

Esther 4

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[0 : 00] Really telling as we have made our way at this time in history to the book of Esther. A book that does not mention by name the name of the Lord God Almighty at all.

It is one that we have the reality that he's moving. There are references kind of subtly given. There are some if you were to do a deep dive and now that I mean deep in this.

So I'll let you know this in all clarity because I expect every now and then you'll study the word not just read the word. So if you were to do a deep dive into the book of Esther there are a number of Bible scholars that tell you the name of Yahweh is actually kind of hidden five different times throughout the book of Esther.

And they can give it to you. It is kind of hidden within phrases. Each of the phrases are complete sentences. When it's spoken the acrostics Y-H-W-H which is Yahweh is hidden because in some of the earliest writings.

I'm giving you some deep stuff to think about. OK here. So just stay with me. Some of the earliest writings. Those letters were capitalized so that the reader of the book would say oh there it is.

[1 : 10] There is his name and that is a reference to the Yahweh is moving. Two of the mentionings are by Gentile individuals and when they are mentioned by the Gentiles then the name is spelled backwards.

So that it is him moving away from the Gentiles. Three of the mentionings are from Jewish individuals. And so when it's mentioned by them the name is spelled forward. But you really have to look for it. You really have to find it.

The Jewish people highlighted it in their writings early on in the book of Esther when they had what we would call their scripture. And just showing that he was there. But for all intents and purposes the reality is is the name of God and even the person of God is not put very forward in this book. And so we're reading a historical writing of God's people even in their unfaithfulness. We don't want to really beat them up too much because we'll see a little bit of their kind of repentance tonight. But they're not worshipping. They're not offering sacrifices. There are no recorded prayers. There are no recorded praise. We'll see tonight kind of a reference to more than likely they were praying.

[2 : 16] But it never says so. We have nothing like Daniel when he is in the same capital city going to his room and facing Jerusalem and crying out and saying Father forgive us for our sins.

The sins of my fathers and my sins. None of that is found in the book of Esther. But yet we cannot doubt the reality that God is moving for the preservation and the security of his people.

Now I said it is not lost on me the reality that we're in this book at this time. Even as we consider the events that are going on around the world today.

And we understand God's activity with his people, his covenant people. We'll get into it on Sunday, March the 22nd. The last of our eight essentials during that Sunday school hour.

We'll get what about Israel. And that's a lot of the questions that I get at times. What about the nation of Israel? So we'll kind of revisit what's going on here. Because most of the arguments, and I'm just going to say this now.

[3 : 15] People say, well I mean the people of Israel, they've rejected Christ. They're not worshipping him. Surely God's not going to maintain that covenant. Surely they have forsaken the covenant. They've walked away.

And surely God's not going to preserve them. And I remind them, the covenant that God made with the nation of Israel wasn't dependent upon their faithfulness. And the greatest highlight of that in scripture is the book of Esther.

Because you have people who could have returned to Jerusalem. They could have been involved in the rebuilding of the temple. But they chose to stay in Susa. They chose to stay there, which the

majority of them did.

They were very much at home in the world. They were living like the world. They were even comfortable in the world. So much so that Mordecai is sitting at the king's gate. That means he's sitting in a place of prominence.

And he's making judgments and rulings. And he's kind of dictating decisions that are going on in this capital city, if you will. But God is still moving. Though he has not so seen his evidence.

[4 : 19] The work of God and the preservation and the maintaining of his covenant is very clear. But now we come to the fourth chapter. Leading up to this time, a number of years have passed.

King Ahasuerus has got upset at Queen Vashti. Queen Vashti was kicked out. Just kind of gets you caught up really quick. Vashti can no longer come to his presence. He goes and fights a battle against the Greeks, which, by the way, he loses. He comes back home.

And he's really upset because he doesn't even have a queen at home. So he has to find a new queen. In God's sovereignty, he has a lady there who's living with her cousin. That is Esther and Mordecai. And they happen to be living in the city.

And she's a very beautiful lady. He makes her queen. She's there. So that's very quickly getting through the first and second chapter. Then in the third chapter, we're introduced to Haman. We don't know where Haman came from. But Haman came out of nowhere.

