

THE BOOK OF ESTHER

Messages Prepared for the Good News Network by Tom ^V(T) Taylor, November 2002

Message # 1....Introductory: The Captivity of Judah

Welcome to a study in the book of Esther.. a book that demonstrates the program and sovereignty of God to a remarkable extent. It also tells us a great deal about our responsibilities in the light of these truths and has a great deal of practical insight for the age and world in which we live. I will try to work through the book on a verse by verse, section by section, basis and attempt not to get bogged down with details although the temptation to that end is very real. But before we enter the accounts in the book we need to review generally the captivity Judah and the purposes that God had for His people when He caused them to be taken into a hostile land.

1. You will remember the division of the kingdom of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, and the resultant two Hebrew kingdoms of Judah and Israel.. *1 King 12*

2. You should remember that Israel departed almost immediately into an apostate situation while Judah walked with the Lord and away from the Lord...having godly leadership and ungodly leadership from time to time. Israel was carried away into Assyrian captivity in the latter part of the 8th century (ca 720) and the removal of these ten tribes has given rise to the "lost tribes of Israel" to this day. They were not, of course, actually lost. God knew where they were and many of them filtered back into Judah and kept their identities intact as you will see from the account of Anna in Luke 2...she was a daughter of the tribe of Asher. *1 Kings 12:1*

3. Judah was repeatedly threatened with the captivity possibility--warned by Isaiah and many of the prophets. She did experience revival at times but following the kingship of Josiah, fell into a rebellious state whereby God decreed that Judah would go into captivity to Babylon. Jeremiah assigned the time period of 70 years to this captivity and instructed the Hebrews in Babylon to settle down and live there until the 70 years were up--even praying for the peace of Babylon (Jeremiah 29). The Lord promised to return them to the homeland at that time but until then they were in bondage with a time to think about their sin and apostasy.

4. The seventy years began with the fall of Jerusalem about 605 and continued until after Cyrus had subdued Babylon about 539. It was a hard time but many of the Jews prospered in Babylon and Assyria and when the time came to return, many did but many did not. They were scattered throughout the Persian empire and many remained in the places of their dispersal but about 535 (approximately) return efforts were

stimulated and the migration of the Hebrews to Palestine began. Cyrus gave them the decree that gave them the right to return and the first group apparently came to Judaea about 535-4. They began to rebuild and even started a rebuilding of the temple but were stopped by a decree following the death of Cyrus and the accession of Cambyses.

5. The accession of Darius I (the great) about 521 was a good event for the Hebrew people. During the interregnum following the death of Cambyses, the Jews had been a non-revolting territory and Darius looked on them favorably and gave permission to have the temple rebuilt. Under the leadership of Zerubbable and the prophetic ministries of Zechariah and Haggai, the temple was completed and Judah was formally a Persian state but with its own governing body and worship procedures.

6. In the fifth century BC there was some laxity in the Jewish territory both in societal development and religious activity. Around 480 we have the time of Esther and the attempt of Haman to annihilate the Jews. Shortly thereafter we have Nehemiah coming to Jerusalem to facilitate the building of the wall and we have the work of Ezra in instructing the people in the Word of God. The Book of Esther lies in the background of these affairs and it shows us, among other things, how scattered the Jewish people had become throughout all of the Medo-Persian territories.

IN CONCLUSION OF OUR BACKGROUND MATERIAL, WE LEARN A LOT OF THINGS:

- God's Word, promises and judgments, are not for trifling
- God knows just where His people are and what they need
- The work that God is doing may not be immediately visible but, when we look in hindsight we can see enough of what He has done to learn to trust Him for the present and the future.
- But the trials of life are never ended and the enemies of God and His people will use any means available to frustrate the work that must be done.

And with this in mind we may continue our studies...remembering that these notes are supplemental to the radio talks and not complete narratives and that the most important thing our listeners can do is to read the book...to give it a real personal study....and to learn to enjoy the wisdom and work of the Lord.

MESSAGE # 2: Introduction to the Book of Esther

I. Particular Introduction to the Book

Thank you for joining us today in our study of Esther. I really have not come to the book yet but am headed that way. In our first talk I reviewed the biblical background for the period of the Captivity and the Persian period in Israel's history. It might seem that we will never get through all of the introductory sort of material but it is needed in a detailed study of a book and while the last talk spoke of the period, in this talk I will speak of the Book of Esther in particular.

1. The book is the second one named for a woman and finds the woman being the chief participant in the account

Ruth

2. The name "Esther" is the translation for the word "Hadassah" which is the Hebrew word for the myrtle tree...a tree of beautiful blooms and stately appearance.

3. Its place in the canon has elicited a lot of arguments. Without being too technical the simple concepts are these. It is always found in the Hebrew Canon in the form in which we know it. It is found in the Greek canon with a number of additions throughout the book stressing the name of God. These are gathered together in the Apocryphal setting and referred to as the "rest of Esther". The Hebrew canon has never admitted these. That Esther has not been found among the literary pieces kept at Qumran has been an interesting and perhaps troublesome point but does not militate against its integrity or canonicity. Luther did not like the book of Esther at all.....his anti-Jewishness made this a necessary conclusion, but the church, on the whole, has never questioned the validity or necessity of the book.

4. The overall plot in Esther is God's vindication of His people in the face of an extermination effort. The age-old contest of good vs. evil is dominant in this setting.

5. The chief persons are:

Esther

ancestral

2:7 Mordecai, her uncle. He is the descendent of the earlier captives taken from Judea to the Mesopotamian territories.

Haman...the plotter against the Jews

3:1 Agagite

the King....Ahasuerus, and I will offer some notes on him in our next talk.

He is most likely Xerxes, The successor to Darius the Great. His rule lasted about twenty years (486-465) and he made the great campaign against Greece that failed. Herodotus tells us a good bit about him and names one wife, Amistris, but the fact is that the Persian kings had lots of wives and we will discuss that later as well, maybe.

6. The absence of the Name of God is the troubling thing about Esther. The Divine Name does not appear but the Divine presences is obvious everywhere. That Esther calls for fasting and Mordecai knows that deliverance will come from one place or another indicates their implicit confidence in the providence that oversees the people of God. The added verses in the Septuagint (the Apocryphal Esther) seek to make this up by inserting the name of God in many places.

