

Esther

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Date: 24 February 2013

[0:00] The Book of Esther The Book of Esther. For such a time as this. For such a time as this.

! Every year around this time the Book of Esther is read aloud all over the world. It's the time of Purim. A biblical feast of worship. Some call it the Festival of Esther. And in Esther 9.27 it says the people determined to keep the feast at the appointed time every year. It's a joyful time. A joyful time as we remember Esther and her courage. We see how God in His saving power worked wonders in delivering His people from destruction. And the Book of Esther is a true life story. Centuries old. It's a dramatic story that we can learn from today.

It displays for us God's miraculous promises and power and His providence for His people. The Book of Esther teaches us that God is in control of the affairs of men.

[1:14] God is in charge. And God governs over our lives. It shows His sovereignty. And that we can take courage. We can have faith today. Because that's still true today, isn't it?

It is still true today. And in Esther 4 verse 14, Mordecai says to his younger cousin Esther that perhaps she was there at this time for such a time as this. For such a time as this. That God had planned and orchestrated all the events up until that time and beyond that time. That God had placed Esther right in the centre of His will for such a time as this. And that's true for every one of you here today. That God has a place, a work for us and His timing is perfect. In chapter 1 at the outset we see as the book starts to unfold. As the King Ahasuerus holds a great victory banquet.

It was an all expenses kind of occasion. All expenses spared occasion. A great victory banquet.

[2:28] And he called Queen Vashti to attend. But she disobeyed him. And dishonoured him. And for that he banished her. And he starts a search for a new queen.

And in chapter 2 as he calls this beauty contest of sorts. The King chose the young Jewish woman Esther.

Her charm and her beauty captured his heart. And the King chose Esther as his favoured wife. We see that in verse 17 of chapter 2.

And the King loved Esther above all the women. And she obtained grace and favour in his sight. And it goes on to say, he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. So Esther was crowned queen. And soon after that Mordecai, her relative, became a government official. And he uncovered this dangerous plot to assassinate the King. And Mordecai revealed this to Esther.

[3:34] And the would-be assassins were arrested and executed. And the King's life was saved. And this act was recorded in the royal history books.

So the Lord had positioned these two people, Esther and Mordecai, in these positions of great power in the kingdom. Then in chapter 3 we see another character. Another player in this story. The evil Haman.

Now just to interrupt this message today. I'm told that when the Jews recount this story. That when the name Mordecai is spoken, people go, yay!

You know, they're really happy and glad. Because he was the hero who saved the day. And then when Haman's name is referred to, they go, ooh! Hiss! You know, oh, you know, make some horrible noises.

You know, they stamp their feet. Haman, he was such a bad guy. Now that's how they would enact it in the synagogues around the world today, I'm told. And, you know, you might want to carry on as

well.

[4:43] But, you know, it was, the Feast of Purim was a time of joyful gladness. And they used to, nowadays I'm told that the Jews in re-enacting it, they put, they dress up as these characters.

And make it a real drama, relived. And so Haman, boo! He was a high-ranking official. And he was made the second in command of the kingdom.

In chapter 3 verse 1. And so he was some real high-flyer. He was, you know, the second to the top dog of the kingdom, of the king himself. Second in charge of the empire.

And people were supposed to bow down and honour Haman as he walked by. They were supposed to bow down and honour him. And give him reverence. In verse 2 of chapter 3 it says, And all the king's servants that were in the king's gate bowed and revered Haman.

For the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence. Mordecai, yay! Mordecai's the hero. Mordecai bowed not, and nor did him reverence.

[5:53] So Mordecai, he was a devout follower of God. Mordecai, he was one. He would not compromise. And bow down to what was the command of the time that was contrary as he saw it to his conscience in honouring the honour that was due only to God.

And so Mordecai considered the gestures of worship, of bowing down, as like a gesture of worship. It would have been like idolatry.

As dishonouring God, in a sense, to bow down. As if he were bowing down to a foreign God. You could understand it. Violating God's command. So Mordecai was a man of character and strength.

And then verse 5 of Esther 3. Esther 3 verse 5 it says, And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath.

Haman was full of wrath. He got so angry. He was such an arrogant man, this man Haman. He was angry when Mordecai refused to bow to him. And he despised him.

[6:59] Why? Because he was one who was faithful to God. So Haman devised this wicked scheme to destroy Mordecai and all the Jews in Persia. Haman talked to the king and he talked him into agreeing to this murderous plan.