He's promoted. He's second in command. Haman is an Agagite. An Agagite would be one of the descendants of King Agag. You ought to remember King Agag because when Joseph and the Israelite people were getting ready to go into Jerusalem, shortly before the death of Moses, one of the last things that Moses did was lead the nation of Israel to defeat King Agag.

[5 : 27] And so now we have this enemy of the Jews, as he's referred to throughout the rest of the book of Esther. And he is now in a place of prominence. He's risen to second in command. He gets his feelings hurt.

His heart is full of pride. Haman won't bow down and worship him. Haman all of a sudden differentiates himself from everybody else. He says, I'm a Jew. I'm not going to bow down and worship him. And Haman is not content to destroy Mordecai.

He wants to destroy all the Jews because he is concerned about the people, not the person. So he wants to annihilate all the people in the Persian Empire. And that's where we're at. Understanding that part of that Persian Empire are the remnant who returned to Jerusalem and are rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem.

Well, at this time, historically, they had stopped. They're building their paneled homes and they're waiting on the prophet Zechariah to get there and Haggai to get there and kind of chastise them and stir them back. But so there's much that hinges on this moment historically.

And we lose it if we don't kind of connect it all together with what's going on in Ezra, later what's going on in Nehemiah. Much hinges here because the Messiah is to come from that location.

[6 : 36] In the mount of the Lord, it will be provided. And so if there's no temple, there's no place, there's no nothing. And if there's no people group, so much of everything that is mentioned in Genesis is depending on what is going on here.

So now we're in Esther chapter four. And let's read the chapter and we'll go into it from there. When Mordecai learned all that had been done, and that is the plan of Haman and annihilation of the Jewish people at the end of that year.

When Mordecai learned all that had been done, he tore his clothes and he put on sackcloth and ashes. And he went out into the midst of the city and walked loudly and bitterly, or wailed loudly and bitterly.

And he went as far as the king's gate, for no one was to enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth. In each and every province where the command and the decree of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews with fasting, weeping, and wailing.

And many lay on sackcloth and ashes. Then Esther's maidens and her eunuchs came and told her, and the queen writhed in great anguish. And she sent garments to clothe Mordecai that he might remove his sackcloth from him, but he did not accept them.

[7 : 42] Then Esther summoned Hathak from the king's eunuchs, whom the king had appointed to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mordecai to learn what this was and why it was. So Hathak went out to Mordecai to the city square in front of the king's gate.

And Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the exact amount of money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews. He also gave him a copy of the text of the Edict, which had been issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show Esther and inform her and to order her to go into the king to implore his favor and to plead with him for her people.

Hathak came back and related Mordecai's words to Esther. Then Esther spoke to Hathak and ordered him to reply to Mordecai, All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that for any man or woman who comes to the king to the inner court who is not summoned, he has but one law, that he be put to death, unless the king holds out to him the golden scepter so that he may live.

And I have not been summoned to come to the king for these thirty days. They related Esther's words to Mordecai. Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, Do not imagine that you and the king's palace can escape any more than all the Jews, for if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, and you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this. Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa and fast for me.

[9 : 18] Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens also will fast in the same way. And thus I will go into the king, which is not according to the law. And if I perish, I perish.

So Mordecai went away and did just as Esther had commanded him. I want you to see this evening an awakened response. An awakened response. If there was one chapter within the book in which we would expect to find the name of the Lord God of the Jewish people mentioned, or even the prayers recorded of the people, it would be within this chapter.

Yet we do not find it. But what we do find now is God awakening his people, and at least now there is response from them and an acknowledgement of who they are.

They are a distinct people. They are separate people. And they are forced to take action. They are forced to respond to the events that are going on around them. And as they take action, then their response kind of leads to an awareness of their identity, and it also leads to an awareness of those around them as to who they are.

The first thing that we notice here is that there is a very public, there is a public display. It says, When Mordecai learned all that had been done, that is, all the plans of Haman, all the edict that has been given, the decree that has been stamped with the king's seal, the amount of money that Haman had promised to give, and Mordecai, if you remember, was at the king's gate.