7. The major things to watch in Esther are these, in my opinion:

How evil works

How God works

How God's people should be employed

How God's people react to His blessing

8. We will move, then to the book of Esther, and if you read along with me, or ahead of me, it will be to your advantage because the Scripture is the important part of our work.

MESSAGE # 3: The Feast of Ahasuerus: Esther (2:2-12)

I. Introduction:

Welcome to another session in our continuing study of the Book of Esther. Having noticed a lot of introductory material we are ready to begin our study of the book proper...we know that the setting is in the Persian empire and the time is the early part of the fifth century BC. I should note that my English Bible readings are from the King James version although I compare with other translations and at times go Hebrew myself. If there is any critical point in translation difference, I will try to point it out but this is not a course in translation principles but, hopefully, is a study of the content of the book. Our first study then is in chapter 1:1-12, the great feast of Ahasuerus.

II. Comments on the Text.

1:1...the character and area of rule of Ahasuerus. He is Xerxes I and his rule is enormous. By the time this book opens he has conquered Egypt and is planning an enormous attack on Greece that will see some military successes but eventual defeat in his total intention.

1:2...he had his throne in Shushan, a location in Southwest Persia where Darius I had also had a palace. (This site has been excavated following its discovery in 1851 and is the source of many examples of Persian grandeur and architecture.)

1:3...a feast in the third year of his reign----one of the two datable notes in this book. It may have been given in celebration of his victory over Egypt or in anticipation of his attack on Greece...that he was showing the power of his empire to all the loyal princes, etc., is significant but does not decide the matter. He fled Greece in 480 after the battle of Salamis and this would appear to have had to been before that.

1:4...the great celebration in general lasting 180 days. They were probably not all there all the time although we do not know. When these guys were showing off they did it big time.

1:5...at the conclusion of the 180 days there was a massive feast of seven days for everyone who was present, great and small, and held in the king's garden court of the palace.

1:6...the elaborate nature of the decorations boggles the mind but everything had to be right for the king!

1:7...there was lots of drinking...wine in abundance drunk from vessels of gold. This sort of demonstration is almost sickening to us. And while we are at it, have you noticed how often alcohol and debauchery go together.

1:8...but happily, no one was compelled to drink. Every person could take one's pleasure. There may have been some teetotalers there but it is likely they were a minority group. Note that the king had commanded it to be this way.

1:9...in the meantime, Vashti, the queen, was having a great celebration for the women in the royal house. These monarchs were not, generally, monogamous. Vashti may have been the queen for the season or for this period of his life. There would certainly be a harem.

1:10...and on the seventh day when the king's heart was merry (and his mind was not sharp--that is my note--he called for the seven chamberlains (KJV) who likely were in charge of the harem and cared for the needs of the queen and such other women as the king possessed.....

1:11...and instructed them to bring Vashti with the royal crown to show the princes and the people her beauty...the text tells us she was fair to look upon. I don't think he meant for her to come in and smile at the gathering but rather to make an erotic appearance that would show the wisdom of the king's choice and the exquisite beauty with which he surrounded himself.

1:12...But Vashti refused to come and the king was angry and the more he thought about it the more angry he became. The defiance showed a weakness in his authority and having demonstrated the power of armies and forces it was pretty humiliating not to be able to order one's wife! Why she did not come out? Not sure but I think it was a concept of decency that overcame her. But behind this...God was going to bring

she refused to come. God was angry because she was in the court and also because she was a woman.

another woman into this powerful position and Vashti was really a victim of circumstance and providence.

III. Conclusion:

The stage is being set by the Lord even though we cannot see any concrete evidence of it unless we have the knowledge of the whole book which, fortunately we do have! No one on the scene is conscious of any action by the Lord but that is not necessary. It is a similar scenario to the one given in Isaiah 10 with regard to the King of Assyria. It is also striking at how well the Bible defines the scene with just a few words and we are left at this point with a great question: what will happen next? So we appreciate your listening today and trust you will be with us again when we next pick up this narrative and see more of the workings of the Lord.

MESSAGE# 4...Vashti's Fate: Esther 1:13-22

I. Introduction:

Welcome to our continuing study in the Book of Esther. This is Tom Taylor looking through this Old Testament book with you in the assurance that the Word of God will bless us and we will be the richer for exposure to it. Following our earlier discussions of background material, we began our study in Esther 1 with observations on the great feast of Ahasuerus and the circumstances that attended it. Today's study is in Esther 1:13-22 as we observe how Vashti was treated after she refused to come out to display herself at the feast of the king. You will find some really interesting things in this passage and when we put them into our context today we can smile at them and rejoice in what better things God has provided.

II. Discussion:

1:13...Ahasuerus has been frustrated by Vashti's actions and is not sure what to do. He called for the wise men of the kingdom, men who "knew the times" astrologers, and the like. We are told this is how he approached most of his problems and he probably felt comfortable with their abilities.

1:14...the wise men are listed by name....there are seven of them and they are called "princes" of the territories and described as those who knew the king's face. This is a colorful way of saying they were familiars as far as the king was concerned and he felt comfortable with them.

- 1:15...The King puts the matter squarely before them. What should they do about Vashti and her open disobedience? He sent a command to her by the chamberlains and she flagrantly refused to obey! What a thing!
- 1:16...Memucan is the last mentioned of the princes (wise men, etc.) but he is the first to speak and he spells out the difficulty in a neat form and offers a prescription that will save the realm from domestic disaster.. He notes that Vashti has not only done harm to the king but to all of the princes and people present at the feast...and indirectly to everyone in the kingdom. You can hardly imagine how much damage she has done---that is his studied opinion.
- 1:17...The outworking of it, in the eyes of Memucan, is that women all over the realm will hear about it and will “despise” (not regard with favor) the decrees and desires of their husbands. The thought is: if the queen could do it we can all do it! No man would be safe from the refusal of his wife and the cold contempt she could pour upon him at any occasion.
- 1:18...The results will be especially bad in Media and Persia and the contempt and aggravation will make life nearly impossible.
- 1:19...So Memucan thinks the king must sent out, as a matter of precedent, a royal decree...one of those things that could not be changed (supposedly) in which Vashti is set aside, given no more precedence, and her entire royal estate will be given to another. In other words, when a woman defies her husband, she loses all! Is he a wretched thinker or not?
- 1:20...He continues that when this decree is known throughout the Empire, the women will shake in their shoes and all wives will give their husbands great honor whether they are great or small persons.
- 1:21...and we read that the saying pleased the king and the princes and he did according to the advice of Memucan. How long it took to do this we do not know but it would take some time. The king would soon have other problems on his mind (military) but I suspect he acted pretty rapidly on this problem to “save the men of the kingdom”. My humorous guess is that Memucan was not married!
- 1:22...So the letters went out to everybody and the content was that every man should rule in his own house. The edict would be in all the languages of the territories that made up the empire and any woman who defied her husband in any way would soon be out! (And, of course, if they really carried out the decree they would soon be out of women as well).