To destroy Haman and the Jews by royal decree. Esther 3 verse 9. Haman says, If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed.

Let it be written that they, the Jews, may be destroyed. Sounds like some characters through history, doesn't it? Who could think of some characters through history who wanted to destroy the Jews?

You know World War II? Hitler was another kind of modern day Haman. And we've got people like the leader of Iraq, is it at the moment?

And Pakistan, various world players today. They've got that same spirit of Haman. They want to destroy the Lord's people.

[8:01] And Haman wanted to destroy the Jews. And the king agreed to this. He wasn't even aware at this time that Esther, his own wife, herself was a Jew. And so the command was issued.

And then we go to verse 13 of Esther 3. The command was issued. The posts were sent out with the orders to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all the Jews.

What a terrible situation it was. And it was on this chosen day. The 13th day of the 12th month, which is the month of Adar. Which is around this time of year.

So Haman, we see, had sin at work in his life. He had pride. Vicious pride. What does the word tell us in Proverbs 16 verse 18?

It says, Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

[8:59] Haman was going to find that out. Chapter 4 verse 1. When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes in this expression of despair, of grief.

And he put on sackcloth with ashes. And he went out into the midst of the city and cried with a loud and bitter cry. It was a time of grief, of great crisis for God's own people.

And they sought after God. Crying with a loud and bitter cry. And verse 3 it says, Where the king's commandment and decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews.

And fasting, and weeping, and wailing, and many lay in sackcloth and ashes. The whole community of God's people were crying out.

Mordecai told Queen Esther about the edict of destruction. And Mordecai asked Esther to seek mercy from the king, her husband. In verse 8 of chapter 4.

[10:06] And then chapter 4 verse 14. Mordecai urges Esther that perhaps she was come to the kingdom for such a time as this. Even though it was a time of great crisis and trouble, everything seemed absolute disaster.

Mordecai says to Esther, perhaps you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this. Now Esther was afraid to enter the king's court without being summoned.

It could have meant the death penalty for her. And so she called God's people together to fast. To turn to God for his strength. And this is what they did in verse 16 of Esther 4.

She said, gather the people together and fast ye for me. Neither eat nor drink. Three days, night or day. I and my maidens will fast likewise.

And so will I go into the king. Which is not according to the law. And if I perish, I perish. It was a life or death decision.

[11:16] She was willing to put her life on the line because she knew that she had to stand. Stand up for God's people. To take action.

She could have been paralysed by fear. She knew what happened to the queen before her. And how the king could be very stern. But she was not paralysed by fear.

Yet she chose rather to use her influence to appeal to the king. She was willing to risk her life to save God's people. What a wondrous testimony of the woman Esther.

That ladies, we can take heart today. You can be an Esther today. You can be an Esther today.

Ladies here today. Step out in faith and trust in God's care.

That's what Esther did. And then we see in chapter 5. Chapter 5, Esther came before the king and she found favour in his sight. Verse 1. She found favour in his sight.

[12:16] And she asked the king as he beckoned her to come and approached her. She asked the king and Haman to be the guests at a banquet. So they called the feast. And during this the king asked Esther, What is it that you want Esther?

I'll give you anything you want. And Esther said, Let's take time for another feast, another banquet the next day. So in the meantime, Mordecai was filled with hatred.

Verse 14. He was filled with hatred towards Mordecai. Sorry. Haman was still filled with hatred towards Mordecai. And Haman took up his own wife's idea to put up this great structure, this great huge gallows.

Some 50 cubits high, which is around 23 metres high. It was massive. It would have been a spectacle for a long distance to see.

These gallows. It was not some small thing. It was a very visible gallows. 23 metres high. And Mordecai was happy. And Mordecai was happy. Sorry.

[13:21] Haman was happy with this idea. And that Mordecai would be hanged thereon. And he left the, he took on that idea.

It says, verse 14, And the thing pleased Haman, and he caused the gallows to be made. So Haman, he liked the idea, and he caused the gallows to be made.

Thinking that Mordecai would be strung up and killed on this structure. And chapter 4, it goes on. It was the night before the second banquet. And the king was having trouble sleeping.

So he called for someone. He beckoned a servant to come and read to him from the royal archives. And the servant came and read to him an account of how Mordecai had foiled the plot to kill the king.

How Mordecai had saved the king's own life. Esther 6 verse 3. The king said, What honour and dignity has been done to Mordecai for this?

