

Remnant Life Church

May 20, 2021

**Esther**

Pt 6

Esther

**“The Plan and Plot of Destruction”**

In this short, unusual book of the Old Testament, wedged between Nehemiah and Job, we have all the components needed for a wonderful and meaningful story

- There is the heroine – whose name is the same as the book’s title
- Her supporter or benefactor who helps her along the way – her cousin Mordecai
- There is the foundational player who is the constant through the entire story – King Xerxes
- And there is the villain who must be stopped before he brings ruin and destruction to thousands – the egomaniacal Haman

If you think about it, that is the exact formula for hundreds if not thousands of movies and television series.

But in this case, it is the true account of a woman who God used to spare the Jewish people from annihilation

Two weeks ago, we looked at Mordecai, Esther’s cousin who raised her after her parents died

And we focused on what is it was about Mordecai that made it possible for God to use him in His plan to save the Jewish people?

1. Compassion
2. Unwavering, uncompromising devotion to God
3. Intestinal fortitude
  - a. Defined as the courage to continue or press on even in the face of great difficulty

Because of these traits, God was able to work in and through Mordecai to help guide Esther in what she needed to do

- Notice that Mordechai would be considered a background person in the fullness of this story
- But he was indispensable and his wise, godly council is what kept Esther on the right path
- God was sovereign in the actions of Mordecai just as much as He was in the actions of Esther

This evening I would like for us to see, one final time, the entire story

- Almost like a synopsis
- So that we have the full picture of the story
- Before we finish next Thursday with the details of how God used Esther to accomplish His will



Here is the story of Esther in one sentence:

- Esther, a young Jewish woman, wins a beauty contest to become queen of the Persian Empire, head-quartered in what is today Iran, and ends up saving the Jewish race from an empire-wide holocaust.

And if you were going to summarize her purpose in one sound-bite it would be found in the second half of the **14<sup>th</sup> verse of the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter** when Mordecai says to her...

- *And who knows, but that you have come to a royal position for such a time as this?*
- The time this story takes place is during the 21-year reign of King Xerxes (486-465)
- The location is the winter capital of the Persian Empire, Susa, that stretched from India to Ethiopia, south of Egypt

So before we finish this study next week by focusing on Esther herself, I want us to enjoy the full story from start to finish...

**Chapters 1 and 2** provide the setting

- *The first chapter* establishes Xerxes as king as he is throwing a banquet for all of his nobles and princes that lasted for 180 days (6 months)
  - He finished off the great banquet with...another banquet!
  - This one lasted only 7 days but included all of the people, from the greatest to the least, who lived in the capital city of Susa
- At the same time, Queen Vashti is also having hosting a banquet for the women of the royal palace
  - On the last day of his banquet, Xerxes called for Vashti to appear before he and his court, in all of her royal splendor, so that everyone could see how beautiful she was
  - Vashti refused
  - This infuriated the king and, after consulting with his highest nobles, it was decided that she would be banished from the royal court, and a new queen would be selected to take her place
- *The second chapter* describes for us how the young lady will be found and what qualities she will need to possess
  - We then learn of the identity and Jewish heritage and background of Mordechai, Esther, and their relationship as
  - She is selected to be in the contest because of her great beauty
  - She endures all that is required to prepare lasting one year
  - She then wins the kings affections and is made the new queen of Persia demonstrating God's providence
- At the very end of this chapter Mordechai uncovers a conspiracy by two of the officers who guarded the doorway to kill King Xerxes
  - He brings it to the attention of Queen Esther who alerts the king
  - The king was saved, and the details of that event were recorded in the royal historical records

**Chapter 3**



- We are introduced to Haman
  - He is a man of Amalakitite heritage who is made the highest noble in all the land
  - Because of that, everywhere he went, people were to bow down to him in the same way as an act of worship
  - Mordechai refused since a Jew would never bow down in worship to anyone but the one true God
- This infuriated Haman
  - He wanted not only Mordechai, but every Jew in all the land to be killed
  - This was due to his ancestral lineage that hated the Jews
  - The king agreed to this by making an irrevocable decree
  - He did not know at the time that this would also include his beloved queen, Esther because she had kept secret that she was a Jew
  - A copy of the king's decree was then sent out to the entire 127 provinces of the Persian kingdom