III. Conclusion

Well, you can see this is building towards a big climax. Thanks for being with us today and may the Lord bless His word to us as we think about it together. There are some humorous thoughts in this chapter....hope I did not offend you by my mentioning them. Men and women are given distinctive spheres of operation by the Lord but none of them require either to give up personal values and ethics for the amusement of another. Tom Taylor--until tomorrow,

MESSAGE # 5...The Contest--a Search for a New Queen. 2:1-14

I. Introduction:

Hello and thanks again for joining us in our discussions in the book of Esther. I appreciate your listening and if you are in a place where you can have your Bible open before you that is the ideal way of listening. But if you are driving or working around the house or in some project where you cannot stop, then listening is not bad but you will want to read the text for yourself as soon as you are able. The text today is Esther 2:1-14 where we read of the plan for the search for a new queen.

II. Discussion

2:1...."After these things when the wrath of King Ahasuerus was appeased". We have no idea how long that took or what was involved. Some scholars think it was years....not until the Greek campaign was ended (480) but whenever it was, the king remembered the fate of Vashti and the decree. The implication is that he remembered it to his hurt..and that is why we have the action of the next verse.

2:2....The servants who were closest to the king thought it would be good to have a feminine companion although it is put in the plural "young virgins" in the text.

2:3....It was determined that the fair young virgins of the kingdom (immediate territory, I suppose) would be gathered to Shushan and put under the aegis of Hege, the chief chamberlain, having all the necessities of life provided for them.

2:4....and it was suggested that the maiden who most pleased the king should be selected as the replacement for Vashti...the king liked the idea. You see,

it is not exactly a beauty contest although that element is certainly in the whole picture.

2:5....Here we meet Mordecai. He is a Jew...probably a third generation captivity person. He is in the palace...the idea is that he has some sort of official status there but not one that is high!

2:6....the facts of the captivity are etched. Note it is not Mordecai ^{only} ~~himself~~ who was transported but his family and he is still there.

2:7....We learn that Esther is his cousin, "his uncle's daughter". Her Hebrew name is Hadassah...the myrtle tree. She has no family but was taken by Mordecai when her father and mother died. She has been raised by him and she is fair and beautiful.

2:8....Esther is brought to the king's house...we do not read that she ran there eagerly or anything like that...simply that as a beautiful maiden she was brought there. These monarchs did not do a lot of wooing...they did a lot more grabbing and taking. With the other women she is placed under the administration of Hege.

2:9....She quickly becomes the preference of Hege who gives to her a group of maidens (7) to minister to her and he provides whatever she needs for her sustenance giving her the best place in the house. Do you think this is accidental?

2:10...But he does not know she is Jewish...Mordecai had told her to keep mum about that...why? Well...

2:11...Mordecai does not quit on the matter of his care for Esther and he walks about the court of the women's house every day, learning what he can of his cousin's destiny.

2:12...The preparation period for these women...to make sure they are pure and fit for the eyes of the king, is a period of 1 year....obviously no one was in a big hurry and the suspense facing Mordecai must have been awful

2:13...After this year the maidens would be sent before the king...they had full choice of cosmetics and whatever other things they might have thought and advantage in seeing the king.

2:14...She went to his presence in the evening, returned to the house of the women in the morning and she never saw the king again unless he called for her by

name. If you have hard guesses about what transpired they are probably right. But remember, the maidens had virtually no say in the matter and if they had purposely defiled themselves or something like that...it would likely have led to death or a life more miserable than we can tell. In this masculine dominated society they were regarded rather poorly---unless the king delighted in them.

III. Conclusion

And so for today we must leave our study at this pressing point. You probably know the outcome from some sermon, Sunday School lesson, or your own Bible reading. But it always fascinates me to see it told in detail as far as the Scripture goes and to know that none of these things are purposeless or incidental. There are those who worry about Esther's morality but that has never been a concern to me...I think she was morally straight and it was the high level of her living that eventually reached the heart and mind of this grasping king. But more of that later and thanks for being with us today.

MESSAGE # 6: Esther's Ascendancy and Mordecai's "good fortune" **Esther 2:15-23**

I. Introduction:

Greetings in the Lord's name and welcome to another study in the Book of Esther. We are rather plodding along and have gone through the trials of the unhappy Vashti and the gathering of suitable women for the review of the king. We know what the procedure was like and what the potential outcomes might be. We know that Esther's cousin Mordecai is anxious about the affair and we are a little bit nervous about it as well. Our text today is Esther 2:15-23 where we learn about her selection and positioning and we also pick up a piece of information about Mordecai that is of enormous importance..

II. Discussion

2:15...When the women were presented to the king they had the option of taking with them any cosmetics, etc., that might give them an edge in the competition. When it was Esther's turn, she needed nothing. Hege, the chamberlain approved this and, as a matter of course, he was taking something of a chance as well for if she wildly displeased the king it could have reflected unfavorably upon him. But she went as she was and had the favor of all who saw her.

- 2:16...This is a key verse in the chronology and dates the event in the 10th month of the 7th year of his rule...we are not sure if that was an accession year or a non-accession year and I will try to explain this in a way that will confuse everyone.
- 2:17...the king was smitten with Esther---immediately---he chose her for the queenly succession...the contest was over and that is all you can say about it. He put the crown on her head
- 2:18...and in proof of his action he gave a great celebrational feast and showed the validity of it by the “releases” and gifts sent to the provinces.
- 2:19...note the gathering of the virgins (a second time) and the shift to the fact that Mordecai now sat in the gate...a more important position, if you please, than he had held before although we do not know how he gained the promotion or exactly all that it meant....but there he was!
- 2:20...Esther has kept her Jewish identity secret...note how the text notes that she was obedient to Malachi...as she had been all of her life. She is now the queen but has no undue pretext of greatness for herself.
- 2:21...and suddenly two fellows who were door keepers (very important posts) decided to take the life of the king---they were angry with him for some reason and were in a good position to assassinate him as the opportunity would allow.
- 2:22...but in some way this became known to Mordecai (now men who are plotting things like this don’t discuss them in public! There is a snitch somewhere. Mordecai tells Esther and Esther reported the matter to the king, crediting Mordecai for the information.
- 2:23...the conspirators were discovered and hung...the whole thing was written in the records of the kingdom....in the book of the chronicles of the king. And if you don’t think this is important...well, watch and see.

