

ESTHER

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[0 : 00] Good morning to you all. Oh, thank you.

Let me pray before we start. Our Father and our God, we do indeed give you great thanks and praise that you are a God who is perfect. You are a God who has answers.

You are a God who saves his people. You are a God who pours out love and mercy to your people. Father, please help us now to understand the message that you would wish for us to hear this morning from these amazing passages.

In Jesus' name, amen. Well, we have come to our second last message here in Esther and we have heard about four interesting characters.

King Xerxes, whose character is extremely questionable, is obsessed with himself. Queen Esther, we know she's beautiful.

[1 : 11] She has kept her Jewish heritage private and along with the fact that her life is in danger, so is the life or lives of all the other Jews and they are threatened with annihilation.

Mordecai, he's of the Jewish family of Esther and he's the guy who refused to bow down to Haman and seemingly has started and caused this problem that we have right at this moment in time.

And Haman himself, the man obsessed with hatred that comes from his ancestor King Agag that we learnt about some weeks back, the king of the Amalekites.

And Haman is the guy who we learnt last week who is filled with pride and whose plans are not just to see the death of Mordecai, but to see the whole Jewish race annihilated.

Now, it's not difficult to dislike Haman. And it is easy to wish for poetic justice.

[2 : 30] Now, poetic justice is a literary term. It's what every good book and every good movie has. You know what I mean.

There's good characters and there's bad characters, evil characters, and all along it looks as if the evil characters are going to win.

And yet the author uses the evil characters to somehow turn the tables and the evil characters receive the punishment that they deserve.

We would say they got their just desserts. Now, poetic justice happens all throughout life. We often want to see the tables turned for good to win over evil.

But poetic justice leaves things a little unresolved. The grief of a family when a member of their family is killed by a mad gunman, and we only just have to look at recent news, they are still left in grief, even though the gunman gets the punishment and is sent to jail for a long time.

[3 : 57] The punishment doesn't bring back the one who was shot. There is still something unresolved, even though the gunman is actually punished.

Now, in chapters 7 and 8 of Esther, we see perfect justice. Yes, there is poetic justice through this story.

Yes, Haman dies on the very gallows that were meant for Mordecai, and the people of God have their lives saved by a reversal of the death edict.

But there's more for us to see in relation to God's perfect justice. You see, commonly, poetic justice has something missing.

But in God's perfect justice, he writes the wrongs fully and completely. Nothing is missing.

[5 : 04] Now, there are four points that we can learn from God's perfect justice from these two chapters. We didn't read chapter 8, but we'll get to that.

There's two points in chapter 7, and there's two in chapter 8. In God's perfect justice, there is perfect knowledge, there is perfect judgment, there is perfect reward, and there is perfect joy.

First of all, in perfect justice, there is perfect knowledge. Any justice that we see in this world isn't perfect because no human has all the information or knowledge of another person.

There are many secrets that are hidden. And we see this happen in Esther chapter 7, in the first six verses, especially look with me at verses 3 and 4.

Having been asked again what the queen's request is by the king, the queen, Queen Esther, answers, if I have found favour with you, your majesty, and if it pleases you, grant me my life, this is my petition, and spare my people, this is my request.

[6 : 31] For I and my people have been sold to be destroyed, killed and annihilated. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet because no such distress would justify disturbing the king.

She knows how to speak to this king, doesn't she? She's very clever. Esther reveals her concern for her own life and her people.

Remember, no one knows that she is a Jew at this stage, not even her husband, the king. All knowledge of the problem is not revealed straight away, nor does she make it clear that it is the edict that Haman actually put together and that the king actually signed is the main problem.

And note her comments, in her comments, she is using the same wording that is in the decree that Haman wrote and the king signed.

Now, understandably, this king asks, who has done such a thing? Now, you could imagine Haman.

[7 : 54] Haman would be getting a little worried as he's listening to the king, sitting there at the banquet, feeling like he's a special guest, and he hears the queen speaking this way.

Things haven't been going well for Haman, remember. He has just come in from outside. He's actually had to be humiliated by parading around the city with Mordecai being honoured, the very person who he hates.

Now, Esther reveals the adversary. It's this wicked Haman. This wicked Haman is out to kill her, the queen of all people.

Now, does the king realise it's the edict that Esther is referring to? Maybe not. Now, we have seen, we think maybe not, and the commentators think maybe not, because we have seen the king be very slow and lacking thought throughout all of Esther.

So nothing makes us think that he's putting all the dots together. The knowledge shared here is not complete.

[9 : 16] Esther doesn't tell the whole story. But in God's justice, all things will be revealed because perfect justice has perfect knowledge.

If you can imagine a judge in one of our courts making decisions on what he or she sees before them, the judge doesn't know the heart of the person in front of them, doesn't know the motives, the judge doesn't know if the witness is lying or not, and so cannot really make a perfect judgment.

