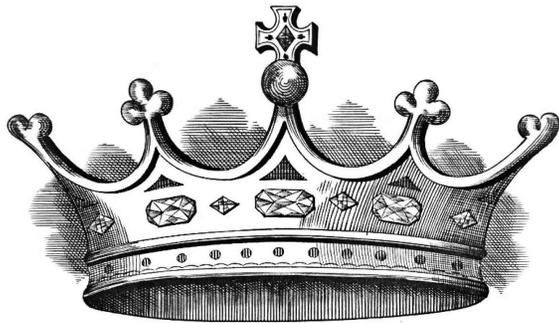


Read through the Bible



Esther Week 2



Monday, July Twenty-Ninth

What do you do when you can't sleep? Do you read a book? Do you watch TV? Do you go for a walk? Do you crack open the fridge and find yourself a slice of cheesecake? While most of us don't usually enjoy sleepless nights, sometimes, some of our best revelations come to us in these moments of insomnia. In today's passage, King Xerxes makes an important revelation in the middle of the night.

Read: Esther 6:1-14

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- How did King Xerxes remember what Mordecai had done for him? (see verses 1-2)
- How did Haman suggest King Xerxes honor the man who had done this good deed? (see verses 6-9)

Haman came to King Xerxes with the intention of having Mordecai impaled on a pole (5:14). Instead, he quickly found himself dressing Mordecai in robes and parading him around town as the king's honored guest!

- How did Haman's wife and friends react to the task he was given by King Xerxes? (see verses 12-14)

Haman's wife and friends seemed to have an awareness of the Jewish people and the power of their God (see verse 13). Because he had already been humiliated from parading Mordecai around town, Haman's wife and friends were convinced that he would not prevail against his mortal enemy. Unfortunately, the fun was just getting started for Haman, as he soon found himself being whisked away to the banquet that Esther had prepared for him (v. 14).

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Sometimes, like Haman, we are humbled when we find ourselves being forced to show kindness to someone we dislike. How does the reality that Jesus has freely shown kindness and grace to you change the way you interact with people you dislike?

Tuesday, July Thirtieth

In Disney's *Aladdin*, the villain Jafar gets his way for most of the movie. In fact, towards the very end, he captures the sultan, pronounces himself the new one, and becomes an almighty and powerful genie. But just as things look hopeless for Aladdin and his friends, Jafar makes a critical error that ultimately leads to his demise in spectacular fashion...he forgets that the genies are subject to the possessor of the lamp! In today's passage, Haman's critical error in chapter 3 (to destroy the Jews) also leads to his demise in spectacular fashion.

Read: Esther 7:1-10

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- What were Queen Esther's petition and request? (see verse 3)
- How did Queen Esther appeal to the king? (see verse 4)

Although Queen Esther demonstrated boldness in making her petition and request to King Xerxes, she still did so with both tact and respect ("If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet..." – v. 4).

- What did Haman intend to do after King Xerxes left the room? (see verse 7) What did it look like was happening when the king returned? (see verse 8)
- What was ironic about the way Haman died? (see verse 9)

The phrase "dig your own grave" is an idiom that people often use when they see others doing something that will lead to their own demise. In this case, "build your own gallows" seems most appropriate for Haman and his ill-fated plan.

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

One of the reasons for Queen Esther's success with the king was that she made her petition and request with both tact and respect. How might you do the same in your interactions with your spouse/family/coworkers/friends/neighbors/strangers? Spend some time praying for these future interactions.

Wednesday, July Thirty-First

In 2017, domino artist Lily Hevesh broke the world record for the longest domino line ever. The feat consisted of 15,524 dominoes and took two days to build. Domino artists like Hevesh experience both relief and pride when they are able to set up all of their dominos without knocking any over, but that isn't always the case. For example, sometimes, domino artists will spend hours and hours placing out hundreds and thousands of dominos only to accidentally knock one over and set off a chain reaction. As Hevesh has experienced herself, once one domino falls, it's hard to stop them! In today's passage, Queen Esther struggles to stop the chain reaction that was set off by the king's original edict in chapter 3.

Read: Esther 8:1-10

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- What secret did Queen Esther reveal? (see verse 1)
- What request did Queen Esther make? (see verses 3-6)

Even though Haman was dead, King Xerxes' edict to destroy the Jews still remained intact. Queen Esther knew that while these edicts could not be repealed (see 1:19), perhaps something could still be done to try and save her people...

- What authority did King Xerxes give to Mordecai? (see verses 8-10)

While the king knew that he couldn't rescind his edict, he figured Mordecai could devise a plan to help save his own people. In doing so, King Xerxes gave his full support to the Jewish people so that they could protect themselves from the people wishing to destroy them on the designated date (see 3:13).

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

God's Word reminds us that we are powerless to save ourselves, but Jesus is mighty to save. Take some time today to thank God for sending His Son to stop the chain reaction of our sin so that we can experience peace in this life and the next.

Thursday, August First

When parents are told that their newborn baby needs to be rushed to the NICU, the feelings of worry and sadness are often intense and overwhelming. However, when their baby is released from the hospital two weeks later, the feelings of relief and joy are usually experienced with a similar intensity. In today's passage, the Jewish people experience relief and joy once they learn of the new edict.