III. Conclusion:

Thanks for joining us today. We have seen the happening of some remarkable events and there are more to come. Remember to be a reader of this book and if you pick up some gem that is new and precious, you could send it to me....I love to see things in the Scripture and sometimes would have missed them completely but for some thoughtful and adept student. So let the Scripture be your daily blessing as well as your guide...you will not be misled or uninformed.

MESSAGE # 7: The Plot of Haman. Esther 3:1-15

I. Introduction:

Welcome to another study in the Book of Esther. You will note that this is not just the account of an unique and competent woman but a remarkable reporting of God's capacity to deliver and keep His people in all sorts of circumstances. So far we have seen how Esther came to prominence in the Persian court and how Mordecai came on a piece of information that was of great service to the king. Today we meet the other featured person in the book, Haman, the enemy of the Jews. Our text is Esther 3:1-15 and in this passage we read about the wicked plot hatched by Haman against the chosen people of the Lord.

II. Discussion:

3:1....Meet Haman, the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite. He may have been a descendent from the old Amalekites whose last known king was Agag..but this is only conjectural. He has attained prominence in the court of Ahasuerus and is in a superior position to all the princes who serve with him.

3:2....The king has commanded that Haman be given a preferential place and that the other servants bow to him. But Mordecai, sitting in the gate, neither bowed nor revered Haman.

3:3....The other servants are perplexed by this and ask Mordecai why he defies the commands of the king.

3:4....Mordecai responded that he was a Jew and the others simply note this and he continued his defiance of worship. Some of them, at least, go to Haman and ask about this....maybe they would like to get away with it, too.

3:5....Haman may not have paid much attention to Mordecai before but he makes special note now and he is "full of wrath". Pride and personal ambition are terrible things when they govern one's affairs./

3:6....So Haman thinks a judgment should be passed on Mordecai but not on this man alone..rather make him feel real guilt by having an act passed against all his people...they were an alien sect, they could be eliminated and the kingdom none the worst. His personal enmity for Mordecai could be set against a sort of protective patriotism.

3:7....In the 12th year of Ahasuerus, the astrologers, etc., meet with Haman for

the casting of lots (pur is the word) to determine actions through the year, etc., The meeting is in the first month, Nisan, and the action is to get the guidance of some form of deity for the future of the year.

3:8....Haman uses the occasion to denounce the Jewish people to the king! Look at the charges he sets against them and ask yourself if you have heard this sort of thing before?

3:9....He proposes the people be destroyed...their properties taken and their wealth, etc., be confiscated to the king. He will need a lot of silver to pay the workers for their carnage but it will be a money raising project for the kingdom.

3:10...Note how casual Ahasuerus is about this.....careless is probably the better word....he simply slips of the royal ring, hands it to Haman and---

3:11...tells him he can have the needed funds and he should go ahead with the matter and complete it in any way that pleases him. With such an arrogant and thoughtless manner the king agrees to the elimination of the Jewish people on the whole.

3:12...Haman issues the decree and has it sent to all the provinces in the 13th day of the first month.

3:13...the order is to be executed on the 13th day of the 12th month (Adar) and the spoil of the Jews (getting all of their stuff) is the object of the affair.

3:14...the letter is sent everywhere so that all were prepared and you must know that the Jews will be considerably perplexed by it as well.

3:15...Shushan is in a state of perplexity...the actual date is nearly a year away and in the meantime, Haman and the king just sit down and have a drink together. Wickedness, you see, knows no season.

III. Conclusion:

The harshness of this plot is hard to conceive. How little it affected the conscience of the king or his people is rather interesting. But God is working and making use of the plans laid by the enemy to bring about his own downfall. Thanks for listening today and may the Lord bless you by His Word daily.

MESSAGE # 8: Mordecai Reacts Esther 4:1-17

I. Introduction:

Thank you for joining us today in our studies in the Book of Esther. We are coming to the very heart of the book in the next few talks...the central thrust where the wisdom of God and the proper action of His people are best appreciated. We know that God is working but we need to remember that His people have a responsibility as well and the handling of that responsibility is one of the key tools in the effectiveness of His program. So we move into Esther 4:1-17 and see the steps advised by Mordecai and the actions taken towards meeting the deadly threat.

II. Discussion:

4:1....Note the response of Mordecai, an act of humiliation and stress with

No mention of God!

4:2....a lamentation taken right to the king's gate even though he knows that no one can have an audience with the king when clothed with mourning garments. (These kings lived in fear of assassination---not without cause---Xerxes himself would be assassinated about nine years later---and they did not allow the entrance of "suspicious persons.")

4:3....and this action was not limited to Mordecai but was true throughout the Empire....why is there no mention that they prayed? Well, I will offer a few notes on that...!

4:4....Esther's attendants tell her of Mordecai's actions and she sends him more proper garments but he will not accept them...Esther apparently does not know the full intent of the decree./

4:5....When he continues his dirge, Esther sends Hatach, a court attendant to find out what is wrong....

4:6....and he proceeds to get the full story from Mordecai

4:7....allowing him to know what Haman has done to destroy the Jews and make the work profitable by taking their stuff for the king's treasury.

4:8....He gives Hatach a copy of the decree and begs him to show it to Esther and to call upon her to petition the king that this thing will not be allowed to happen.

4:9....Hatach carries out the mission

4:10...and Esther responds to Mordecai telling him....

4:11...that she has not been called to the king's presence for thirty days and that no one can approach the king who is not called on the penalty of death unless the king extends the golden sceptre to make their presence acceptable. She does not know if she dare do this....