[10 : 44] So he has the opportunity to hear these things, not only as the decree is read in the court square, but also from the people coming in and out of the king's palace.

And also, he knows the inner workings of what is going on. He knows more details other than the fact that, hey, on the 13th day of the 12th month, the Jewish people are all supposed to be annihilated, and all of their plunder is supposed to be taken.

And so we understand here that Haman makes this plea, Mordecai becomes very aware of it, and then he responds in a very, very public fashion, one that would not be easily ignored.

It says that he tore his clothes, and he put on sackcloth and ashes. And notice this, and he went out into the midst of the city. The first awareness, the first awakening we have is Mordecai not simply resolved to keep his identity as a Jewish individual to himself, or confined to the king's gate, because those who were with him at the king's gate knew he was a Jewish individual.

Now he is very public in his stance. That is, he takes off his robes that would be fit to wear at the king's gate, and he clothes himself in sackcloth. He covers himself with ashes, and he goes not at home, but rather into the center of the city, and begins to wail and to mourn very loudly.

[12 : 08] So much so that the palace takes notice of it, because the maidens that are attending to Esther, and some of the eunuchs notice this, and the word gets back to her, and her writhing in great pain is not writhing because she realizes the Jews are to be annihilated.

She doesn't know that yet. She is writhing because Mordecai is making a public spectacle of himself, and he has went very public with his mourning.

He's went very public with this, and he has went as far as he could, so much so that he could not go to the king's gate, for the text tells us it was unlawful to go to the king's gate wearing sackcloth. You should call to mind Nehemiah. Nehemiah was afraid to be sad in the presence of the king, though he was the cupbearer of the king, because the king said, anybody that is in my realm is going to be happy.

And so this king is King Xerxes. Nehemiah is serving King Artaxerxes. Xerxes was a lot stricter than Artaxerxes. So if you show up wearing sackcloth, and you're sitting at the king's gate, we're not going to have a bunch of sad people in my presence.

[13:15] We're supposed to be happy around here. Everybody's going to be joyous, because look how much I've done for you. So that would have been the end of Mordecai. But Mordecai here goes to the public square, and very publicly declares not only his identity, but his grief and his mourning and his weeping over the reality that's going on.

Sometimes God has used, both biblically and historically, very unfortunate and uncomfortable circumstances to make his people move.

Up to this point, Mordecai had kept his identity as a Jewish individual to himself. And he would not allow Esther to tell anyone in the courts that she was Jewish either.

But it was when the reality of the certain destruction of their people forced him to be public about who he was. Because now he must make a choice.

Am I going to grieve and mourn as I should? Am I going to put on sackcloth and ashes? And even though we do not have him crying out to the Lord God, all of these actions are signs of mourning for the Jewish people.

[14:30] Is he going to behave as he is, the peculiar, different people of the Lord? Or is he just going to try to fit in and fill in and hopefully these things will pass by?

No, the issue had been forced at hand and God is making his people identify themselves as his people. We see this even in the book of Acts.

In the book of Acts, Jesus gives what we call the Great Commission. And you see it found in Acts 1-8, right? They were to carry the gospel into Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth.

We understand that. That is, they were just supposed to start where they were and they were to keep going further and further and further. By the way, that's still the Great Commission given to us to take the gospel to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Well, we go a little further in the book of Acts and what we find is the church is just hanging out in Jerusalem. And nobody's leaving Jerusalem because there's a mega church in Jerusalem and everything's going fine in Jerusalem. And, you know, I mean, why would you leave?

[15:30] But then there's the stoning of Stephen. And after the stoning of Stephen, things get very uncomfortable after Acts chapter 7 because now persecution has arisen in Jerusalem. But when you turn to Acts chapter 8 and following, what you find is that a few people stayed behind in Jerusalem.

But lo and behold, after the martyrdom of Stephen, they started carrying the gospel to Judea, Samaria, and to the othermost parts of the earth. They started doing exactly what Christ had commanded them to do, but unfortunately they didn't do it until things got uncomfortable and they had to do it.

