

Esther - A Story of Providence

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[0 : 00] Well if we could, this evening with the Lord's help, we could turn to the book of Esther, and this time to chapter 4.

The book of Esther, in chapter 4, and if we read at verse 10. Esther, chapter 4, and verse 10.

As this, and particularly those words, who knows whether or not you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this.

This evening we come to our last woman, our last woman in our study of the daughters of the kings. And we have, over the past few months we've been doing a character study of the women in the Old Testament.

And we've seen time and time again how the Lord used different women from different situations and different backgrounds in order to implement His plan and purposes.

[2 : 10] And what we've noticed about each of these women, whether it was Sarah or Miriam or Abigail, what we could say about each of them is that the Lord used them in their day and generation for His glory and the extension of His kingdom.

And each of these women, they ought to remind us that they were ordinary people who loved and served their extraordinary God. And that is still the calling of everyone who follows the Lord.

We're not called to be heroes or heroines. We aren't called to be super-Christians with overflowing gifts and abilities. We're just called to serve the Christ who loved us and gave Himself for us.

And sometimes that service may have to be a faithful mother like Jochebed or Hannah. That service might be an encouraging mother-in-law like Naomi.

It might be the person of wisdom like Deborah was. It might be someone who demonstrates the grace of God coming into their life like Rahab or like Ruth or like Gomer.

[3 : 23] Whatever our calling in life, whatever the Lord has called us to and given to us in our life and in our experience, all these women of the Bible that we've been studying, they're there to remind us that we are here in our situation and we have been given this particular experience for such a time as this.

Because what we've learned from each of these daughters of the king is that their experience, whether it was the sorrow of Ruth and Naomi or the patience of Hannah waiting for Samuel or the disobedience of Gomer, it was all used by the Lord to accomplish His plan and His purposes.

And there's one thing for sure that we've learned is that the Lord doesn't waste anything. The Lord doesn't waste anything. He uses every situation and He uses every experience of pain and even every act of disobedience and He uses it to build His kingdom and to further demonstrate His love and His mercy towards God's people.

And when we come to the book of Esther, that's what we're seeing again. We may not see the Lord in all His fullness being displayed to us because there's not one reference to God or Jesus or the Lord in this entire book.

And even though the Lord may not be visible in the book of Esther, you could probably say the same about our own lives too. Because sometimes we don't see the Lord working in our lives visibly as we do at other times.

[5 : 12] But the wonder of it all is that the Lord is still working. The Lord is still working. And He is, as Paul says, He is working all things together for good to those who are called according to His purpose.

And so what we see with the book of Esther is the story of how the Lord used one woman to deliver His people, the Jews.

The Lord may not appear on stage in the storyline, but He is certainly working backstage to ensure that the script which He has written is being acted out perfectly.

And so this evening I'd like us to try and just walk through this story, this wonderful story, and see the Lord's hand in it all.

See the Lord's hand in protecting His people. And we can follow the thread of the narrative by looking at the plot, and then considering the people in the story, and then lastly looking at the providence of the story.

[6 : 24] So the plot, the people, and the providence. The plot, the people, and the providence. So we're going to walk through this book. So turn with me to chapter 1 and verse 1.

Keep your Bible open. Chapter 1, verse 1. Now in the days of Ahasuerus, Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia, over 127 provinces, in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne in Susa, the capital, in the third year of his reign he gave a feast for all his officials and servants.

The army of Persia and Media, the nobles and the governors of the provinces were before him. While he showed the riches of his royal glory and the splendour and pomp of his greatness, for many days, a hundred and eighty days.

And so the opening verses of the book of Esther, they set the scene for us. And they give to us a scene which is very unfamiliar to us, because we're now in the land of Persia.

Most of the history which surrounds the Lord's people is situated in the nation of Israel. But when we come here to the book of Esther, the Lord's people are in Persia.

[7 : 49] And they're under the reign of a Persian king called Ahasuerus. And at that time, which was around, as it says, the history tells us it was about 483 BC, we're told that Ahasuerus reigned over 127 provinces, from India to Ethiopia, which is, you could say, most of the Middle East, including places like Israel, Babylon, and parts of Africa.

And the kingdom of Persia, you could say, was massive. And they were looking to expand it further and go into Europe and discover the unknown parts of the world and make it part of the Persian Empire.

But what's interesting is that Ahasuerus had inherited this growing kingdom from his father, Darius. And Darius, he had inherited the kingdom from his father, Cyrus.

And I don't know if you're clicking onto it, but those two names, Darius and Cyrus, they ought to be familiar to us because of what we were looking at on Sunday evening in the prophet Haggai.

Because what we saw on Sunday evening, we saw in the events of the book of Haggai that it was during the reign of King Darius, the father of Ahasuerus.

[9 : 18] And just so we know where we are in this whole plot, I just want to recap this history again, very, very briefly. Just to go back to the beginning, because as you know, the people of Israel, they were the Lord's chosen nation.