4:12...and this is communicated to Mordecai

4:13...who reminds her that if the decree is carried out, she and her house will also be in jeopardy,

4:14...for, he reasons, there will help come from some place and when it does come she will be outside the bounds....the fact is, he says, that who can be sure if this is not the very reason why Esther has come to the kingdom at this time?

4:15...So she returns an answer

4:16...and asks that all the Jews in Shushan will join her and her maidens in a 3-day fast and then she will go into the king which not normally is acceptable behavior but...if she perishes, she perishes. Her resolution is not a hopeless one but simply a stated fact.

4:17...So Mordecai does what she suggests (or instructed) and they will all have to wait to see what will fall out.

III. Conclusion:

And thanks again for joining us today. You will need to understand that God is the last resort...and the first one as well. If you wonder why they did not pray or are not recorded as praying, I will elaborate on that as I remind you to continue in your study of these books and the enjoyment of God's Word. May you be blessed in His testimony and witness today.

MESSAGE # 9: The Banquet of Wine: Esther 5:1-8

I. Introduction:

Today is a great day for studying the Bible and we thank you for being with us as

we continue in our study of the book of Esther...the account of a remarkable woman but even more an account of a remarkable Sovereign God. We have read of the wicked plot of Haman for exterminating the Jews and have seen Esther taking the first step in being ready to approach the king....knowing that if he does not receive her it is death. And if you wonder why she should worry about this well, he has not summoned her for thirty days...and it must be in her mind that maybe she is being laid aside, too, or something like that...but she will take the initiative and we will see how it is worked out in our text for today, Esther 5:1-8 where we read about the banquet of wine..

II. Discussion:

5:1....Esther comes to the king although not formally invited. She wears her royal apparel and enters the inner court---and waits.

5:2....the king is on the throne and when he sees Esther he holds out the golden scepter to let her know that she is accepted at that point. She approached and as an act of respectful servitude, touched the top of the extended sceptre.

5:3....the king is in a gracious mood...he asks what her request is and assures her that it will be granted even to the extent of half of the kingdom. You must be impressed with the fact that Ahasuerus does not think very much and just takes the actions that seem right to him at the time.

5:4....She invites the king and Haman, his chief officer, to attend a banquet on this very day....one she has prepared especially for them.

5:5....the king is delighted and he urges Haman to lose no opportunity to be ready for the banquet the queen has prepared. They both come.

5:6....And now, once again, the king asks Esther what she wants. (He may have had more experience with others than we suspect). Whatever her petition is it will be granted to half of the kingdom. But Esther does not want that much...in fact,

5:7....she makes a special request

5:8....that they will come to another banquet tomorrow and then she will make known to the king whatever her request is.

III. Conclusion:

How far Esther has thought these things out, I do not know. Some think she was

But God will use this circumstance

the queen
the plotter
Mordecai
Haman
the king

just biding time but I think she was setting things up in a deliberate way in order to assure the compliance and reaction of the king. Remember: her Jewishness is not known to either of the attendees. But note that things are not done in haste even though there might have been great cause for anxiety and stress. Well, we will continue tomorrow, as the Lord allows, and in the meantime, may you know the joy of the Lord and the blessing of God on the daily pathway.

MESSAGE # 10: Haman's Provocation Esther 5:9-14

I. Introduction:

Hello and welcome to the series of Bible studies in the Book of Esther. We are glad you have taken the opportunity to be with us today as we continue to see how the Lord has worked in the interest of His own people through time. Esther abounds in practical lessons and we will say more about them in time. For the moment we have been working through the book and come today to Esther 5:9-14, a short passage of Scripture but a key portion in this book as it shows how the pattern of God's moves to overcome the evil intents of those who oppose Him.

II. Discussion:

5:9....Previous to the action of this verse was the first of Esther's banquets when she invited the king and Haman to return for a second banquet...at which time she told the king she would let him know what was on her mind. You will remember that neither the king nor Haman know she is Jewish and Haman, with a super ego, is delighted that the queen wants to see him for another feast.. He is going home with a glad heart but he encounters Mordecai, the Jew who will not give him reverence and his happy thoughts are suddenly ruined and he is full of anger.

5:10...At home he calls for his friends and his wife to inform them of the great things that have happened this day.

5:11...He boasts openly of his riches, his family, his promotion by the king and his advancement over the other princes in the territories.

5:12...He basks in the light of the fact of the queen's invitation for this day and for the next. Without going into detail you should be able to see many of the weaknesses of the flesh and we ought to go to Ephesians 4 to get a

category of fleshly things in which we should not indulge in order that the new man may be clearly seen

5:13...and then Haman thinks of Mordecai and he opines that all the good things that have happened to him are as nothing as long as Mordecai, the disrespectful Jew, sits in the king's gate.

5:14...So his wife and friends suggest he have a giant gallows built and have the king hang Mordecai on it the next day before the luncheon. The idea pleases Haman greatly and he immediately gave orders for the gallows to be made. Some have wondered how it could have been done so quickly... and I suppose the best answer is that this gallows was not the architectural work of a great architect but a quick job by workmen who had rapid access to the right material...and probably had lots of experience in this very sort of thing. At any rate it is done.

III. Conclusion:

There are times when it appears that everything is working out for the enemy of truth. But we should not be quick to make such observations or take such pessimistic attitudes. Remember that God takes the wise in their own wisdom often uses the pit one digs for another as a place of destruction for the evil. So we will see how it comes out and will learn a big lesson about the working of the Lord in our world.

MESSAGE # 11: Events in the Life of Mordecai: Esther 6:1-14

I. Introduction

Welcome to another study in Esther...the Old Testament book that shows the delivering power of God and demonstrates the importance of His people learning to trust in Him. I enjoy these studies and I hope you will enjoy them, too, especially as you follow in the Scripture. Esther is not a long book, not a complicated book. You might read it often and after awhile aspects of it begin to take hold on one's thinking. But for now we come to Esther 6:1-14 and look at an event in the life of Mordecai, Esther's older cousin.

II: Discussion

6:1....Our account moves to the king's palace and we find him sleepless on a particular night. Not being able to sleep he had his servants bring to

*The king
couldn't sleep!*

him the book of records of the chronicles of his rule. No doubt he thought that reading about his own great deeds would make him sleep better.

6:2....Whether he read himself or others read to him...and this seems more likely... he heard of the time that Mordecai had saved his life by reporting the treachery of two of his door keepers...he probably had known it before but these people forget easily.