We'll do the best he or she can, but it won't ever be perfect. A judgment will be made perfect, will be made, but it won't be that perfect because a judge cannot have perfect knowledge.

But our God can make a perfect judgment because all things will be revealed on the day of judgment. Revelation tells us that when Jesus returns, the books will be opened and every wrong and every right that we have ever done will be totally exposed and all will be revealed.

Now, unless our wrongs, our sins, are covered somehow, we, every one of us in this room is in great trouble.

[11 : 01] God's justice is perfect justice. He has perfect knowledge. Nothing is hidden from him.

Even though we can hide a huge amount from each other, nothing is hidden from God. God's perfect justice requires perfect righteousness of which we cannot give ourselves.

In 2 Corinthians 5, verse 21, it says, God made him, that is Jesus Christ, who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Jesus is the one who can cover all of our sins. Now, many think that God will let everyone pass the entrance into heaven on the day of judgment.

But how can that be perfect if he lets those who have ignored him all their lives and done their own thing? Those who have been wicked, those who have been selfish, those who have been self-motivated.

[12 : 20] And dare I say, how can even welcoming a religious person who comes to church every Sunday and then forgets God the rest of the week for six days, no thought of God, but I'm in church on a Sunday, how can that be just if God allows that person into his heaven?

You might remember Jesus said some pretty horrendous things about the Pharisees. And in Luke 11, Jesus comments about the Pharisees in many different ways.

But maybe one of the worst comments is, woe to you, experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge.

you yourselves have not entered and you have hindered those who are entering. How awful is that?

To just be a nice person isn't what is needed. Putting your life into Jesus' hands 100% is what is needed.

[13 : 40] to know that you need saving and that Jesus is the perfect saviour because he has taken the punishment that we deserve on the cross.

So that we then can stand confident when that book is open and everything about our lives is revealed. Our sin will not be seen but Jesus by his very life and death will be covering the pages and only Jesus will be seen.

If we are trusting in Jesus as Lord and saviour then the perfect knowledge of all of our actions good and sinful will in fact be covered by our saviour Jesus.

Now God's perfect justice will also be a perfect judgement. There was a day of judgement for Haman.

For a time it all looked as if everything was going well for Haman. He had position he had wealth he had power he had honour. It would be understandable to be looking on and say this isn't fair this person is evil.

[15 : 01] and yet look at everything that he has and that is not uncommon in life. We see many people in life who are elevated seemingly blessed in finances and position and we might be tempted to call out and say it isn't fair.

fair. How often have you thought that a punishment does not fit the crime? We cry out it isn't fair and I can and every one of you with children will know children can do this the best.

they cry out they cry out but it's not fair she is to blame he is to blame but with God his punishment is perfect.

Psalm 73 the whole of the psalm explains this dilemma beautifully but we won't read the whole psalm but the psalmist does say I envied the arrogant when I saw their prosperity and the wicked they have no struggles their bodies are healthy and strong they are free from common human burdens they are not plagued by human ills and the psalmist continues with saying that he has been faithful and yet things are going wrong for him and he cries out to God and he says God this isn't fair and then he realises it's not fair only for a time in the psalm it says how quickly are they destroyed completely swept away by terrors it looks all unfair but it's only for a time that it is unfair scripture tells us in many different ways the meek shall inherit the earth the first shall be last the last shall be first take courage

God's justice is perfect judgment and if there wasn't a day of judgment then that would mean that God's justice is not perfect after all heaven now here in Esther we see the king has a problem and Haman an even bigger problem we know the king is weak and we know and here in this story he's horrified that someone would plan to kill his queen but he's the one who has promoted this wicked person he's the one who has given him all the power and the high position how embarrassing for this king who is only concerned about himself he's going to look like a goose he's enraged and he's disturbed and he has to take himself outside to give him some space to think what on earth am I going to do here now

[18 : 20] Haman on the other hand tries to see whilst the king's out of the room tries to see if he might be able to persuade the queen to change the story or something or to plead for life because Haman knows only too well that this king is about to kill him he has seen this king annihilate kill many many people but as fate or is it coincidence or have we learnt by now throughout Esther God's hand is at work quietly Haman trips and he falls on to queen Esther just as the king is coming in not a good look one would think and for this weak king inwardly he most probably saying woohoo I've got another reason to get this guy

I'm not going to look as bad as what I thought I might have been he won't be as embarrassed about this one or he won't lose face but Proverbs 11 19 tells us truly the righteous attain life but whoever pursues evil finds death now this is poetic justice and God's justice is perfect judgment we can be certain that God will judge Haman he has been judged by the king by being given death at that moment but God's judgment is eternal death and Haman will have that and God's perfect justice will receive a perfect reward now God promises to fully and completely reward the righteous some of the rewards will be in this life but much of our rewards will be in eternal life in our life after death there is a great reversal and a great reward for the righteous and we see it in

