

Esther 3

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[0 : 0 0] Amen. Last time we were together and we opened up the book of Esther, we looked at this reality that this is a book that never mentions the name of God. It never speaks directly to Him.

We find no prayers that are given, though there's the implied prayers through the fasting and time like that. There are no times of praise, which is kind of telling because you would think by the time we get to the end of the book that we would find this great rejoicing and celebration of praise. We don't find any of those matters. But yet we know that when we read the story, we cannot fail but to see how God is working and to see how He is moving.

So it is one of those things which we need to keep in mind even as we read through it, that while God may not be in the foreground, so to say, we do know His activity, His sovereign hand of leading is moving not only the circumstances, but He is putting the right people in the right place at the right time.

We introduced that when we were looking at King Ahasuerus, which is also King Xerxes, not Urtaxerxes, but Xerxes in the Persian Empire. Not known for his noble character.

[1 : 1 0] He had a 20-year reign. He was an individual who would kind of act spontaneously. We see that not only in history, but we see it in Scripture because we know that in a moment, He displaces His wife.

He takes her off of the throne. She no longer can be in His presence. But even the sovereignty of God is moving. Therefore, a void is left, the void that would be filled by Esther.

And we know that God had only positioned Mordecai and Esther there at the right time because of the events that would take place that are now being introduced to us in the third chapter. So I want you to see here the arrival of the adversary.

I told you about a book that I love called Explore the Book. J. Sidlow Baxter wrote Explore the Book. It is kind of a compilation of short studies.

I know this is Sunday night, so we can be a little bit lax in our talk here tonight. So it's short studies, if you will, if you're taking a survey course through Scripture.

[2 : 1 1] Billy Graham once said that if he could only have one other book besides the Bible on an abandoned island, it would be J. Sidlow Baxter's Explore the Book. It was after I read that quote, I said, well, I'm going to go find Explore the Book.

Thankful I did. And it really is, you read through it and you'll say, okay, read the Book of Esther through twice without stopping and then let's go through this study. Next time, read these chapters and let's go through this study.

And it's kind of an overview. It's really, it's a great book to have in your library. If you don't have J. Sidlow Baxter, Explore the Book. It's a great one, okay? It's not a commentary. It's just this is what's going on.

It's an awesome little book. I say little because it's about this thick. Okay, so it's a big thick book, but it's broken up into short studies, if you will. I love what Baxter says about this.

Not that he's absolutely accurate in all things, but I don't want to take credit for something that is not mine. We call that plagiarism. So I love what he says about this reality.

[3 : 0 9] There's so much imagery in the Book of Esther that it is easy to see the correlation between it and other fulfillments that we find later on. One of the imageries we find is that redemption comes to God's people in the exact moment that it needs to come.

And that imagery is united with the fact that there is an adversary of God's people who is risen to power. He is seated next to the king. He is entrusted with rule and reign, and he is given freedom to execute justice or injustice over God's people, much like we see in the Book of Revelations when the Antichrist sits upon the throne and his one beside him is the one.

He is given the keys to do whatever he wants to to God's people. So don't lose that imagery, if you will. There are all these types, these foreshadows in Scripture. Now, full transparency. We don't want to get lost in the types and that everything has a type or a greater fulfillment. But there are some writings that when we get in Scripture, we know they are pointing to a greater fulfillment.

There is an Antichrist that was set upon the throne. He will be surrounded, as we read in the Book of Revelations, by his servants, some of which he would elevate, and he would bring to a place of position.

[4 : 24] And he is the adversary of God's people. And all those things where the woman flees and is hidden and the water overcomes, and the enemy is seeking to destroy all these people, the same imagery that we find here.

But it's also, now to step out of that typology, if you will, it is also very telling that the adversary of God's people is always present, though we do not always see him.

And so here, in the pages before us, we see the arrival of the adversary. In Esther chapter 3, it says, And after these events, King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the son of Hamadathah the Agite, and advanced him and established his authority over all the princes who were with him.

All the king's servants who were at the king's gate bowed down and paid homage to Haman, for so the king had commanded concerning him. By the way, you ought to just see the Book of Revelations, right, where the Antichrist raises up those, the one who is, and people should bow down and worship him in the mark of the beast is upon the people.