6:3....His immediate question is to the effect of what had been done to honor Mordecai for this action and he learns that nothing special had been done.

6:4....By now it is almost day and the king hears someone enter the outer court. It is Haman and he has come early in the day to secure the hanging of Mordecai after the plot in chapter 5...he probably has not slept much as well and has feasted on the idea of vengeance on this disrespectful Jew.

6:6...But before he can make his request known, the king has something to say. He wonders how one should be honored, one in whom the king delights. Haman, with his intense ego, cannot imagine that the king delights in anyone but himself....cannot conceive that anyone deserves more honor.

6:7....So he outlines a bold plan that is outrageous in its pretensions.

6:8....an elegant parade is planned. The one to be honored will wear the royal apparel of the king, will ride on the king's horse, 'and wear a royal crown on his head

6:9....and one of the king's servants will see that these things are delivered and the honored person appropriately clad and then he will lead him through the streets of the city declaring this is the person in whom the king delights. Haman can hardly wait for this honor.

6:10...But it must have been a terrible shock to his system when the king informed him this would be done and that he, Haman, should see that all these things he had suggested would be done for Mordecai the Jew, the one who sat in his gate, and nothing of the prescribed plan was to be omitted.

6:11...Haman does it....he had no choice...and to think that he was planning to ask that Mordecai be hung! Good thing the king spoke first.

b 5 12....And when the parade is over, Mordecai returns to work but Haman goes in mourning clothes to his house....

6:13...and tells his wife and his friends how things have gone....and he is not much comforted when they assure him that if he is falling under the spell of Modecai, of the seed of the Jews, that he cannot prevail.

6:14...but before they can resolve these matters, the chamberlain arrives from the palace to take Haman to the banquet that Esther has prepared. He had ^{been} ~~tell~~ uplifted by it the day before...how he feels now you might easily guess....but remember, he does not know Esther is a Jewess and a relative of Mordecai.

III. Conclusion:

8:12
When I was majoring in English literature in college---many years ago---a fellow student noted that Esther was in the form of a perfect short story. I was never certain about that but it has the elements of great literature...surprise, intrigue, and even denouement. Since the inspiration comes from the Holy Spirit, we should not be surprised at its excellence and since real life is more interesting than fiction we should not be amazed at how things are working out. But it is surprising and satisfactory and we are reminded in the words of Ecclesiastes that it will be well with them that fear the Lord. And although the Lord is not mentioned by name in this book, the acts of devotion are there and surely the presence of God is witnessed in all. Thanks for listening today and we will hope you can join us again in this continuing series.

MESSAGE # 12..Adventures of the Second Banquet: Esther 7:1-10

I. Introduction:

Once again it is my pleasure to invite you to our continuing series in the Book of Esther. When we come to this scene we see how Esther bought a little time for herself in the matter of the two banquets and between the two the events concerning Mordecai have come to light as well as further emphasis on the evil plans of Haman. Now in Esther 7:1-10 we come to a pinnacle in the action and see what a difference one day has made in the program of God. Haman is proud to be at the banquet, in spite, I think of his humiliation with promotion of Mordecai, but he is soon to be rudely disappointed in the way the things of life will go.

II. Discussion

7:1....The banquet is in place, the king, Haman and the queen are all present.

summary

7:2....The king again asks Esther what her particular request is (See 5:6, 5:3) and he assures her it will be given even to half of the kingdom.

7:3....The queen modestly states is....“If I have found favor” (and she certainly had) “let my lie be given me and my people.....”

7:4....the reason for the request is stated simply---they are all to be slain and destroyed. Esther notes that if the threat simply reduced them to bonded people or slaves, she would have said nothing

7:5...The king appears to be shocked and asks quickly “Who and Where” is the one who would do such a thing.

7:6....and the queen replies without hesitation....“The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman” Is that sufficiently specific or not? Suddenly Haman is fearful in the presence of the king and queen.

7:7....the king stalks out into the garden in a rage of anger...Haman, now fearful falls before the queen to plea (you will need to remember that the seats for these affairs were like low lounging couches).

7:8....and the king returning accuses Haman of trying to rape the queen in the very circumstances in which they are found. The king’s servants are there and they cover his face. (Haman’s face)

7:9....Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, knows of the gallows prepared for Mordecai (how did he know?) whom he calls the king’s friend...

7:10...And the king says...hang Haman there...and they do this and the text tells us the king’s wrath is pacified.

III. Conclusion:

You will find this account is singular in the Scripture but in the course of life it is often typical. God takes what is planned for evil and works for good. And He uses people as He desires, often without their having any knowledge of what He does. We need to remember that He who is the Creator is supreme in the universe and we should never doubt the rightness or direction of His will and purpose. Thanks for being with us today, we will count on having you in our audience for tomorrow.

MESSAGE # 13..How Deliverance Come to the Jews: Esther 8:1-17

I. Introduction

Here we are again with a study in Esther. Having seen the personal overthrow of Haman we are now anxious to see how the Jews will be delivered from the edict of the king, one of those things that could not be changed. We know, of course, that things decreed by men are often changed but the thinking of the time is something we cannot change today. The mere death of Haman did not end the problem...the date was set and the purposes given in the edict could have been achieved with or without him. But God has other plans and in this chapter we see them working.

II. Discussion:

8:1....Esther is given the estate of Haman, and Mordecai is brought before the king and their relationship is made known.

8:2....Mordecai is given the place of honor formerly held by Haman.

8:3....Esther appeals to the king for her people and pleads with him to get rid of the device of Haman.

8:4....Esther is permitted to speak and to offer some solution to the matter

8:5....What would be good would be another decree reversing the order of the first decree.

8:6....Esther's plea is emotionally supported...she cannot bear to see the ruin of her people.

8:7....The king reviews his treatment of Haman

8:8....And now he will have another writing for the Jews....

8:9....and here is the longest verse in the Bible and it simply tells of the mechanics in writing another decree and having it advertised.

8:10...Written by Mordecai, it is sealed with the king's ring and ut in the mail.

8:11...The essence is that the Jews will be allowed to gather and defend themselves in every place where they are threatened.

8:12...on the 13th day of the twelfth month

8:13...the information is sent everywhere....it should have been reassuring to the Jews and a word of warning to their enemies.