Haman and Mordecai if we compared the two of them Mordecai was humbled at the beginning of the story of Esther and then Mordecai was honoured and exalted Haman was honoured and exalted at the beginning and then he was humbled there was a massive reversal for Mordecai when all of Haman's estate that was given to Esther by the king was handed over to Mordecai to take care of along with the king handing over his signet ring we see in chapter 8 to Mordecai signifying that he can speak for the king in all of Susa isn't that amazing that the king can just switch like that you see there is also a great reversal in the kingdom of God we might see the wicked and

Haman in this passage grows in wealth and position and pride and honour but there will be a time where all will be reversed. God will reward those who serve him faithfully. Hebrews chapter 6 verse 10 says God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. This isn't just poetic justice; this is a great reward from God. God's rewards are based on what we do now. Don't get me wrong, I am not talking about salvation here; there is nothing that we can do to earn our salvation that is purely a gift from

God. But in Revelation 22 the Lord does say, "Behold, I am coming soon, my reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done." This is a reward over and above the gift of salvation. The question that we need to ask ourselves is, "Am I living for God in all areas of my life? Am I serving him faithfully for this wonderful reward that is promised?" We see great concern also in Esther. She has everything she has power. She now knows for a moment that her life is safe, but there is still sadness; there is still unfinished business, and it's the same here in Esther. Poetic justice was given to

[23 : 57] Haman he was hung on the very gallows that he intended for Mordecai but Esther is still sad because her people still have the edict that they are to be annihilated; they need to be rescued, otherwise they die. Now we need to understand that in this time that Esther is written, a king could not change a law that he had made. Any edict he had put out, it could not be changed; it could not be revoked because of shock of shock, it might look as if the king had made a mistake, but a new edict was written where the Jews were permitted to defend themselves and their families. This is amazing; this is a reversal, it's a great reversal for the

Jews. They were destined to be annihilated but now can defend themselves against those who defend themselves against those who would come after them to kill them. Now God has also made an irrevocable law that is a law that will never be changed, and that is the wages of sin is death. God will not change his laws but he won't change his laws not because he's frightened that he's made a mistake; he won't change his laws because he has perfect justice. God must be just but he is also the justifier and he maintains justice by sending Jesus to die in our place and to take the punishment we deserve. His law does not change but he steps in to save us; he pays the cost so that anyone who puts their trust in

Jesus will be saved. That great verse that all of you would know for God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life in God's perfect justice there will also be rejoicing. In the last few verses of chapter 8 from 15 to 17 when Mordecai left the king's presence he was wearing royal garments of blue and white, a large crown of gold and a purple robe of fine linen, and the city of Susa held a joyous celebration for the Jews; it was a time of happiness and joy, gladness and honour in every province and in every city to which the edict of the king came there was joy and gladness among and celebrating and many people of other nationalities became

Jews because fear of the Jews had seized them we see the people of Susa rejoice when they see Mordecai is now the second in charge they were not all Jews, all the people of Susa there were many nationalities there but they were all rejoicing because the wicked Haman had been dealt with and now we have this new guy who seems to be a good guy and they're excited about that so they too can rejoice and we see rejoicing amongst the Jews they no longer have a death warrant over their heads and they can defend themselves they can stand firm for God friends if if you have been set free from your sin and you've been set free from

God's perfect judgment are you rejoicing? Paul says to rejoice in the Lord always and as believers haven't we got a reason to rejoice in Esther there was rejoicing and dancing for days and others saw their gladness and were attracted to their God others saw that their God had delivered them from death this God of the Jews this God of us he watches over us and he cares for us and he gives us eternal life and a promise that all the wrong and all the evil in this world will in fact be dealt with eventually we have a confidence in a God who is just amazing and words cannot express it enough the joy in

[29 : 38] God's people allows others to see that there is something worth rejoicing about is that you the German philosopher and atheist and I have a sneaking suspicion Steve used Friedrich Nietzsche's comment somewhere in this series but Friedrich Nietzsche the philosopher said I might believe in the redeemer if his followers looked more redeemed I mean really Mahatma Gandhi on the back of that statement he actually said if it weren't for Christians I would be a Christian what an indictment that is if us Christians cannot actually show how wonderful our great God is what hope is there for the world that is horrendous that we have people like this say that sort of stuff perfect righteousness comes only in

Jesus my friends and if you know this Jesus you need to show people that God's justice is perfect and his salvation is free that is reason to rejoice if life is tough for you at this moment in time but you are trusting in Jesus know this it is only for a time that it's going to be tough there is an eternity of things that are made right and perfect you are only in a moment of time our reward will come and it will be perfect and it will be for all eternity there is poetic justice in Esther but more importantly Esther points us to

God's perfect justice that remains because there is perfect revelation perfect knowledge there is perfect judgment there is a perfect reward waiting for everyone and it comes with rejoicing be the people of God and let others see it Amen