Read: Esther 8:11-17

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- What did the king's edict grant the Jews to do? (see verses 11-12)

The edict that Mordecai wrote for King Xerxes was wisely crafted because not only did it allow the Jews to fight back against the people who had planned to destroy them, but it also provided the king's full support. The date in the new edict – the thirteenth day of the twelfth month – was the same date as the original one. In this sense, this was the day that the Jews were allowed to defend themselves against the people who were trying to kill them.

- How does the situation in verses 15-17 differ from the situation in 4:1-3?

The Jews living throughout Persia were overjoyed by this new edict even though the day had not yet come. As Christians living today in 2019, we experience a similar situation: we are overjoyed that we will one day spend eternity with Jesus even though that day has not yet come!

- What was the result of this new edict on the surrounding peoples? (see verse 17)

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Think through the past few days. When have you felt saddened, and when have you felt overjoyed? Take some time to thank God for being with you in the midst of all of these moments.

Friday, August Second

(Spoiler Alert!) In Marvel's *Avengers: Endgame*, there is a scene toward the end of the movie when the small band of Marvel superheroes are surrounded and outnumbered by their enemies. Just as it seems all hope is lost, Captain America makes a battle cry, and all of a sudden, a series of portals open up, and a ton of superheroes come to the rescue to help fight the bad guys. In today's passage, people throughout Persia come to the aid of the Jews to help defeat their enemies.

Read: Esther 9:1-19

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- Why couldn't the Jews' enemies stand against them? (see verses 2-3)

With King Xerxes and many people throughout Persia on their side, the Jews proved to be an unstoppable force against the people who came to kill and destroy them. Once again, God had provided a way to protect His people.

- What was Queen Esther's request? (see verse 13)
- Why did some Jews feast on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar while others feasted on the fifteenth day of the month of Adar? (see verses 16-19)

As we looked at last week, Persian communication was orderly and efficient, but it was still slow in comparison to how we communicate today! When Esther requested to extend the new edict for another day, there simply wasn't enough time to get the word out to all of the provinces throughout Persia. Instead, only the people of Susa were aware of this change, and thus, their day of feasting and joy was a day after everybody else.

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Psalm 46:1 reminds us that "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." Commit this verse to memory as a way to remind yourself of who you can turn to in difficult times.

Saturday, August Third

One of the purposes of Christian holidays is to help us remember a particular story or moment from God's story. Christmas, for example, helps us connect with the story of the birth of Christ, while Good Friday and Easter remind us of His death and resurrection. In today's passage, Queen Esther and Mordecai declare an annual holiday as a way of helping God's chosen people remember this special moment in their history.

Read: Esther 9:20-32

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- How were the Jews to celebrate annually the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar? (see verses 20-22)
- Why were these days to be called Purim? (see verses 23-26)

Purim is also commonly called the Festival of Lots. Purim thus serves as a reference point for the moment when the lot was cast and Haman chose what day the Jews would be destroyed (see 3:7).

- Why was it important for Purim to occur every year? (see verses 27-28)

Queen Esther and Mordecai wanted people to remember this moment, and thus required that their fellow Jews celebrate Purim every year. Today, approximately 2500 years after the time of Queen Esther, Jewish groups continue to celebrate Purim. During these 1-2 days, the people exchange gifts, donate to the poor, eat a celebratory meal (called the *se'udat Purim*), wear costumes and masks, put on parades, and hold a public reading of the story of Esther. Additionally, in keeping with the explanation in 9:16-19, most cities celebrate Purim on the 14th day, while only Jerusalem and a few other cities celebrate it on the 15th. It is amazing to see how this tradition has continued over all of these years!

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Which Christian holiday is most meaningful to you? How does (or might) the way you celebrate it remind you of the story behind it?

Sunday, August Fourth

When moviemakers are done shooting their last scene, they get to say three very exciting words – “That’s a wrap!” In today’s passage, the story of Esther wraps up with a special note about Mordecai and his blossoming reputation.

Read: Esther 10:1-3

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- Why was Mordecai held in high esteem? (see verse 3)

Ever since he followed his adopted daughter, Esther, to the king's palace in chapter 1, Mordecai never stopped looking out for his people. Much in the same way, we are reminded that we serve a sovereign and faithful God who never stops looking out for us.

The story of Esther illustrates a miraculous moment in the life of God's chosen people. However, had it not been for God's direction and Queen Esther and Mordecai's actions, the end result would have been very different. Throughout history, God has stirred His people to act in times of trouble and turmoil, and He will continue to do so until He returns again to complete His story of salvation.

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Take some time to thank God for His story and for sending His Son, Jesus, to claim total and complete victory on our behalf!

Well, that's the end of the story of Esther! I pray your time in God's Word has filled you with fresh perspective as you reflected upon this account of God's sovereignty and faithfulness. It has truly been a pleasure reading along with you! Have a great rest of your summer, and I'll be back in the Fall with our next book of the Bible...Genesis. – Pastor Chris

Questions? Comments? Contact Pastor Chris at chris.futch@oursaviorfl.org or (727) 531-2761.