

Outlines - Esther

Intro: Tonight we are journeying through the 17th book of the bible the book of Esther...

Few things about the book:

- A. **It takes place between chapters 6 and 7 of the book of Ezra (60 Year Gap)** - If you remember that Story you know that the Jewish captives were giving the okey to return to Jerusalem and restore their city starting with the temple...50000 went...But many didn't...Many stayed in Babylon..and this story takes place there around 492 B.C.
- B. **This is unique because Not once is God mentioned** - It seems odd but It's an invitation see the providence of God at work
 - 1. **Providence has been defined as** – “the hand of God slipped into the glove of human affairs.”
 - 2. Here's what Sidlow Baxter said - “God is in the Book of Esther, not in syllables but events; not in miraculous intervention but as the guiding wheels of providence; not in open communication but as an unseen power over all.”
- C. **The Book of Esther is huge because in it we see**
 - 1. **Number One** - God ordering the events of the universe to accomplish His ultimate goal in preserving the nation of Israel so that he could roll out and accomplish all of his redeeming plans wrapped up in Jesus.
 - 2. **Number Two** - God use flawed sometime morally ambiguous people to accomplish his purposes

In these first few chapters we will be introduced to the leading characters of this book

Chapters 1 Introduces us to the King of Persia

1 Now in the days of Ahasuerus (or Xerxes), the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces...in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne in Susa, the citadel, 3 in the third year of his reign he gave a feast for all of his officials and servants. The army of Persia and Media and the nobles and governors of the provinces were before him, 4 while he showed the riches of his royal glory and the splendor and pomp of his greatness for many days, 180 days. 5 And when these days were completed, the king gave for all the people present in Susa the citadel, both great and small, a feast lasting for seven days in the court of the garden of the king's palace.

A six month party...Why is he doing this? Essentially He's whining and dinning these people in the hopes of selling them a battle plan that will get some of these generals to fight alongside him...

A. Xerxes' dad, a guy named Darius, was a really important figure in history. And his dad's last military campaign was an attempt to push the Persian Empire into Greece. And he took 50,000 soldiers to do battle against the Greeks in a place called Marathon - a very famous battle in history. And there, 10,000 Greeks withstood the Persians, and stopped the spread of the Persian Empire into Greece...Well, Xerxes, or Ahasuerus, wants to pick up where his dad left off. He wants to muster a large army to attack Greece. And that's why he's having this party.

*In verse 10 it says – On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded...(a bunch of guys who were) the seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus, 11 to bring Queen Vashti before the king with her royal crown, in order to show the peoples and the princes her beauty, for she was lovely to look at. ¹² **But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command delivered by the***

[eunuchs. At this the king became enraged, and his anger burned within him.](#)

Now Extra-Biblical history tells us that Xerxes had a real anger issue. he had 300 men construct a bridge somewhere near the Persian gulf. And a huge storm came; and it destroyed the bridge that these 300 men had constructed. And he flew into a rage. He went down to the water. And he started beating the water for wrecking his bridge

- A. **So here's the picture:** We have this King who's already irrational when he's sober, He's drunk now and Has just been told "No" by a women, in front of his friends...His advisor speaks to him...here's what they decide to do.
- B. They decide to take her crown, strip her of her title. And then they send a letter throughout every province in the empire, saying, **"You've heard what Vashti did. This is what we did to her. You better do what your husband says."**

Chapter 2 picks up the story line up after four years - This is where we meet 2 more main characters...

Esther 2:1 After these things, when the anger of King Ahasuerus had abated, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her...

So after all this time Xerxes begins to remember the old days with Vashti and there's some regret there...then somebody comes up with the Idea to have a beauty pageant where they round up all the beautiful Virgins in the area and bring them before the king...so that he might crown a new queen

- I. **These women would be brought to the palace for 12 months.** It was like this royal spa. They would be making themselves beautiful, learning the ins and outs of palace life. And at his beck and call

*Esther 2:5–8 (ESV) ⁵ Now there was a Jew in Susa the citadel whose name was Mordecai..(gives his lineage ⁷ **He was bringing up Hadassah, that is Esther, the daughter of his uncle, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman had a beautiful figure and was lovely to look at, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.***

So here we meet 2 more characters from this story...Mordecai and Esther...We're told that Esther was an orphan. We're told that she was raised by her older cousin, a guy named Mordecai. We're told that she was a very beautiful woman. This is repeated a few times in the Book of Esther.

Esther is told that she will go before the king...and she is chosen

*Esther 2:16 And when Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign, **17 the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she won grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.***

And this brings about the 2nd feast

Esther 2:18 (ESV) ¹⁸ Then the king gave a great feast for all his officials and servants; it was Esther's feast. He also granted a remission of taxes to the provinces and gave gifts with royal generosity.

At the end of Chapter 2 - Something seemly random happens for Mordecai - he by chance over hears an assassination attempt on the Kings life, He tells Esther who tells the king and stops the bad guys who get hanged for it...But we see Mordecai was in the right place at the right time thing

- A. Notice, whats happening, even though God is not mentioned, there just seems like theres a number of things that are happening that seem too important to be a coincidence - Esther becomes queen - Mordecai saves the king...why dos it even matter?*

Chapter 3 - Haman

Esther 3:1–7 (ESV) ¹ After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, and advanced him and set his throne above all the officials who were with him. ² And all the king's servants who were at the king's gate bowed down and paid homage to Haman, for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage.