Same picture, right? Let's keep reading. But Mordecai neither bowed down nor paid homage. Then the king's servants who were at the king's gate said to Mordecai, Why are you transgressing the king's command?

[5 : 33] Now it was when they had spoken daily to him, and he would not listen to them, that they told Haman to see whether Mordecai's reason would stand. For he had told them that he was a Jew.

Then Haman saw that Mordecai neither bowed down nor paid homage to him, and Haman was filled with rage. But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him who the people of Mordecai were.

Therefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus. In the first month, which is the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, Pur, that is Lot, was cast before Haman from day to day, and from month to month until the twelfth month, that is the month Adar.

Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom. Their laws are different from those of all other people, and they do not observe the king's laws, so it is not in the king's interest to let them remain.

If it is pleasing to the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed. And I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who carry out the king's business to put into the king's treasuries.

[6 : 46] Then the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hamadathah, the enemy of the Jews. The king said to Haman, The silver is yours, and the people also.

Do to them as you please. Then the king's scribes were summoned on the thirteenth day of the first month, and it was written just as Haman commanded to the king's satraps, to the governors who were over each province, and to the princes of each people, each province according to its script, each people according to its language, being written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king's signet ring.

Letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to seize all the possessions as plunder.

A copy of the edict to be issued as law in every province was published to all the people so that they should be ready for this day. The couriers went out impelled by the king's command while the decree was issued at the citadel of Susa, and while the king and Haman sat down to drink, the city of Susa was in confusion.

I want you to see the arrival of the adversary. Here, by the way, we have the first mentioning of such a type of event in scripture that has been an ongoing reality for the people of God throughout

history.

[8 : 11] It is something that continues even today as it pertains to the nation of Israel. It is a matter which we will discuss in the eighth week of our Essential Eights on what about Israel, and we'll look at the reality that this has been an ongoing, recurrent theme in that nation's history, and it is intended to show us, here before us, the faithfulness of God, even in spite of the adversary that now has come onto the scene.

The first thing I want you to notice is that we are introduced here to the presence of the enemy. And I say we're introduced to him because it seemingly comes out of nowhere. If we were to go and we read chapters one and two, there are no mentioning of Haman at all.

We don't know if he's in attendance some 10 years prior to this event, nearly 10 years, nine to 10 years prior to this event, when the king throws this great festival and this great celebration, this week-long event, we don't even know if Haman is there.

We do know that he's not one of the men that he consults. He's not considered one of the wise men who understands the times and gives his advice how he ought to remove Queen Vashti from her position.

We do know that he's not mentioned by name until this event. But prior to this event, so much has happened historically within the realm of the kingdom that now Esther, who has not disclosed who she is as a Jewish individual.

[9 : 30] We've seen that reality that they must have inherently not been living as Jewish individuals. They had not been open about their reality. And it's easy to say, oh, well, they are backslidden Jews.

In hindsight, we look at that and say, in God's sovereignty, it was kept from those around them. For surely matters would have been different.

But yet God had put Esther there. Mordecai had been there. Mordecai is seated. He has been promoted. He is at first in the citadel in Susa. Now he is seated at the king's gate.

Think of the irony of that. That now Mordecai, who has just revealed this plot against King Ahasuerus' life, and it has been recorded in the Chronicle of the Kings, in the king's presence, is also one of those seated at the gate.

And all of these things happen prior to the coming of the enemy. But the enemy evidently had been present. And he had been present enough that King Ahasuerus had taken notice of him.

[10 : 31] For it says that after these events, King Ahasuerus promoted Haman. So he must have been around. He must have been there. We just didn't know him yet. And the reality is, is that the enemy of God's people is always there.

He's just not always obvious. Sometimes he manifests himself. Sometimes he is brought into light. And sometimes he is seen.

But he promoted Haman, the son of Hamadatha. But notice who is there, the Agagite. Now that ought to call to mind the conquering of the Promised Land.

For when God's people were moving into the Promised Land, it was actually when they were still on the eastern side of the Jordan River, there was a king, King Agag, in which they completely destroyed and annihilated.

They asked him to make peace with them, but they would not. And they destroyed King Agag, took control of his property, took his land. Later it would be settled by the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and the half tribe of Manasseh.

[11 : 29] But we understand here that that is the region on the eastern side of the Jordan. We call it, when we get into the New Testament time, the Transjordan. It's the region where Decapolis is at. Jesus does a lot of things over there.

