

Esther 5

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[0 : 00] Amen. The book of Esther is unique in its setting! We've looked at this before. Not only unique in the fact that it never mentions the name of God.

! Now we know that historically the purpose is for the preservation of God's people, the Jewish people, at that time in history.

It was one of the attacks that was coming against them, in particular from an individual who is Haman. It is described within the book as the enemy of the Jews. He is attempting to move King Ahasuerus to the complete destruction and annihilation of the entire Jewish population.

Now, that is important because that completely interrupts the plan and purposes of God. Within the realm of King Ahasuerus at this time are the remnant that had returned back to Jerusalem after the decree of King Cyrus, and they are rebuilding the temple.

The reconstruction of the walls during the time of Nehemiah had not taken place yet. Neither, historically speaking, has the revival that took place when Ezra the scribe went there, because these events actually predate Ezra chapters 7 to the end and in the entirety of the book of Nehemiah.

[1 : 35] So we will find these within the pages of Ezra chapters 1 and 6. That is, when the remnant is there, they're rebuilding, they get discouraged, they stop. And we're waiting on two of the minor prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to come and to really encourage the people.

And if you remember their encouragement, and I know I'm asking you to go back sometime if you haven't, or you weren't with us when we did. The two prophets that showed up, Haggai and Zechariah, the minor prophets you find in your scripture, have this repeated refrain.

They continue to speak of the Lord of the host. That is, they are declaring this name of God, the Lord of hosts, that God is the God of the armies of the universe, the God of the armies of heaven. And so he is all powerful and all moving. And that shouldn't surprise us because we see that they had just went through a time of unsettled ease.

And they went through a time of great despair, not only being discouraged by Sambalat and Tobiah and all those other people we meet, they had also been discouraged by this enemy of the Jews a little bit prior to their arrival.

[2 : 40] So I say all of that to say that God is really preserving his people because of his covenantal promises. We've alluded to it a little bit as we studied the book of Esther, that when we get to week eight of the eight essentials, which we are only two weeks away from that last one, it is entitled, What About Israel?

And we've seen this reality that our interpretation of God's dealing with modern day Israel can also fit into the context of our understanding of what he's doing in the book of Esther.

And we say that because what we find in the pages of the book are not a faithful people truly worshiping the Lord God Almighty and serving him. Rather, we find people that are living according to the ways and means of the world, enjoying the Persian Empire.

They are kind of elevated in their position because they have really acclimated themselves to that world. They did not respond to King Cyrus.

They are not in the realm of temple worship. They are not offering sacrifices. And nowhere do we have a recorded prayer of the people in the book of Esther.

[3 : 53] Nowhere do we see them exalting the Lord God's name. Nowhere do we see them rejoicing in the deliverance that comes. Yet we do see God moving on their behalf.

And that's comforting because we say, oh, well, that's not fair because, you know, people say, oh, well, if they're walking in disobedience and all those other things, then then God should just move on. But we have to be careful there because what we're revealing is a character of God.

And I say that because we're about to read this chapter and you'll see something in just a moment. That each of us at a time in our history and a time in our lives, we were not walking in obedience. Rather, we were walking in rebellion against the Lord God Almighty who is holy, holy, holy. We were not seeking after him, though he was seeking us. We were rather walking according to the desires of the flesh and the lust of the mind and the lust of the body. And yet God, in his sovereign purposes and plans, chose to redeem us.

And it is that character of God which is so astounding that leads us to stand and worship and go, how amazing is the Lord God Almighty.

[5 : 02] And we see this really in this chapter because we're at a pivotal time in the book where the decree by Haman has already been written in the king's name, sealed with the signet of the king.

The law has already been established, a law which cannot be repelled, by the way. A law which cannot be changed. Don't miss that. A law of the Medo-Persian Empire, once put into writing, could not be changed.

So even though we know at the end of the book there is deliverance, the law still stands. A law of condemnation. A law of destruction.

The law that was sealed by the king's signet ring, his seal, still stands. And now the people of the Jewish nation are helpless because the law has stated there will be a day of destruction.

And I want you to see in this fifth chapter the hope for the helpless. It says, now it came about on the third day that Esther, if you remember going back to the fourth chapter, Esther said, well I'll go into the king but you fast for three days and you and the people in the city of Susa fast and me and my maidens will fast.