8:14...and all things were followed through as commanded.

8:15...Mordecai is further honored and the Jews are glad...in fact all of Shushan is glad

8:16...and the joy of Israel is overwhelming.

8:17...note the celebration and the way in which it is carried out and notice the effect on the population in some ways...many persons becoming Jews in the light of their deliverance and purpose.

III. Conclusion

Centuries later we are still able to rejoice with them. With the wise counsel of Mordecai the king is able to maintain the respect for the laws of the kingdom and yet to allow the Hebrew people means to care for themselves. They still have enemies but the power of the enemy is greatly reduced and the resources of the Jews greatly increased. Somehow, if this were an old vaudeville production, we would all stand up and cheer. And thanks for being with us today....may the Lord bless you by His Word.

MESSAGE # 14. The Vindication of the Jews Esther 9:1-19

I. Introduction:

Hello and thanks for joining us today in our Esther studies. Nearly nine months have passed since our work in chapter 8 (nine months in the book of Esther, that is) and the Jews are coming to that critical period where the decree had been given against them but for which they have been given the right of defense. Much of their practical deliverance will depend on the readiness to follow the instructions and opportunity given by the governmental authorities. If they would do nothing at all, they might all be annihilated anyway. But the Hebrew people are a zealous bunch and they will do what is required in accordance with the king's command to make this a memorable day.

II. Discussion:

9:1....the fatal day approaches and you will notice in this verse how the tide has turned against the enemies of the Lord's people

9:2....The Jews assemble for defense

9:3....they receive governmental help...the authority of Mordecai and the king assure some of this.

9:4....Mordecai's prominence is here stressed. It is not the first time a Hebrew has become prominent in a Gentile court...remember Joseph and Daniel among others.

9:5....The Jews defend themselves...

9:6-10....Here is a list of the places where the action was most severe, I suppose, but note the last phrase of verse 10..."on the spoil they laid not their hand." In other words, the Jewish defense was not to enrich them but to secure their lives and properties....they did not raid their enemies.

9:11-12...The king hears of the report, is apparently satisfied, and once again speaks to Esther wondering if there is anything else she wants.

9:13-14...She wants closure to the whole matter and asks that Haman's sons be hung....and it is done. Some think this is not to Esther's credit but I will tell you what I think...I do not have space to write it out!

9:15...The Jews in Shushan avenge themselves but do not take the spoil

9:16...likewise throughout the territory 75,000

9:17...The action is on the 13th day of Adar, the rest follows on the 14th day.

9:18...But the Jews in Shushan needed two "work days" and so rested on the 15th day.

9:19...And a great celebration is held...note how they celebrated and encouraged one another.

III. Conclusion

This chapter shows the vindication of the Jews and for those who are not comfortable with bloodshed, it is not an easy chapter. But the Jews could only act in self-defense, not in aggrandizement of goods or territories. And they proved the integrity of their actions by not taking the spoil. So, until tomorrow....

Parv

MESSAGE # 15: The Establishment of Purim...Esther 9:20-32

I. Introduction

For those of us who are not liturgically inclined, special religious days and the like have often no meaning. But in the Bible it is a reality that certain seasons and celebrations are very important...especially in the life of Israel as the covenanted people. You will think of the Day of Atonement and many other special days and recall also the stress given the Sabbath. The days that are outlined by the Spirit are, of course, the vital days but they did not mean that Israel could not have other days. Purim is perhaps the first "added" celebration and will later be followed by Hannukah and other special times. These occasions help the nation to remember and we need all the help in that we can get for we forget so easily and become hardened in the course of life without cause. In Esther 9:20-32 we have the establishment of this Jewish holiday (usually celebrated in January) and it is worth our understanding of this cultural enrichment... And, forgive me, if I forgot to welcome you to our study today...I am in a hurry for no particular reason at all, and I forget to just be polite. So let us proceed in this section of Esther.

II. Discussion:

9:20...Mordecai sends a decree.

9:21...the substance of which is to set aside the 14th and 15th days of the month Adar on a yearly basis. (The Jewish calendar has two forms: the religious year began in Nisan and the "business" year began in Tishri. Most of us today have similar calendar affairs with the business and personal world)

9:22...the occasion would be a remembrance and should be marked by feasting, happiness and the exchange of gifts..

9:23...and the Jews follow the instructions faithfully

9:24...remembering the plotting of Haman

9:25...and the means whereby they were delivered.

9:26...and they would call the days Purim (plural of pur)

9:27-28...and these days would be kept perpetually

9:29...note the "second letter". Apparently 8:10 is the first although it does not mention the title of the affair.

Mordecai wrote Esther's letter

9:30-31...and the letters are sent out far and wide so that the whole Israeli citizenship can have the benefit of this deliverance

9:32...it is written in a book...probably the chronicles or records of the king of that time. We do not have that book but we have found a lot of old books in the last many years and who knows what the archaeological workers may bring to our attention next.. The recording of the Bible is good enough for me!

MESSAGE # 16: Mordecai's Advancement Esther 10:1-3

I. Introduction

Thank you for joining us today in our continuing study of Esther. We are about at the close of the book but I have some summary thoughts that I plan to share with you in the next four talks related to Esther and some of the things we learn for the present pathway. But today we come to Mordecai in Esther 10:1-3 and his character and work are worthy of consideration. We do not have records of him aside from the Bible (although some scholars have linked him to a person in official Persian position with a similar sounding name....names are hard to move from one culture to another) but that is not surprising....many of the ancients are known only in limited resources. The Biblical account has given some traditional thoughts (2 Maccabees 15:36) about him but for our work in these talks we will stay in the concepts of the Bible.

10:1....The rule of Ahasuerus

10:2 are they not authentic?

10:3 his place
his assistance
his work
his legacy

What can the merit of
God equal?

His diligence
His confidence
His service
His willingness to lead

50909

MESSAGE # 17: The Ways of God

I. Introduction:

Thank you for joining us today as we continue to think about some of the things learned or observed in the book of Esther. We have finished our text studies even though we know there are many items that could have been studied more fully. But as we have moved through the book we have repeatedly seen items of interest that need wider study and that is what I hope to do in these summary talks. I won't need to review the book with you totally. If you have not been with us for the radio discussions, be sure to read the book! And even the most attentive listeners would do well to go back again and read the book! But against the background of the book we are able to treat some of these interesting subjects and the first of them relates to the ways of God or how God works.

