the law and if I perish I perish.

Now as far as fasting the human body can go three days and nights without food or drink but to fast beyond that as our Lord did you need to partake of water so you don't abstain beyond three days

you don't abstain from drink the body is not designed for that but we see the Bible does show three days three nights to fast to abstain from drink and food but beyond that as our Lord did he abstained just from food and Esther wanted to seek God's will the word tells us we need wisdom to ask of God for wisdom as it says in James James says if any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not and it shall be given him in other words God gives to all men freely and liberally when we ask God for something and he upbraideth not he doesn't hold back he gives us freely he gives us generously he gives to us the wisdom that we need how?

just ask him and that's what Esther did she wanted to make a wise decision here and God gave her very wise way of tackling the situation is it something that we face do we stop and do to pray when we face a decision do we stop and pray when we're up against it when we're in a time of crisis and danger do we stop and seek after God Esther shows us to do just that Esther did just that she called the people to fast she fasted herself and of course prayer goes along with fasting the people sought God they sought after God number one Esther sought after God she says seek God that's Esther's advice number one second point another spiritual truth we can learn from

Esther is this her self denial her self denial she displayed great courage you know what did she say I'm going to go in I'm going to go before the throne I'm going to break all the rules as it were the protocols and the you know the expected way of doing things and if I perish I perish she says I'm going to do this no matter what even if it cost me my life it wasn't customary it could have meant death for her because no one could approach the king uninvited she knew that Esther stepped out in faith to do what was right even at risk of her own life she wanted to do what she could to protect her people no one could approach the king uninvited she approached the throne she approached the king it must have been a tense moment perhaps there was dignitaries there perhaps there was an important meeting going on perhaps there was a this was a men only event or this was just the nobility excluding her that this was just a closed session if you like it would be like trying to barge into the council meeting when there's a closed session that's a confidential meeting you don't!

[24:47] into the king and how it must have been such a tense moment as she waited to see whether the king would extend his scepter to show her sign of his blessing and the king did he extended his golden scepter he extended that staff that indicated his authority as the rule of the king and the king received her notice here in chapter 5 verse 3 then said the king answered her what wilt thou queen Esther and what is thy request it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom he says whatever your request is make it known even if it's the half of my kingdom I will give it to you God granted Esther favour with the king so Esther asked for a banquet with the king and

Haman and herself and for a follow up banquet she later asked for a follow up banquet with the three of them and Haman was here and he felt really excited wow this is great dinner with the king and queen and he was really chuffed he thought wow I must be very special you know he was just so glowing with oh I'm so good and then as he left the place he saw Mordecai sitting down at the gate again and he did not bow to him and even murder at Mordecai how dare he he he got home and his friends persuaded Haman look let's build a gallows let's build an execution instrument here to hang Mordecai on and we can speak to the king you can go speak to the king tomorrow and have Mordecai hanged on these gallows so he instructed the workers to build the gallows 75 feet high just for that purpose this was going to be the biggest gallows ever this was just going to make such a such a spill and so the workers got to work all night long they were banging away chipping away nailing away manufacturing these gallows next in our story we see divine intervention God at work on our behalf God at work unseen that's moving that night the king couldn't sleep someone has reckoned maybe it was because of all that but whatever the case the king couldn't sleep so the king woke up his servants and said he ordered them to read to him you know I need a bedtime story here he said and they found this really sleep inducing book you know the chronicles of the king and it it'd be like reading you know the the the record of parliament or something you know it would just be just such a boring totally boring thing people actually turn their radio on and listen to them going on you know this was a real sleep inducing book the chronicles of the king and for some reason that just happened just happened to find the chapter that told of the time of mordecai where he saved the king from the assassination plot when the king asked the king asked you know he still maybe

hadn't really had much of a wink of sleep here and he thought who is in the court early morning Haman was there just watching and he was just hanging around waiting for the king to summon him I suppose he got there bright and early this was his big day his big day he was going to ask permission to use those gallows the biggest gallows that have ever been made that he had built to hang Mordecai and so we see in chapter 6 verse 6 Haman came in and the king said unto him what shall be done unto the man whom the king delighted to honour Haman couldn't believe his ears it's even going to get better I've had the banquet with the king and queen now they want to honour me and so things just couldn't get any better for Haman to be made now and Haman answered the king for whom the man whom the king delighted to honour he thought

I'm going to pull out all the stops just everything is going to be laid on for me he thought it was for him he says let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear and the horse that the king rideth upon and the crown royal which is set upon his head the king the king the king the king king crown why not verse 9 and let this apparel and this horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes that they may array the man with all whom the king delighted to honour let this man who the king delights to honour let him be robed let him be celebrated let him be acknowledged even by the noble!

[31:19] the man! I'm Haman I'm the man and so it goes on there verse 10 then the king said to Haman make haste and take the apparel and the horse as they have said and do even so to Mordecai the Jew do it to Mordecai the Jew that is going let nothing fail of that thou hast spoken it's a great irony isn't it verse 11 can we imagine the shock the horror the embarrassment the humiliation that

Haman offered this and in chapter 7 Esther held now the second banquet she caught Haman and the king together again still hadn't revealed her reasons and that her nation was the Jews but we see that Esther called Haman and the king to meet again and the king asked of her to let him know her request of him Esther had been given wisdom by God and boldness to tell the king that she and her people were about to be destroyed we see that in chapter 7 verse 3 then Esther the queen answered and said if I have found favor in thy sight O king and if it please the king let my life be given me at my petition my request for we are sold why by whom who has done this see verse 6 of 7

Esther said the adversary and the enemy is this wicked Haman he's the adversary he is the enemy and then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen he thought uh oh my luck's changed now just to recap thus far we have two plots the first against the king the second against the queen and her people God's people we've seen of Esther in such a time as this how did she respond how should we respond in time of crisis in time of trial of our faith firstly her response was to seek after God to seek God's will to get expectations to do what was right to do to do what was right and to surrender to God's will to stand up for God's people to stand in faith to sacrifice her own comfort and safety not only could she be deposed as the former queen!

she faced the risk of her life by virtue of what she was to do and thirdly we see Esther's response I put to you which is a lesson for us Esther's spiritual warfare Esther's spiritual warfare chapter 7 verse 6 Esther said the adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman Esther and God's people had an adversary and enemy and so do we conflict that were engaged in Haman was acting the Agagite as King Agag as the Amalekites as everything that drove them which was the enemy it was the!

[36:59] spiritual enemy of God's people that was behind and motivated and drove them to such actions necessary and enemy is this wicked Haman and at this the king he just flew in a rage I'm just going to go get some fresh air and he went outside into the garden so

I'm going to I've just got to take five here.

And so he went up in raids, he went outside, and Haman threw himself on the couch where Esther was reclining. He just said, please, you're saving. And the king walked in and he saw Haman on the couch with his wife.

Maybe he even made a steal. What are you doing now? And then his attendant stepped up and said, Hey king, there's a gallows 75 feet high outside that Haman made for Mordecai.

Oh, that's a good idea. The king said, We've got chapters really to read the book of Esther. Read through it again yourself.

[39:34] In the book of Esther, what do we see? The power of one. One, one woman who God raised up.

For such a time as this, one woman, the power of one with God.

For such a time as this, women folk, men folk today, let's be encouraged to be like Esther.

Ultimately, it's a spiritual battle that we're engaged in. We're not fighting flesh and blood.

There's some wicked hamens around, but they're driven by the enemy who opposes God's people, the adversary. Where there is great danger and crisis, let's learn from Esther and seek after God to stand for God in your family, in your circumstances, in the time that you are in, in such a time as this.

Don't.