[6 : 20] And after three days I'll go in and if I perish, I perish. You remember that time of surrender. Now it came about on the third day that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace in front of the king's rooms.

And the king was sitting on his royal throne in the throne room opposite the entrance to the palace. When the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, she obtained favor in his sight.

And the king extended to Esther the golden scepter which was in his hand. So Esther came near and touched the top of the scepter. And the king said to her, what is troubling you, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be given to you. Esther said, if it pleases the king, may the king and Haman come this day to the banquet that I have prepared for him.

Then the king said, bring Haman quickly that we may do as Esther desires. So the king and Haman came to the banquet which Esther had prepared and they drank the wine at the banquet.

[7 : 20] And the king said to Esther, what is your petition for it shall be granted to you? And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be done. So Esther replied, my petition and my request is if I have found favor in the sight of the king.

And if it pleases the king to grant my petition and do what I request, may the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them. And tomorrow I will do as the king says. Then Haman went out that day glad and pleased of heart.

But when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate and that he did not stand up or tremble before him, Haman was filled with anger against Mordecai. And Haman controlled himself, however.

He went to his house and sent for his friends and his wife Zeresh. Then Haman recounted to them the glory of his riches and the number of his sons. In every instance where the king had magnified him and how he had promoted him above the princes and servants of the king.

Haman also said, even Esther the queen, let no one but me come with the king to the banquet which she had prepared. And tomorrow also I am invited by her with the king. Yet all of this does not satisfy me every time I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.

[8 : 30] Then Zeresh his wife and all his friends said to him, have a gallows 50 cubits high made. And in the morning ask the king to have Mordecai hanged on it. Then go joyfully with the king to the banquet.

And the advice pleased Haman. So he had the gallows made. We're going to look and we're going to see the hope for the helpless. This is a pivotal chapter because the events that are happening here are the hinge in which the fate of the Jewish people swing.

It is amazing when we get into the sixth chapter and we continue to see the sovereign hand of God leading the events. But we do not want to get ahead of ourselves. For if we do not have the fifth chapter then the sixth chapter really does not matter.

The reading of the book of the Chronicles and all of those things matters little if we do not have what takes place in the fifth chapter. And it is the hope that is offered to the helpless people of God. The people who have nothing to cling to, nothing to lean on. There is no hope they have of gaining freedom or release from this law. For the law must stand.

[9 : 34] The law requires their death. And it is a law that cannot be changed. It is steadfast. And it is true. But yet even in the midst of the helpless situation of knowing the decree of a law that they were deserving, not deserving, but leading, being led to death, there was hope.

There was hope that was extended to them through the leading of holy God. And we see this, first of all, with the fashioned intercessor. The fashioned intercessor.

Hope begins with the reality that there is an intercessor present. Without intercession, there is no hope. For none of those people that were in the city, none of those people that knew the decree, none of those people who read the law, those who were mourning and weeping and wailing, they could not approach the king.

Mordecai himself, who sat at the king's gate, which is a title or a reference to having a position of some authority within the realm of the empire. It is being an individual who at least makes judgment among matters of smaller court, if you will.

And he is there helping with decisions and he has a place of prominence. Yet even he, in his sackcloth and ashes, wasn't allowed to sit at the king's gate, let alone go into the king's presence.

[10 : 57] No one had access beyond the gate of the king. All of the Jewish people outside the gate of the king knew full well the weight of the law.

They knew that their destruction was coming all throughout the province. In every native language and in every tongue, it had been decreed. And yet no matter where the people found themselves, there was none but one that could intercede for them.

But God had provided an intercessor. And that intercessor was not someone outside the kingdom. Rather, that intercessor was someone inside the king's palace.

That intercessor happened to be a Jewish lady named Esther. And we know that prior to this, for three months, she had not been asked to come into the king's presence. Yet she had surrendered her life and said, Yes, I will go and I will intercede with the king.

And we notice it says here, Now on the third day, she clothed herself in her royal attire. So not only had God provided an intercessor physically, God had also provided an intercessor who was clothed properly.

[12 : 05] Someone who had the garments to be in the presence of the king while he was on his throne. Now stay with me. It says here, It was an intercessor who cared little about her life, but knew she had the means and the opportunity, and had been raised to that time to intercede on behalf of someone.

Esther literally risked her life because she alone was the only one who could intercede. Now, friend, there are many types throughout Scripture in which we could say this is a foreshadowing of things to come.