God's purposes and plans will not be thwarted even by our comforts. And I know personally in my own life, sometimes the greatest lessons have been taught in the most uncomfortable of seasons when I have been forced to be public and make a stance about what I believe.

I've been forced to decide, do I really believe this? Will I live this fashion, live this way? Will I be different than those around me? Or am I content just to kind of fade in the background? We see here that it is a public display.

Secondly, connected to this public display, there is a revealed identity because not only is Mordecai revealing who he is, when Esther hears about this, she sends her maidens and her eunuchs out to try to re-clothe Mordecai because her cousin is kind of making a show of himself and that's not befitting of a man sitting at the king's gate.

[17:00] He will not take these new clothes. He will not take these garments. He is weeping and mourning, but there's a little phrase in there for she's not aware yet of what is going on. Mordecai tells Hathak, the eunuch, by the way, I love what Warren Wearsby says here.

We meet people throughout scripture that we have no idea where they came from. We know nothing that happens to them after this, but God uses them in a mighty way. And we see them throughout scripture. And he gives highlights.

You know, we always talk about the boy that brought the sack lunch that Jesus used to feed the multitudes. We have no idea who that boy is. He also refers to, do we really know who the men,

nobody knows who the men were who let Paul down through the city wall.

We don't know who they were, but yet if they had not lowered Paul in a basket through the city wall, then Paul would have probably been taken captive. And God uses these unknown. Now we have a man named Hathak. All we know about him is that there was a time in history where he had to go back and forth between Queen Esther and Mordecai because Esther couldn't come out of the king's palace because she could not be seen with a man in the sackcloth and ashes.

Nobody knew their relation. And now Hathak has to go between God. And if he had failed in his responsibilities of accurately hearing what Mordecai was saying and accurately conveying it to Esther, then Esther would have never said, okay, then I'll go.

[18 : 16] But now this responsibility has been entrusted to this man. We don't know at this point, more than likely at this point, Esther has not revealed her identity yet. Nobody in the palace knows who she is.

She's not aware of what happens. Mordecai gives a decree, even tells the amount of money. But then he makes this one statement that is going to reveal at least to Hathak and reveal to everyone else there.

He implores her to go in. It says it there in verse eight. Then he implores her to go into the king to implore his favor and to plead with him, look at this, for her people.

Now all of a sudden we have the revelation. We've known it. Nobody else has. That Esther is indeed a Jewish individual.

And she can't hide behind the king's palace and the king's court. She is forced even to acknowledge her own person. Because God wants his people to be publicly known.

[19 : 23] It is a sad reality that so many of his people try to fit in. But as Christ said, you cannot light the lamp and hide it under the basket. It is to be set on a table so that it may shine.

It is to glorify God. And so without the revelation of their true identity, without the opportunity to acknowledge that even Esther is the Jewish one who's in position.

So we notice here that God is now forcing his people, not forcing them, but awakening his people to respond. And they awaken, first of all, by acknowledging who they are.

This brings us to this third reality. The way that God has been moving all along is that in the midst of all this uncertainty, in the midst of all this struggle, there is a provided opportunity.

Have you noticed in Scripture how faithful God is? God always has, not only his person, man or woman, God always has the deliverer.

[20 : 27] No matter how desperate it may seem, no matter how perilous the times may be, no matter what attack the enemy may bring, God always has a deliverer.

Ever since the Garden of Eden and the fall of man, where God entered into not the Abrahamic covenant, but the Edemic covenant, the covenant with Adam, that the seed of a woman would crush the head of the serpent, as we refer to it as the Proto-Evangelium in Genesis 3.15.

Satan has been fighting against this seed of a woman, and he is fighting the destruction. He starts it out with Cain and Abel. So if it's going to be the seed of a woman, then let me kind of condemn the seed of a woman.

And so Cain kills Abel. But then we read, but Eve conceived again. And then we are introduced to Seth, and you have the lineage of the godly. And we keep going on and on and on, and we go a little bit further through the book of Genesis.