He encounters the man that's filled with the legion of demons and all those. So it's on the Transjordan, the eastern side of the Jordan River. So he has connections to the vowed enemies of God's people.

But we have not met an Agagite until now. And the enemy has just been silent. But now all of a sudden, he is present. And his presence may surprise us.

He will be referred to throughout the book of Esther repeatedly as, quote, the enemy of the Jews.

He is the enemy of the Jews. Not just as the promoted individual. He is promoted to second in command.

He is the one that is given this grand position. And all of a sudden, this man with so much authority, so much worldly esteem, so much worldly power, is all of a sudden the enemy of the Jews.

[12 : 26] But God was still at work. Don't lose sight of that. While we didn't know the enemy was coming, God did. And he had positioned enough people in the right place.

Why? Because God always has his people. And God always has his purposes. And we can't lose sight of the sovereignty of God in the book of Esther.

We can't lose sight in the reality that Mordecai the Jew, who would be the kind of central focus of all of this, is also the one who was made aware of the events that they're trying to plot against King Ahasuerus' life.

We can't lose sight of the fact that Esther was the one whom the king fell in love with. We use the term love loosely. Who he loved more than any other. And he placed the royal crown upon her head.

We can't lose sight of the reality that while we did not know the enemy was there, God most certainly did. And God was preparing in advance a deliverance from the enemy long before his presence was revealed.

[13 : 33] But yet we see, for the first time, the presence of the enemy. And in this, we see the plot of evil. So now Haman has this great esteemed position and it says that all of those who sat at the king's gate bowed down and paid homage to Haman.

For so the king had commanded it. So the king had given this commandment. You see him, bow down and pay homage. All but Mordecai. And for the first time in scripture, Mordecai begins to act like the people of the Lord.

We definitely have to say he's, we can't say that he's faithful. We can't say that he's leading this perfect life. We don't put him up on a pedestal because he also didn't respond to the decree by King Cyrus to go back.

But again, notice the sovereignty of God. For this plot here is so thick and this plot runs so strong. Mordecai now says he's not going to bow down.

We get Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego images, right? I'm not bowing down to worship this. I'm not bowing down to pay him homage. And the whole reasoning why he won't do it is because he says, I'm a Jew.

[14 : 46] And so now there's this reality of who Mordecai is. Haman is made aware of it, but he is not content just to destroy Mordecai because evil is never content.

And the plot of the evil is not just to destroy Mordecai, but he wanted to destroy all the people of Mordecai. So notice this, this elevation of the plot.

We're moving from being upset at a person that we're completely upset at a people group simply because of who they are. They are the Jewish people.

They are a distinct people. They are a different people. And so the intentions of the enemy are to remove the people and could care less about the persons.

The enemy is never concerned about the individual. the enemy is always concerned about the multitude. Even when we as believers face spiritual battles and the church goes through spiritual attacks, it's really not about the individuals.

[15 : 52] It's not about you and I as much as we would like to think it's about you and I and as much as the enemy tries to convince me that it's about me and you and we're all to blame. We understand it. It's really not about us because he's not attacking us.

He's attacking who we are. It is the people of the Lord that the enemy has set his mind upon. And he is not content. He is so upset.

This bitter anger and this animosity and this disdain that he has that he wants to destroy all of the people of God so he casts lots and he puts the lots out there for a year and we even notice the timing here.

All those in the whole realm of King Ahasaurus. Now, just so we catch ourselves up on this included in the realm of King Ahasaurus are the Jews who had moved back at the decree of King Cyrus to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple because that's still the realm of King Ahasaurus.

So notice here that is the entirety of the people of God. That is the entirety of the purposes and the plans of God. God had declared that he would deliver the hope of the world through a particular people but now the enemy has come on the scene.

[17:09] The spiritual battle is really not about Mordecai by the way because Haman is not the enemy of Mordecai. Haman is the enemy of the Jews and one thing that we notice in scripture and that we see this repetition of that we must not lose sight of all these battles and all these attacks and all these things it is the enemy of man's soul continuously trying to fight against the purposes and plans of God.

Essentially God had put all his eggs in one basket. God had said I will put enmity between the seed of a woman and Satan and then he narrows it down just a little bit more.