*⁵ And when Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage to him, Haman was filled with fury. ⁶ But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone. So, as they had made known to him the people of Mordecai, **Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus.***

So we would call this Genocide...

So here we have Haman, who is an Agagite - The Agagite family was a royal family in a people group known as the Amalekites.

- A. In 1st Samuel we read of the king of the Amalekites, a guy named Agag, Saul was told by God to wipe out all of the Amalekites - youngest to oldest, flocks and herds. But Saul disobeyed God; and he spared Agag.
- B. Now, in our own reasoning, we might find it easy to think that God gave a very horrible command to Saul.
- C. But here's the deal - had Saul obeyed God, we would never be reading of an Agagite in the palace of Ahasuerus who was a hater of all things Jewish and who planned the extermination of the Jews. Saul's disobedience put the entire nation of Israel at the risk of annihilation.
- D. **Here's the point:** Disobedience has long term implications

Then he approaches the king to wipe out the jew...

*Esther 3:8–11 (ESV) ⁸ Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, “There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom. Their laws are different from those of every other people, and they do not keep the king’s laws, so that it is not to the king’s profit to tolerate them. ⁹ **If it please the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed, and I will pay 10,000 talents of silver into the hands of those who have charge of the king’s business, that they may put it into the king’s treasuries.**” ¹⁰ So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. ¹¹ And the king said to Haman, “The money is given to you, the people also, to do with them as it seems good to you.”*

Who’s worse here...Haman the little Hitler...or this king who doesn’t really have a dog in the fight yet he’s willing to okay the wiping out of an entire nation...I say the king

So this is what happened next...

Esther 3:13 (ESV) ¹³ Letters were sent by couriers to all the king’s provinces with instruction to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods.

How did they chose this day?...where told later by throwing lots or dice...

Chapter 4 *The Jews in the empire get news of the genocidal plans of Haman. There were about 15 million Jews scattered through the Persian Empire. And now all of them have a death sentence and they can’t run because this king ruled from India to Ethiopia (Esther 1:1) – there’s nowhere for them to hide...**Luckily Mordecai is able to communicate with Esther.***

Esther 4:8 (ESV) ⁸ Mordecai also gave him (Him being Esther servant...in the hopes of getting it to her) a copy of the written decree issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her and command her to go to the king to beg his favor and plead with him on behalf of her people.

So suddenly the reason this girl goes from unknown to queen of Persia starts to come into focus.

*Then Esther responded to Mordecai through her servant - 11 "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law – to be put to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter so that he may live. But as for me, I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days." 12 And then they told Mordecai what Esther had said. 13 Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace that you will escape any more than all the other Jews. 14 For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. **And who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?**"*

I love what Mordecai says here...If you don't step up...God will use some other means of deliverance...but perhaps this is why things have happened the way they have for you!

*I. **I want us to think about that for ourselves...**your home...your work place....your school...the people around you...it's not by mistake... maybe you are where you are "for such a time as this"*

Esther 4:15 Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, 16 "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. And I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it's against the law, and if I perish, I perish..."

You see, she's discovering that there's something that's going on that's bigger than her in this moment. And her response was to be brave

- A. *Her response was to say, 'Man, if God is working seemingly random things together and that's why I'm in the palace at this time, I can't sit and do nothing, because that would be a contradiction to the very reason I'm here.*
- B. **App:** *How do you know If God has called you to walk on the water... Step off the boat*

Chapter 5-7 Esther makes her move to save her people

*Esther 5:1–2 (ESV) ¹ On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, in front of the king's quarters, while the king was sitting on his royal throne inside the throne room opposite the entrance to the palace. ² **And when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she won favor in his sight, and he held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter.***

You know isn't it weird, that so many people have a low view on christianity because they say things like "it objectifies women...It's sexist...It's chauvinistic" yet we have shows Like the Bachelor that are beloved by many and are essentially the book of Esther

- A. *Who's most beautiful*
- B. *Who meets my needs*
- C. *Who's gonna get the rose*
 - 1. *All the while, if you look at Jesus and the way he treats women in this highly male dominated culture...and women should praise Jesus for the way he honored and cared for women*

The first feast takes place - she invite the king and Haman to a feast that has prepared in their honor, theres eating, drinking, and then the king says “what is it that you wish for?” she asks for them to come to another feast she’s having tomorrow...which the king agrees too...

A. **Here’s the question:** Why is she asking the tomorrow? and not just telling them tonight? - it just doesn’t make sense

ether way, at this point, both Haman and the King home...

Haman leaves the palace...