[14:27] How have we honoured this man? What dignity, what honour have we given to him? Then said the king's servants that ministered to him, There is nothing done for him.

The king was shocked by this. This was someone who had saved his life. It was such a tremendous act of heroism and loyalty.

And he was surprised that Mordecai had not been properly rewarded for what he had done. Then, right at this moment, Haman is just outside in the hallway.

He's coming to the king with the idea to ask permission to hang Mordecai. It's kind of funny, isn't it, really? How it all panned out.

But before he could open his mouth, the king asked Haman, What should be done to honour a hero? To thank someone who's a hero. So proud Haman thought, Oh, I must be talking about me.

[15:28] You know, proud Haman, Wow, this is my time for, this is my five minutes of fame. You know, this is my time in the spotlight now. And so he thought, wow, this is great.

So he waxed eloquent about the reward and the honour that should be paid to such a hero as himself. And so, chapter 6, verses 6 through, And the king said unto him, What shall be done? What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? What shall be done to this man that the king would delight to honour? To honour.

And so now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour? More than to myself. And verse 7, Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour, 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.

Haman wanted to be treated like a king. You know, he thought this is his time, And he deserved all this honour. He wanted to be honoured in style. And not only that, but to be publicly acclaimed On the streets and market squares of the city.

[16:45] To be publicly acclaimed, To get all the fame and glory that he could receive. So it goes on in verse 9, And let this apparel and horse be delivered, To the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, That they may array this man, Whom the king delighteth to honour, And bring him on horseback through the street of the city, And proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man, Whom the king delighteth to honour.

You know, as the town crier would go out, And you know, you see that sometimes, Even today, when someone rings a bell, And they're dressed in finery, And they declare the city announcements.

You know, like a town crier, He would have gone, Thus it shall be done, Until the man that the king delighteth to honour. This was a totally massive occasion, A great celebration and recognition of such a man.

So Haman described this lavish reward, Thinking that it was for him, That he would be the one. He wanted to pull out all the stops, And get all the glory. And the king agreed. But, then, to Haman's shock, And humiliation, He learnt that Mordecai was the person, That the king wanted to honour. Mordecai, the very one that he wanted to string up and kill, On the gallows, Haman didn't know that years earlier, Mordecai had saved the king's life.

[18:09] Nor that Mordecai's young cousin was Queen Esther. And together these two facts, Would unravel Haman's murderous plot. Verse 10, Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, And take the apparel, And the horse, As thou hast said, And do even so, To Mordecai the Jew, That sitteth at the king's gate.

Let nothing fail, Of all that thou hast spoken. Verse 11, Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, And arrayed Mordecai, And brought him on horseback, Through the street of the city, And proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done, Unto the man that the king delighteth to honour. Mordecai had been in the city square, Only the day before, The day before. What was he clothed in then? In sackcloth and ashes.

It was a time of grief, Of crying out to God. In chapter 4 verse 6, He'd been clothed in sackcloth and ashes. And now he arrived in the square, Treated with royal honour and acclaim.

And Haman returned home, Totally humiliated. Then we come to chapter 7, The next scene in this dramatic unfolding drama. In chapter 7, The second banquet, Haman is present with the king, And Esther again is asked, What is it that you ask for?

[19:41] And verse 3, Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, And if it please the king, Let my life be given me at my request, And my people at my request.

She said to the king, This is life or death. This is my life, And the life of my people. That's what I'm asking for. And she told him how someone had plotted To destroy her and God's people. And the king was outraged, That such a thing should be happening. He was outraged that anyone would dare to threaten his queen. And when he asked who had done such a thing, Esther declared that Haman was to blame.

Verse 6 of chapter 7, And Esther said, The adversary and the enemy is this wicked Haman. Ooooooo. Let's try that again shall we?

The adversary and the enemy is this wicked Haman. Ooooooo. Oh that nasty creature. Haman. Then Haman was afraid. And he was afraid before the king and the queen.

[20:49] The adversary and the enemy is this wicked Haman. Ooooooo. One of Esther's servants then told the king how Haman had erected the gallows to kill Mordecai.

And the king immediately commanded that Haman be hanged instead on the very gallows he built to kill Mordecai. Chapter 7 verse 9. Then the king said, Hang him thereon.

Hang him thereon. Hang him thereon. Everything changes for Mordecai and God's people. In chapter 8 verse 2. The king then took the signet ring from Haman, the royal ring, and gave it to Mordecai.