We have the proto-evangelium in Genesis and then he calls Abram out of the land of the early Chaldeans and now it's through a man and we go a little bit further we go a little bit further we go a little bit further and then God had confined all of his purposes and all of his plans to one peculiar people in one small region of the world and attack after attack after attack shows up and it's really not really doesn't have a lot to do with Mordecai.

It's the enemy of the Jews showing up trying to stop the purposes and plans of God which ultimately friend is the coming of Christ to bear our sins to die upon the cross of Calvary to be dead and buried for three days and to be raised to walk in newness of life so that he could be at the right hand of the Father daily to intercede for you and I.

It is the salvation of mankind that is flowing through this one people group and now the enemy is plotting evil trying to rid the world of them and we see this plot of evil this plot is only possible because there is a position that has been elevated it is this false sense of position and prominence and importance in which they have but before we get there notice the timing in the first month which is Nisan he began to cast per or that is lots and he was casting lots and trying to figure out when is the best month when is the best month when do I want to go to the king about this now let's just think about this for just a moment for a whole year Haman has this animosity he has this hatred he has all of these feelings and he wants to destroy the people of God he wants to destroy the Jews so for a year he casts lots and what does scripture tell us man casts lots but God decides the outcome right so for a year he casts lots a year later on the 12th month he said oh this is good the lots fell in a favorable fashion to him he thought it was up to chance

[19:57] God is ordaining the days now all of a sudden a year has passed guess who's been in the palace for a year that's Queen Esther right she's been there for a while guess who's been faithfully serving at the gate that whole year that's Mordecai he's been there so now all of a sudden the plan is there and he goes and this plot of evil and this elevated position he's just so vague he says they're king there is a certain people in your region who are a little bit different notice this friend the enemy attacks in vague terms the truth is always clear and specific it is in the shadows that the enemy hides it is when we cannot speak in complete transparency that we find the enemy doing his work for Haman says oh king there is a certain people why didn't he say who they were you know why because everybody has known that Mordecai is a Jew for a year now and Mordecai has been serving faithfully at the king's gate that is giving counsel making decisions his name is recorded it's just a certain people doing some certain things different and really it's not to your benefit be careful when we rest our hope in generalities and we need to know the details here but this plot comes and the position is exaggerated and the enemy is so upset he's willing to give of his own money he said

I will invest I will pay the cost this is here it is and here's this position that they think they have but they do not for verse 11 says the king said to Haman the silver is yours and the people also do with them as you please king Ahasaurus is not a man of really great character for he is just about to give up or he is intending to give up the lives of x number of people throughout his realm without any questions without any comments without any doubts go ahead whatever that's fine later on in the book he'll tell the people that he just handed over to execution okay you can rise up and fight and plunder back and he says do whatever you want to do he really doesn't care as long as it stays out of!

their right to make a decision concerning God's people go back to what we were talking about this morning they thought they were taking ownership of what they were only called to tend the silver is yours and the people also do with them as you wish that is a false sense of position those are not his people they don't even belong to King Ahasuerus though they reside within his realm why are they within his realm for the owner of those people had put them there it was God who had put them into Babylonian captivity it was not Nebuchadnezzar who carried them away it was God who sent them there it was God who allowed them to be led captive for their own failure for those are the people of the Lord those are not the people of King Ahasuerus Haman does not have control of it

the silver may be his temporarily but it is not his and the enemy is scheming thinking that he has the right to do what he wants because he thinks and he will keep his people he will be faithful to them he will hold them and he will deliver them we'll see that through this book one of the ways that he does it is in the fourth and final reality and it is when the plan is actually enacted

Haman with his false sense of position and this false sense of security says well now that I have my desire let me plan my events he has the signet ring of the king he has the right to seal the documents and make them official when he does so he sends them out again on the first month but the decree is to be fulfilled in the twelfth month another full year so now by the time hatred has entered into Haman's heart two years will elapse before the plan is carried out God can do an unbelievable amount of work in two years God had even delayed these realities so that the time would be sufficient because when we look ahead we will know that Esther has not been called into the presence of the king there will need to be days of fasting and waiting and days of approach ability there will have to be multiple days to have banquets there will have to be all of these realities and

God is providing the means even through the planning and scheming of the adversary for he works all things out according to his plans and purposes and he is doing it sovereignly behind the scenes and it's the reality that we understand that when the adversary is finally revealed we know that God has been full aware from the very beginning and that God's plans are not thwarted nor are they changed but they are consistent for God knows what he is doing it will be a trying season for his people we see the cruelty in it when the king and!