And it says, well, then there was a time where the sons of God saw the daughters of men, and they came down to the daughters of men, and they interchanged, and we have the Nephilim there. And it is wickedness. The heart of every man is wicked, and the heart of every man is content only to do evil.

[21 : 28] But God had Noah, right? The preserver of righteousness. And after the ark has opened up, we can read the lineage and the family of Noah. And we see all these descendants until we come to Abram from the land of the Ur, the Chaldeans, and God entered into a covenant with Abram who becomes Abraham.

And now the enemy starts to begin to confine his attacks to the people of Abraham. And over and over again, we have these plans until finally they go into Egypt, and the enemy is trying to use the Egyptians to kill off the male babies that are born to the Israelites so that he can wipe out this seed of a woman that would crush the head of Satan.

But God has his Moses. Moses is being raised in the palace of Pharaoh, and he is their deliverer. Over and over, God has an opportunity for deliverance, for he has someone in the right place at the right time.

And we see it. And now historically, we're at this point where the enemy says, well, I will use this man Haman, who is the enemy of the Jews, and I will annihilate this people, and I will wipe them out.

But God has a queen in the courts. And he has provided an opportunity for deliverance. And Mordecai rightly sees this. He tells her, do not think that just because you're in the king's palace, you can escape this reality, because now your identity has been revealed.

[22 : 47] Now you know who you are, and the people around you know who you are. And so you're not hiding from this. For if you remain silent, he says in verse 14, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, and you and your father's house will perish.

This is the first kind of innuendo that Mordecai understands the covenant relationship that God has with his people. That God will preserve his covenant.

It wasn't because they were faithful. It wasn't because they were good. It's because God was able to do it. And we have this phrase that all of us know so well, and who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this.

Here is the reality. God had been working in the background up for this point to provide someone in that place. And it just took the right circumstances for her to understand, this is what God had been positioning you for.

I would say that each and every one of us need to look at our lives that way and say, okay, Lord, why have you done these matters in my life? Why have you put me in this place at this time?

[23 : 51] And sometimes we don't see it until we look back and we say, that's why I was there.

That's why I was going. Because just as much as God directs the steps of Esther, God directs the steps of all of his people.

You say, oh, well, pastor, I just, I'm no queen or I'm no king, and I just have an everyday normal life. Right. But you have a sanctified life in Christ. You have been sanctified.

What does sanctified mean? You have been set apart for his use and his glory. Every aspect of our life has been sanctified. And if we say that, then why has he set me here?

Why am I here at this time? Paul would say on Mars Hill that God ordains not only the time, but the location of where every man dwells. And he has put us at this season, at this time, in this location for a time such as this.

We need to understand that. And we need to see the opportunities that God has given us to redeem them as he has put them in our path. Because really, if we fail, God will not.

[25 : 02] For deliverance will arise from another means. And the truth of it is, is if I fail to carry out the opportunities that God has given me, that is my loss, not his.

Because he is not confined nor constrained to just use me or to use you or to use anyone in particular. But he gives us the opportunity to be used by him for his glory.

This is why we counted a joy to be able to serve and to be able to labor for the sake of the kingdom in any means. Because we're not compelled to do it out of compulsion.

But we're driven to do it because we have the opportunity to labor in the fields. And we have the opportunity to minister in this way even though it may seem insignificant.

We will never know the significance until much, much later. I can look back and point to a number of things in our life where we say, okay, Lord, whoever you put here is who we're going to minister to.

[26 : 01] And then we look around and say, wow, that's amazing. Look how that turned out. And you just stand and see the goodness of God. But don't miss the provided opportunities in your life.

Fourth and finally, notice the required humility. With these opportunities come a required humility. Esther had everything in the world against her, by the way.

Not only was she a lady serving in the court of a king who, I mean, was chauvinistic to say the least. I mean, you remember his party he had at the first, right? If he got upset because Vashti didn't come out and show her beauty to the kings, then how much more upset will he be if Esther decides to tell him what he needs to do?

So anyway, she's the queen of a king who's not really a friendly person. King Ahasaurus historically is very wicked in his dealings.