Mordecai was given Haman's estate and gave Esther the power to reverse Haman's orders in verse 5. The orders were reversed.

And immediately the king sentenced Haman to be hanged. Now notice this. This happened all the very day. The very day that nearly a year before Haman had cast lots to determine the day when he would destroy all the Jews.

[22:03] That's when we get the word pure and pure is the name for lots. So it had been thought through like a year before. And Haman thought that he had everything going his way as the lots were cast and the decision was made.

And then in the very final act of this true life drama, Mordecai is appointed to Haman's position. Mordecai takes Haman's position.

And he is appointed in that authority. And the Jews were granted protection throughout the land. What a turnaround it was. Amazing how God works in the affairs of men.

And he still does today. Amen. God is still overruling. No matter what man thinks, God is still the unseen power that is at work.

And then we read from Esther 8 verse 15. Mordecai went out from the presence of the king. He was clothed in royal apparel of blue and white. And with a great crown of gold.

[23:02] And with a garment of fine linen and purple. And the city of Sushan rejoiced and was glad. The city rejoiced and was glad. Verse 16. The Jews had light, gladness and joy and honour.

Verse 17. And in every province and in every city, withersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day.

And many of the people of the land became Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell upon them. God worked wonders at this time. The very day, the very day that Haman had chosen that the Jews would be destroyed was actually the day that God worked wonders and brought joy and gladness to his people.

Esther issued an edict and the Jews were given protection. And they had victory over those that sought to kill them. And chapter 9 verse 18 it says, The people rested and it was a day of feasting and gladness.

And Mordecai declared that this day would be remembered every year. And that is why the Jews celebrate the feast of Purim at this time of year.

[24:17] Chapter 9 verse 21 it says in part that they should keep it yearly. To remember how God had turned a time of disaster into a time of deliverance.

He turned sorrow into joy. He turned that time of mourning into a good day. And so it was a time of feasting of joy.

And so this same day became a day of great blessing. Isn't that wonderful to know that what God can do. It's a bit like Joseph's story isn't it?

What his brothers had intended for him. That God brought good out of something that was terrible that was going on. And maybe you're going through such a time in your life where you think, Wow, things are not going quite as well as I'd like them to.

That even through that time, God is working. God is working. God is working. Have faith. Have faith that he is working.

[25:18] Just as he was, it seemed doom and gloom and disaster. But God worked wonders for Esther and Mordecai. The last verse of the book, chapter 10 verse 3.

The last verse of the book we see Mordecai replaces Haman as effectively the prime minister of Persia. He's in a very senior position, second only to the king.

Mordecai the Jew was next unto the king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people and speaking peace to all his seed.

For such a time as this. For such a time as this. Esther was right where God wanted her to be. For such a time as this. As she boldly, courageously entered the king's presence at the very risk of her life, standing for God and his people.

As Mordecai would not bow down, he would not compromise, he would not compromise the worship of Yahweh by bowing down to this heathen man in a kind of idolatrous reverence.

[26:30] And God honoured Mordecai for his stand of faith. So in Esther, there's many truths that we can take home this morning. In Esther, we can see the works of Queen Esther.

We see by her courageous act, the whole nation was saved. We see that she seized that God-given opportunity that God had put in her hand. That she interceded to God for his people.

And to the king for his people. But her life made a difference. Her life made a difference. Now, through the book of Esther, it's been noted that while he is not named, God is at work.

It's almost like he's the invisible main character of the book. God is there in the book of Esther. It's just his name is not there.

God is at work. We see his fingerprints all over the book. All over the account of the record. He is present. And he is the one who halted Satan's schemes.

[27:35] Because God is the one who controls everything. God controls everything. Even when Haman threw the lot, the dice or whatever. And it seemed like everything was going Haman's way to wreak havoc.

To destroy Mordecai on this gallows. That the tables were turned dramatically. And in fact, Haman was the one who was destroyed. It shows to us that no matter what, God is at work.

God controls everything. We witness in the book of Esther, his power. His provision. His faithfulness. And his deliverance. We see his glory revealed. We see his people saved.

We see how God works in the lives of ordinary human beings. Just like you and me. Maybe there's some Mordecais and Esthers here today.

Maybe you're a Mordecai. Maybe you're an Esther here today. That God can use for such a time as this. For such a time as this.