And some of them we can have a little too much freedom, I think, to speak kind of spiritually over matters and we can say that these types are a little too much because sometimes things are just what they are in Scripture.

But I do not want you to miss the type in this picture. That we as the people of God, rightfully so, now stay with me, are under a condemnation of death and that law has never went void.

The law says that we deserve to die. That whoever breaks one small portion of the law deserves to die. And Jesus said that he did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill the law.

[13 : 46] And the reality is that the law still stands that the sinner deserves to die. For the wages of sin is death and that has never been changed. It has never been null and void.

It is a law that cannot be changed. It is a law that has not been stamped with the seal of a king but rather it has been stamped with the holiness of the Lord God Almighty. And it will not be changed for the condemnation of sin is death.

And according to the law, we cannot change the law. We cannot rewrite the law. We cannot hope to abolish the law. Rather, we need one to intercede for us in spite of the law.

But we can't do it. We, like Job, have to cry out, oh, if I was to call out to heaven that he would never entreat me to come into his presence. And Job said, I wish that there was an umpire, someone who would put their hand upon God Almighty and put their hand upon me and intercede

for us.

We have found that intercessor and it is Jesus Christ. Jesus didn't risk his life. He gave his life so that he may be clothed in the righteous robes of the king to stand clothed in the presence of the Lord God to intercede on our behalf.

[15 : 02] And the good news of the gospel is that we don't have an intercessor who stands in the doorway. We have an intercessor who actually sits on the throne. And he's at the right hand of the Father. What does it tell us?

Daily to intercede for the saints. Don't miss the reality that the law still declares our death. And the only hope we have for the helpless situation we find ourselves in is that there is an intercessor who is present.

And he has been fashioned to be our intercessor. We have the fashioned intercessor who is there. Secondly, we notice the favor of the king.

When the king set upon his palace, it tells us that Queen Esther put on her royal robes and she stood at the entrance. She was right outside the doorway of the courtroom, of the throne room. And she is standing there and he looks straight ahead because she is before him. And the king takes notice of Esther. He had not called her to his presence in three months. As far as we know from the text, he has not even seen the queen for three months.

[16 : 09] And yet now he sees her standing before him. And the law of the lamb was that anyone who came uninvited into the presence of the king, there was but one judgment and that was death.

Unless the king was to extend the royal scepter which was in his hand. And it tells us in our text that when the king saw Queen Esther, she gained favor in his sight.

And he extended the scepter and welcomed her into his presence. But the favor does not end with the reality that the king allowed her to be present. Because if the God of the universe simply allowed Christ to be in his presence, I know we're speaking a little bit here because he is fully God and fully man.

And we can make our brains smoke when we get into that, right? But if the intercessor who intercedes for us was only welcomed into his presence, that would not be enough. But rather the king on the throne, he not only says, you're welcome here.

He says, what do you want from me? And he makes a promise. Up to half of my kingdom, I will give it to you. Listen, the favor shown Esther is the only thing that will overcome the evil intent of Haman.

[17 : 23] It is the only thing. And sovereign God moved the heart of King Ahasuerus to show that favor. And the favor that is being extended is the very favor she needs to make her request known.

But she makes that request known at the right time. We may wonder, why did she not ask her request during the first banquet? Well, we have the beauty of reading it on this side of history. And we know that if she had asked it at the first banquet, the events that follow the very next morning would not be seared into the mind of the king.

And so in the divine timetable, she delayed. Because at the right time, the intercessor asked the question.

But notice the favor of the king. And the favor extended is a hope that we have in our helpless situation. But there's a further hope. The third thing we notice here, though it doesn't sound like a hope, it is still hopeful to us.

[18 : 31] It is the foundation of hatred which Haman had. Haman went to the banquet. He thought himself pretty important for he was invited to this banquet. We've read the story.

We know what happens. But yet he is living it out in real time. And he alone has been invited. He and the king. And what a banquet it must have been. And it tells us that he left the banquet joyful and merry of hearts until he saw Mordecai.

Until he saw Mordecai. Completely disrupted his day. Why? For Mordecai would not stand nor tremble before him.

Here's the whole foundation of Haman's hatred. He found an individual who would not bow to his will. He found an individual who was not moved by his presence.

He found an individual who was untouched by his preeminence. He found an individual who cared little about his personality. He would not stand to give him honor.