She has this reality that for these 30 days the king had not called her into his presence. So we can assume that by this time a number of years have passed since she has made queen. And he's like, okay, well, that's fine.

[27 : 07] You stay over there. I appreciate it. So she's not been called into his presence. And the law states that no man nor woman can go into his presence no matter how high ranking they are until they are called.

So she's got the law against her. She's got, you know, who she is against her. She is a Jewish individual. She's got the reality that his second in command is the one that wants to kill all the Jewish individuals, that is Haman.

And so she's got all these matters against her. Yet she's the one that God has put in the place. And so what this requires is this humility that is called for.

So Esther sends out and told them to reply to Mordecai, go assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. And I and the maidens that are with me or the attendants that are with me will do the same thing.

So the first display of this humility is the fast that they call for. Surely this fast is a time of prayer. Surely this fast, though it doesn't say it verbatim, surely this fast is a time of humbling oneself and crying out.

[28 : 07] I mean, if you knew, hey, in a matter of months, we're going to be completely wiped out as a people and the law has already been passed. There's nothing we can do about it. But yet we have these three days to fast. And at the end of these three days, she says, then I will go into the king.

And if I perish, I perish. So there's the true humility, understanding the opportunity that you are there, that she was there for that season.

And she not only was calling for the humility of fasting and prayer. She was calling for the reality that she was taking her life on the faithfulness of God. She said, I cannot fail to do this.

And she counted it more important to go intercede on behalf of her people than she did for the preservation or the supposed preservation of her own life. We notice the faith that God will deliver. But as the book of James says, faith without works is dead. So the faith of Mordecai was that God would deliver. But that faith had to be met with the work of Esther saying, I will go into the king and if I perish, I perish.

[29 : 21] There's an action that had to be united with it. It is one thing to say, yes, I believe God has a purpose and a plan for me. And yes, I believe he provides opportunities for me. And yes, I believe that these opportunities are divinely orchestrated and he has me exactly where he wants me.

And it's a whole other thing to say, so since I believe that I'm going to stake my whole life on that and if it kills me, it kills me. And I'm going to live with abandon and say, yes, Father, I trust you. I will do something because I believe it. If we don't take action on our beliefs then they're just sweet thoughts. They're not truly beliefs. You take action on what you believe.

Bottom line. The actions in your life are dictated by your beliefs whether or not you state that or not because belief always creates action.

it just does. If you believe something is better for you and you have to do something for it but if you really believe it, you'll do it. If you believe this will help you and you need that help then you'll do it.

[30 : 29] But if we say, well, I believe that God is doing this but we don't do anything about it then we're truly not believing it. We're just saying, well, that's a good thought. That's a good thought. Mordecai had convinced Esther that deliverance would come and she had come to the place in humility where she believed that she was the one appointed for it so much so that she was surrendering her life to it.

If I perish, I perish. Paul would say later, he said, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. He believed God had called him to preach the gospel and he said there was a fire within his bones and he had to preach the gospel and he counted and staked his whole life on that thought that he had to preach the gospel.

We ask ourselves what response has been awakened in us because God has stirred some circumstances or situations sometimes unexpected when he makes his people perk up and say, you know what, there is something different about us.

He's called us to be different and when we really believe it and when we really hold on to it then more times than not we're forced to take action upon that and that action may be costly but that's the reason we're there.

We say, yes, I'll do it because this is what God has called us to do. This is the response God was hoping that God was awakening in his people that now they're not content just to live as they always have.

[32 : 08] Now truly, we'll read the rest of the scripture and we'll never see this mentioning of God. There'll be no praise of God for this deliverance rather there'll be the looting of those who came against him and we still scratch our heads and say, man, why?

Why didn't revival break out here? You know why? Because it's really not about Mordecai and Esther. Not really about them. It's about the faithfulness of God to maintain his covenant with his people no matter where they're at.

No matter their faithfulness, no matter their goodness, he's faithful to his covenants and we see it for us in Esther 4. Thank you. Thank you, brother.

Okay. Does everyone have a copy of the prayer list? Thank you.