#### Chapter 4

- Mordechai hears of this and goes to Esther, desperate to change what is about to happen
  - The only way was for the queen to go before the king and beg for mercy
  - The problem was this
    - The law of the kingdom stated that no one could approach the king unless he summoned them
    - To do so was punishable by death
    - The only exception was if the king extended his royal scepter, then the person's life would be spared
  - Esther and Mordechai agreed this was the only chance they had in spite of the obvious danger to Esther
    - She asks Mordechai to request all the Jews in the capital city of Susa to join her in a 3 day fast as she prepares to go before the king unannounced

#### Chapter 5

- After the 3 days she goes in to see the king and he welcomes her by extending his scepter and asks what she wants and it will be done for her
  - She says that all she wants is to be able to prepare a banquet for the king and Haman
  - He readily agrees and when they arrive the king asks her again what he can do for her
  - Her answer is for them to come back again for another banquet the next day and she will make her request known
- In the meantime, Haman leaves after the first day of the banquet in great spirits because he is being singled out by the queen to join the king not once, but twice
  - His spirits are ruined however when he goes out, passes by Mordechai who once again refuses to bow down before him
  - He complains bitterly to his family who then suggest that Haman build a special set of gallows 75 feet high to hang Mordechai on
  - This delights him, and he has them built

#### Chapter 6



- God's providential hand begins to move again
  - Back at the end of chapter 2 we read that Mordecai saved the king's life by uncovering a plot to assassinate him
  - One night, the king can not sleep
  - Instead of counting sheep, he calls for the historical records to be brought and read to him
    - He discovers that in spite of his actions, nothing was done to honor and recognize Mordecai for his bravery
    - The king asked for whatever noble was in the court at that time to come see him so they could decide what should be done
    - Haman had just entered the court (God's providence)
  - The king then asked Haman 'what should be done for a man the king wishes to honor?'
    - Haman believing that he is the man the king wishes to honor gives a rather extravagant and exaggerated answer
      - Place a royal robe on him
      - Sit him on a horse that the king himself has ridden
      - Have one of the king's most noble princes place the robe on the man and mount him on the horse
      - Then have that noble lead the man on the horse throughout the city streets crying aloud that this is what is done to a man of great honor that pleases the king
      - To his horror, the king says that Haman should do every one of those things himself, for Mordecai
    - After it is done, he arrives home in utter and total embarrassment and grief, knowing that his plan for the Jew's extermination is now in ruins
    - It is right then that the king's eunuchs arrive to take him to the second day of Esther's banquet

## Chapter 7

- Esther finally answers the king and proclaims that she and her people have been targeted for destruction
  - The king, greatly angered by what he has been told, demands to know who is responsible
  - Esther points to the only other man in the room and says that it is Haman
  - Well, this so enraged the king that he went out into the royal garden to calm down
    - Seeing his only opportunity to be spared, Haman rushes across the room and falls on the couch Esther is reclining on to beg for his life
    - It is that same moment that the king reenters the room, and sees Haman nearly lying on top of the queen and asks if he would even molest the queen in his very palace?
  - Haman is seized and the head eunuch tells the king that there is a 75-foot tall gallows next to Haman's house and that it was intended for Mordecai who was the one who had saved the king
    - Haman is then taken out and hanged on them as were his ten sons soon after



## Chapter 8, 9, 10

- As a result of Esther and Mordecai's faithfulness to God
  - The king could not reverse the order Haman had convinced him to make, but he allowed the Jewish people to not only defend themselves against their enemies, but to attack them as well
  - Haman's estate was given to Esther who appointed Mordecai to oversee it
  - Mordecai was given the signet ring of the king, once worn by Haman, as the head noble in all the land as well as royal garments, a crown of gold and a purple robe
- The Jews successfully defended themselves and began a great celebration
- The Feast of Purim was then established to be celebrated each year in commemoration
- It is still celebrated today

The name of God is not used once in the story, but His presence is seen throughout to save His people from extinction