55:8
29:11

We know from Isaiah 55 and Jeremiah 29 that we are not going to be fully able to understand the ways of God (Romans 11 expresses that as well). So we are not going to be able to develop an analysis that will enable us to see exactly what the Lord is doing from point to point. But we are able to see some general things that ought to allow us to have increased confidence in the working of God and therefore we should be able to live with greater confidence and rejoicing....in any sort or set of affairs. We will move on, then, to some general observations on the ways of God.

II. Discussion

- A. God has a program...and all things are fitted into it according to His purpose and design
- B. God arranges circumstances
- C. God uses people:
 - 1. He prepares them and positions them for service
 - 2. He stations them in the situations that are to suit His will
 - 3. He allows them to work...be creative, ingenious, or even to fail. The people He uses are not robots but responsible individuals.
- D. God provides the help needed

1. In the material, moral spheres
2. In the supernatural and/or physical spheres

E. God does not advertise:

He will announce that He is going to do something and His people need to believe and perform in accord with His will. This is how He takes the wise in their own conceit, catches people in the traps they have laid for others.

III. Conclusion:

The ways of God are inscrutable but not unobservable. In any part of the Bible His direction and interest may be seen being served by His grace.

MESSAGE # 18: The Civic Responsibility of the Lord's People.

I. Introduction:

Thank you for being with us today in these talks which summarize some of the things we have seen in the Book of Esther. As noted early in our study the Name of God does not appear in Esther although the work of God is apparent in every aspect of the book. Considering the ways of God in our previous discussion we can see how Esther is a dramatic presentation of God working and intention and we can learn from it that no force is able to frustrate Him in the execution His great plan. But we also observe in this book that while God is working His will it is crucial that His people be obedient and responsive to His direction. Our mention of civic responsibility is not intended to take us into a world of politics but to help us see how God's people should live in their relationships with one another and the society in which they find themselves. It is an important lesson and certainly should not be forgotten in the character of the age in which we find ourselves living.

Somehow we have to understand that there are times and situations that are not to our liking and also beyond anything we can do to secure immediate change. How then, or what then, is our responsibility as we live in such a setting? That is what I hope to discuss with you today...for these few moments in the conclusion of Esther.

II. Discussion:

- A. Unable to change a particular circumstance, the Lord's people must live in ways that are true to him...they must not abandon themselves to apostasy or give up the principles of their faith. The hope for the the situation is the working of God through His people and if they are disobedient or rebellious, the means for His work are curtailed.
- B. The civic responsibility requires them to be true in principle and practice. There are several examples of this in Esther...but note in being true one is not to be foolish in the hope that some sort of demonstrable bravado would save the day. When Esther hears of the plot she does not jump up a scream that she is Jewish...she will bring this to light when it is advantageous for securing help for her people.
- C. ^{dy} The stay together...they help and support one another and take the advantages provided by a "family".
- D. They will not impede the work of God by trying to do it on their own or substituting private ends for spiritual goals.
- E. They will stay concerned for the processes and procedures of what is right and will not, in any understandable way, give their energies to the forces of evil.

III. Conclusion:

We might add that they will not hide nor try to conform to the images about them so that they are invisible. They will continue to be the people of God but a people who walk worthy of the calling in which they are called.

MESSAGE # 19: How Do We Understand the Hatred Shown to the Jews

I. Introduction:

This might seem to be a sideline as we bring our Esther studies to a conclusion but since the heart of the book is the plan to exterminate the Jews it reminds us, necessarily, that throughout all of history God has had a program and the enemy has steadfastly sought to interrupt or ruin it. Since the Hebrew peoples are a key part of that program, it is only natural that they would be hated by those who hate God. That hardly explains the anti-Jewishness of some who know God and I suppose the best we can say for them is that

all persons are products of their times and not immune to poor reasoning or actions of the society in which they find themselves. And, incidentally, the correct term is Anti-Jewish rather than anti-Semitic. The Jewish people are a minority among the Semites but when people speak of being anti-Semite they are almost always thinking "anti-Jewish". There are some things about this we need to understand.

II. Discussion:

A. The hatred of the Jews is a Satanic device

B. In the history of the Jewish peoples, God at times punished them severely but he never gave up on them in the sense of not recognizing them as His people. Check the Babylonian captivity and other periods of their rebellion as in the days of the Judges.

C. Much of the hatred of the Jews stems from:

1. Jealousy
2. Moral resentment
3. Their role in history
4. Their pretensions and superiority assertions at certain times.

D. Briefly notice the Biblical persecutions of the Jews and compare/contrast them with the national persecutions in our historic scope

III. Conclusion:

Hating the Jews is bad and dangerous business. I will elaborate on it but it is one of those things that we should avoid. We can be against wrong wherever it shows itself but an ethnic hatred of the people God has chosen is not a good idea.

MESSAGE # 20: Some Practical Lessons

I. Introduction:

Welcome to our concluding talk about the book of Esther. This is our 20th message and the last three have been summary notes about things we saw in our transit through the book. In this final talk I want to ramble a little...just in case you have not heard me do it before and I may repeat some things or try to stress some particular emphasis that I did not do in passing. My remarks in this talk are addressed to those who know the Lord or to those who do not know Him but will believe on the Lord Jesus and enter the family of God. So this is something on the order of family talk and I will get on with it now.

II. Discussion:

A. It is important that you see your life belonging to God and His people and that you are willing to use every aspect of it for Him.

12/13/15

B. Within friendly reason, it is important that we seek to be consistent and put the value of others and the will of God ahead of personal gain or greed.

C. It is good that we learn to make the moves in life dependent on the Lord....that we neither go before Him nor get lost following too far behind. I know this is a general thing but we need to be discerning in it and practical as well.

D. Never allow circumstances to dictate a policy that is contrary to the Word or truth of God. At the same time learn to be clear about what the Word of God requires (or desires) and what is explicitly in our province.

12/15/15

E. And never minimize the contributions of others....or maximize your own in a way that is boasting. Be yourself for God and encourage others in a walk that honors Him as well.

III. Conclusion:

It has been a great privilege to fellowship with you in the study of this Book. May God bless you richly by His Word and may our yielded obedience to Him be an act of daily worship and sacrifice. For the present then, this is Tom Taylor .