[25 : 24] Haman are down sitting down to drink and the whole city of Susa is in confusion it is a scene that has been recurrent throughout the ages as people after people have been raised up to be the adversary of the Jews and sought to destroy the entire people of the Lord yet God has been faithful not because this is one of the!

things that I love about!! not because they are quote good they are not worshipping as they should we don't see any sacrifices being offered we know they're not at the temple we know historically and during this time the temple has the temple work has ceased!

Those that were in Jerusalem are living in fear they are building their own homes not that they're being faithful God does not act because his people are faithful and good and right God acts because his covenants endure I was beginning to have a conversation this afternoon or actually I had a very brief conversation this afternoon with an individual and we were talking about just that the importance why is it important that God is faithful to the Abrahamic covenant why is it important that we see God's preservation of the nation of Israel what's important because your salvation rests upon a covenant promise too and if God can't keep that covenant what hope do you have that he will keep the covenant he made with you and if God is not faithful to ensure that covenant in spite of his people and sometimes even in light of the failures of his people then where do we stand when we stumble and we fall and we mess up and we say oh father forgive me do we not have the same confidence that we entered into the covenant of the blood of

Jesus Christ and God is faithful to his covenants because much like the Abrahamic covenant had nothing to do with Abraham for it was God who went back and forth between the split animals God ensured that the covenant would rest upon him friends your salvation was fully that it was God himself who took our sins and bore them upon the cross he declared the work finished and he entered into that covenant relationship with us and he called us to himself he revealed his loving kindness towards us his chesed love one that endures until the end and he called us to trust in him and him alone because he is faithful and so our hope and our security rest in the reality that God keeps his covenant promises even when the enemy is working and if he can't do it for the people of Israel then how do we know he'll do it for us but the word of God tells us he does and since he does even when they're not good we know that he can with us too for God does not change he is the same yesterday today and tomorrow for we say why does the book of Esther matter because it tells us maybe not a new name of God but it clearly reveals to us the character of God and we can't name it and claim it theology we don't look in the Old Testament I've told you this before I don't mean to mess you up you don't look at Jeremiah 29 verse 11 and say that's my verse some of you say that's my verse you can't do that for Jeremiah 29 is written to the nation of Israel and we are not a part of the nation of Israel for I know the plans I have for you plans to prosper you and to grow you not to harm you and some of!

[29 : 26] that's a good verse for me I like that verse that's not your verse that's the nation of Israel's verse but what it does do is it shows you the character of God that God makes good plans for his people and if you are his people he has plans for you it might not be to grow and prosper you and make you a powerful nation for that's the nation of Israel which is what Jeremiah 29 is in context by the way but he does make good plans for you for the character of God is to make plans for his people and to keep his people and to be faithful to his people so while you cannot claim the promise in Jeremiah 29 11 you can most definitely claim the character attribute of God that is revealed in Jeremiah 29 11 and say that's the God I serve he's a God who makes plans for me he's a God who has a purpose for me he's a God who will keep me he's a God who will ensure that I make it to what he wants me to do and I'm going to entrust him with that when we look at the book of Esther we don't celebrate the Purim the festival at the end because we overcame our enemies and we looted them for we didn't for we're not the nation of

Israel but we can celebrate the character of God that God is sovereignly working throughout the history of our lives for his purposes and he will keep his people until the end no matter how much plotting and scheming the enemy does so these are the things we celebrate we don't even celebrate that Mordecai set at the king's gate we celebrate the fact that God had someone sitting at the king's gate and that God puts someone in our life and God puts people in our lives and he knows what he's doing for his glory because there will be a day when the adversary shows up we may be surprised who in the world is Haman anyway!

Father we thank you so much we thank you for this day we thank you for who you are God you are faithful you are enduring you are true so Father we lean into who you are we thank you for your attributes that we find in your word they are clearly displayed through scripture and Lord we trust in you may all of our hope and confidence rest in you and you alone so that Christ may be glorified that the bride may be magnified lead us as we leave here tonight may our lives be given for your glory we ask it all in Christ name amen thank you guys really appreciate your time