[28:39] That God can put you in situations where you can have an influence. Like the salt and the light that we read of. But you can be used of God.

To turn things around. To be an instrument for his glory. So that God's faithful people can be blessed.

God can use you and me. As Mordecais and Esthers today. Because there's Hamans around today. Isn't there? There's people who hate the Gospel.

There's people who hate God's truth. They don't love the Lord Jesus. And his righteousness. Friends, we need to stand up like Mordecai did.

We need to stand up. Not bow down. Like the three Hebrew children. You know, the king struck up the rock band. And had the, you know, all the razzmatazz and the jazz.

[29:45] And everyone had to bow down when the sound came. And they said, no, we're not going to do that. We're not going to bow down to the golden idol. We'll stand.

No matter what. We need to stand like Mordecai stood. And trust our God. And be like Esther. Willing to have courage. To speak up. Have courage to speak up.

You know, it's very easy to be a quiet Christian. It's very easy to be a quiet Christian. And, you know, it's hard to speak up sometimes. I'm finding for myself it's a bit easier.

Because I've got more of a say-so about things. But in previous jobs I've had, it's been hard to speak up. I've been attacked by my own manager for being a Christian.

And it can happen for you. It probably is happening for some of you here today. Stand for truth. Stand for the right. Stand for God's Word.

[30:48] Stand for what's right. Like Mordecai did. And be like Esther. Have courage. Women. Women folk here today. Have courage. Every one of you women can be like an Esther.

For such a time as this. That you can step out and be bold. And speak up. Stand for Christ. Stand for the Word of God. Be a witness where you are.

Where you live. With the friends and circle of people that are in your acquaintance. Don't be afraid to speak up. To speak out. To stand up. God had placed Esther in such a unique position of influence for such a time as this.

God has given us a place where we are. And Mordecai, with his honesty and wisdom, won the King's gratitude. How can we do that today? Friends, be challenged. Be urged today. God has got a plan for our life.

He is the one who works in all the circumstances of life. He is watching over you. He is working in you. Ask yourself, what has God given me to do? What can I do to make a difference in my place where I am today?

[31:55] And God places us where he wants us to be. To be used of him. The feast of Purim was a time of laughter and joy. It's like Psalm 126 verse 2.

Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing. Then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them. There's great things that God is doing for us. Great joy and peace we have in him. Just as people recall that time of Esther's deliverance of the festival of Esther, We can likewise have joy today.

We can have joy today. Joy because of the day of deliverance. That when it was Haman's plan to be a day of gloom and horror, God turned it around into a day of victory and deliverance.

And so we can take heart like the word of God tells us, That for we that love him, that all things, all things work together for good.

[33:02] To them who are the called, who love him, and who are the called according to his purpose. Our Lord shows his faithfulness time and time again.

God is still looking for Esther's. God is still looking for Mordecai's today. Men and women who are willing to be used of him.

Willing to trust him no matter what. Willing to do his will. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the life of Esther that speaks to us of courage, of faith, of standing up, of speaking out.

Help us, Lord, to learn from the example of Mordecai and Esther. To avoid the pride and arrogance of Haman.

Lord, to, as it were, clothe ourselves in sackcloth and ashes that we might cry out to you as a people. I cry out to you because of our state, our condition, of the peril of our nation, of our world, of the Hamans of this world that would destroy and hurt God's people.

[34:26] Pray for the nation of Israel today, Lord. We pray for the Jews who think of this feast of Purim. Even around this time. Those that are even in this time.

When they remember Esther and Mordecai. Lord, that they would find even more truth. That they would find that you are the great deliverer, the Lord Jesus, as you took our sin and penalty and paid for it.

Lord, we pray that they might see you. Yeshua, the Lord Jesus, as the true Messiah. That they are still looking for, not knowing that you have already come. And that you are yet coming again in power and glory as the great King of kings and Lord of lords.

Lord, we pray for the Hebrew people that they might cry out and find salvation. It is in you. It is in you. Yahweh, our Saviour, Yeshua.

Yahweh, our Lord, our God, our King, our Master. We pray for anyone here today who is yet to trust you. That they might know what it is to have faith in the living God.

[35:37] That you died and rose again and ever live. And intercede for your people now and forever. Lord, we pray. Challenge each Christian here today. Challenge us, Lord. Challenge us, Lord.

To be Mordecais and be Esthers for such a time as this. In Jesus name, Amen. Amen.