[19 : 40] And he dared not tremble before him in fear. And it is for that reason and that reason alone that he hated him. And he hated him with such a hatred he wanted to kill him the very next morning.

Friend, listen. Haman is a representation of the enemy of all of God's people. He doesn't hate you because of who you are. He hates you because you will not tremble before him. He hates you because you will not honor him.

He hates you because you will not stand and revere him. And the moment we turn our backs on the enemy of our souls, his hatred is formed against us. Simply because he will not be content until all men bow before him and him alone.

Read the book of Revelations. It is the foundation of hatred. Jesus said that if they've hated me, they will hate you too.

Why will this world hate us? This world system and the powers and principalities of the air. Why such hatred? What have we done to this world that would make it hate us this way? Simply because we've separated ourselves from it.

[20 : 46] And if we find a moment where the hatred of the world is not garnered towards us, then we ought to find a moment of concern. Am I standing and honoring the world system the way it wants me to?

Am I trembling because of the world forces the way it desires for me to? Or is there something within me that is causing a disruption in the joy of this world? Not in the joy of the people, but in the joy of the world system.

I was struck today in my own daily reading, 2 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 3. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh.

Ours is a spiritual battle. We ought to check and see how we're fighting the battle. If we're fighting a battlefield against flesh and blood, then we're fighting the wrong battle.

For we fight on a spiritual front and that alone. Haman is a representation of the world system and the hatred it has for God's people simply because God's people do not bow to it.

[21 : 48] Fourth and finally, notice the failure to see. But we've got good news for our enemy is blind.

He is blinded by something that is a great failure of his. Haman possesses the same quality and attributes as the enemy of God's people today.

It is the failure of pride. Notice what he says, that when he stayed himself and he went home and he called his friends and he called his wife and he began to recount to them all of his splendor, all of his riches, how many sons he had, how many promotions he had been given, and the reality that he had been invited alone to the banquet of Queen Esther.

Friend, that's nothing but pride. He made himself feel better and tried to impress those around him. For he said, it doesn't matter. This man won't bow to me, but he should.

Look at me. Look how important I am. And pride blinds the humble. He will be humbled. He was blinded by his own ambition.

[22 : 57] He was blinded by his own pride. And his desire to prove his self-worth, he could not see the handwriting on the wall. He did not know that Esther was a Jewish individual.

He did not see his imminent death. That it will be coming very quickly. By the time we get to the end of the sixth chapter, somehow or another, his own wife will say, well, if Mordecai is a Jew, then you're not going to win this battle.

How does she see it then and not know it now? It is pride. And the wonderful thing is, is that the enemy that opposes God's people is so blinded by his own pride, he does not know his own end is coming.

But God is in control. Now today we have an enemy of our souls who knows full well that the end is coming. Yet it is pride that had him cast out of heaven.

And it is pride that moves him to operate the way he does on the face of the earth. And in his pride, he will be put down. We fight a blind enemy.

[24 : 11] One that doesn't know the end is coming. But yet we do. We know the reality. We know what's going to happen. There's an intercessor in the courtroom of the king who's interceding for us, though the enemy may be raging.

Though in his pride he may be exalting. Though in his pride he may be building and erecting a torture instrument. Something to impel upon us. Something to torture us and to kill us.

Though he may be plotting and scheming and planning all these things. In his pride he thinks he's in control, but he's not. For the promise has already been given. Up to half of my kingdom I will give to you.

And all she'll have to do is ask for one man. Our enemy who wages war against us. May try to convince a number and a multitude around us.

Through his pride and through his ambition and his plotting and scheming. Though we know there is an intercessor who stands in the presence of the king. And there is hope for the helpless.

[25 : 23] The law still stands. We are still deserving of death. But the intercessor is greater. And Jesus doesn't go one time before the king.

Don't miss this. That after three days. Esther was clothed. And on the third day Christ comes out of the tomb. And then he ascends to the father where he daily lives to intercede for us.

Oh if God can do such work through such temporal. Fallible human beings as we find in the book of Esther.

How much more the intercessor that we have in the presence of the king. How much more grateful ought we to be. May we not be like the people we find in this book.

And fail to lift up our voice in glory. Hallelujah. For the redemption and deliverance we find. For we too stand under the same condemnation as the Jewish people here. For the wages of sin is death.

[26 : 26] But the deliverance we have is greater. And we have it recorded for us in Esther chapter 5. Thank you my brother.