*Esther 5:9 But when Haman saw Mordecai in the king’s gate, that he neither rose nor trembled before him, he was filled with wrath against Mordecai. 10 Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home and he sent and brought his friends and his wife Zeresh. 11 And Haman recounted to them the splendor of his riches, the number of his sons, all the promotions with which the king had honored him, and how he had advanced him above the officials and the servants of the king. 12 Then Haman said, ‘Even Queen Esther let no one but me come with the king to the feast she prepared. And tomorrow also I am invited by her together with the king. 13 Yet all this is worth nothing to me, so long as I see **Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate.***

So his hate for Mordecai is even great then his political ambition...so then His wife

*Esther 5:14 (ESV) 14 Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, “Let a **gallows** fifty cubits high be made, and in the morning tell the king to have Mordecai hanged upon it. Then go joyfully with the king to the feast.” This idea pleased Haman, and he had the **gallows** made.*

This is very interesting - the Hebrew word for ‘gallows’ could be translated as a ‘stake’ as in a stake used to impale people. Crucifixion was invented by the Persians. And in its primitive form they would basically take a large stake and sharpen it on one end and impale the person on the end of it... So his wife looks at Haman and says, “Just crucify the Jew.”

So Haman filled with Rage and bigotry, stops what He's doing gets the Gallows built and heads off to see the King

The King...

The King, he goes to bed; but he can't sleep. You read a book maybe, right? But he sent for someone to come and read to him....and He sent for someone to come and read about all the memorable deeds that had been done in the kingdom...

Esther 6:2–10 (ESV) ² And it was found written how Mordecai had told about Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, and who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. ³ And the king said, "What honor or distinction has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" The king's young men who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him." ⁴ And the king said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace to speak to the king about having Mordecai hanged on the gallows that he had prepared for him. ⁵ And the king's young men told him, "Haman is there, standing in the court." And the king said, "Let him come in." ⁶ So Haman came in, and the king said to him, "What should be done to the man whom the king delights to honor?" And Haman said to himself, "Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?" ⁷ And Haman said to the king, "For the man whom the king delights to honor, ⁸ let royal robes be brought, which the king has worn, and the horse that the king has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown is set. ⁹ And let the robes and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble officials. Let them dress the man whom the king delights to honor, and let them lead him on the horse through the square of the city, proclaiming before him: 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.' " ¹⁰ Then the king said to Haman, "Hurry; take the robes and the horse, as you have said, and do so to Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Leave out nothing that you have mentioned."

Oh...no!

Esther 6:12 Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered."

The next thing you know, though, there's king's eunuchs showing up at his door to escort him to the dinner for three. He had forgotten about it, right?

The 2nd feast takes place - So he goes to the private banquet. It's just Esther, Ahasuerus and Haman.

- A. *And the king says, "Okay, Esther, so here we are again. Why are we having these meals?" And she drops the bomb she was going to drop the day before...something has dramatically changed - The Jew Mordecai would have been pretty much a nobody in the eyes of the king just one day ago...Has now because a special Guest of honor*
- B. *And Esther tells the king that Her and all the Her people have been targeted and marked for death...and He says "who would dare do this!!!" and she says "this wicked Haman!"*
 - 1. *Interestingly enough the King leaves to think...*
 - 2. *Haman starts begging and groveling for his life to the point where he's pushing up on Esther*
 - 3. *The king comes back in and is infuriated*

*Esther 7:8 And the king said, "Will he even assault the queen in my presence, in my own house? As the word left the mouth of the king, they covered Haman's face. 9 Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, "Moreover, the gallows that Haman has prepared for Mordecai, whose word saved the king, is standing at Haman's house 50 cubits high." **10 And the king said, 'Hang him on that.' So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai."***

Chapter 8

So God intervenes. Haman is dead. But there's still a problem. The decree to wipe out the Jews has been issued. And even the king could not revoke one of his decrees. He didn't have the power to change his own decree.

- A. *So they had to devise a plan. And they wrote another edict. And the king signed it, and sent it through the empire, giving all the Jews permission to train and equip themselves because of a specific day when their neighbors were going to try to plunder their goods and murder them. And they were given permission by the king to wipe out anybody who attacked them - highly publicized. And so essentially most people gave up on the idea of turning on Jews. But there was a battle. And the Jews were victorious; and they survived.*

Chapter 9 and 10

These tell us about the feast that was established to commemorate how God thwarted Haman's genocidal plan.

- A. *They called the Feast - Purim. Purim is plural of the word 'Pur'. And the word 'Pur' means 'Lot', or like dice for the casting of lots to determine decisions. And remember I told you to mark the 13th verse of Chapter 3. When they chose the date for annihilating the Jewish. they chose it by casting lots.*
1. *The Bible says in - **Proverbs 16:33 The Lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.**"*
 2. *They were rolling their dice saying, what day shall we kills the Jews on? They cast the lot; and the lot said in 11 months. 11 months later, the architect of the genocide is executed, the Jewish people are rescued, and so the Feast of Purim was established.*
 3. *Then We hear about the greatness of Mordecai*

Conclusion:

So whats our take away from this book?

Tuesday, January 30, 2018

“When God seems absent, when things are bad, and when the situation is messy...God will never abandon his people...God’s purposes will always be fulfilled...”

Romans 8:28–29 (ESV) ²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

This world is crazy...and people are messy...But God loves us, and He’s in control...