They were the nation whom the Lord had set his love upon and ordained that they were to be the light to the Gentiles. They were to be that light and it was going to be through them that all the other nations of the earth would be blessed.

But of course, the condition of experiencing that great blessing, it was dependent upon obedience, the obedience of the Israelites. And the condition was that they were to love the Lord, love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength.

And they were to serve him. But as we know from our study of the daughters of the king, the history of the children of Israel, it was one of constant failure.

Because they repeatedly turned away from the Lord and they turned to worshipping idols. And even though the Lord was patient with them and he graciously warned them time and time again, they didn't listen.

[10 : 32] And the Lord promised judgment if they didn't change their ways. But still, they didn't listen. And so in 586 BC, which we must all remember that date, key date to remember.

In 586 BC, the nation of Israel was invaded by the Babylonian army who was ruled by King Nebuchadnezzar and the Israelites, they were taken off into Babylon.

And in Babylon, they were made to live in a foreign land. They were made to worship foreign idols and they were made to serve a foreign king. But in the process of time, God in his mercy allowed a Persian king by the name of Cyrus to overthrow the powers of Babylon.

And because Babylon was defeated and Babylon had defeated Israel, both Babylon and Israel, they were incorporated into the Persian Empire.

And so in 538 BC, 48 years after the Israelites first went into Babylon, Cyrus, king of Persia, he issued this decree and he authorised that some of the Israelites, or all of them, can return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.

[11 : 54] And included in this decree that Cyrus gave, the Israelites were to return to their own land, they were authorised to rebuild the temple, and they were going to be given money to help them do it.

But out of this mass of people who first went into exile, only 50,000 returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple.

And as we saw on Sunday evening when looking at Haggai, when they returned to the land of Israel, the Israelites returned with this hope of new life. And it was like a new beginning for them.

It was this desire to rebuild. And they came back with so much enthusiasm and so much excitement and everything looked so promising. But then they ran into problems.

Because when the book of Haggai was written, King Cyrus had died, Darius was now on the throne, and the Israelites hadn't touched the temple.

[12 : 56] It was still lying in ruins. The work on the temple had stopped and nothing was being done. And the reason for this was due to the fact that the Israelites had lost sight.

They had lost sight of their priorities. They failed to put the Lord first and instead they focused upon themselves and upon their own houses. But once the temple was rebuilt under the reign of King Darius and by the encouragement of the prophet Haggai, there's this 40-year gap until we come to the book of Esther.

So at about 483 BC, Ahasuerus, son of Darius, grandson of Cyrus, he's now king over this massive Persian empire.

And when we look at the bigger picture of history, although it might be a hard history to follow, but it's a wonderful history to look at. When you look at the bigger picture of history, the story of Esther becomes very, very significant.

Because Esther's actions to protect the Jews, it ultimately protected the well-known man called Nehemiah. Nehemiah was later the cup bearer to the succeeding Persian king, Artaxerxes.

[14 : 24] And as you know, it was Nehemiah who asked the king if he could return to Israel to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. And it's a fascinating story to see how it all links together and how it creates this wonderful history of the Lord's hand in everything and how the Lord used different people in different generations in order to accomplish his perfect plan and purposes for his own glory.

And so the plot to the book of Esther, it covers about a 10-year period from 483 BC to 473 BC. And during that time frame into this book, the Lord mysteriously works through four particular people in order to accomplish the deliverance of the Jews.

And in this narrative, we can see that the Lord uses King Ahasuerus, he uses Mordecai, Haman, and Esther. And they're the people that I'd like us to consider in the book.

So we've considered the plot. We know where we are. We've tried to understand the history of how we got here. But secondly, we see the people. The people. So if you jump down to verse 10 of chapter 1.

The people at verse 10. On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Bista, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagatha, Zether, and Carcas, the seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus, to bring Queen Vashti before the king with her royal crown in order to show the peoples and the princes her beauty.

[16 : 12] And as we've seen, the first person we're introduced to in the narrative is King Ahasuerus.

And we know when Ahasuerus became king over the Persian Empire, he inherited a lot of power. He was king over 127 provinces.

And he had a powerful army in which he was seeking to take over the world. Because like his forefathers, Ahasuerus, he wanted to reduce the world to one empire, the Persian Empire.

But as you would expect with a man with so much power and such a high position, it all went to his head. Because Ahasuerus, he would throw large parties of pomp and ceremony in his palace and he would invite all his nobles and all his officials to it.

And this is how we're introduced to Ahasuerus in the opening verses. We're told that he was this powerful king and he gave large feasts. Look at verse 5. It says, 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.

[17 : 42] There were white cotton curtains and violet hangings fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rods, marble pillars and also couches of gold and silver on mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother of pearl and precious stones.

Drinks were served in golden vessels, vessels of different kinds. And the royal wine was lavished according to the bounty of the king. And drinking was according to this edict. There was no compulsion.

For the king had given orders to all the staff of his palace to do as each man desired. King Ahasuerus was a man of reckless living.

Where he would throw all these large drunken parties in order to show off his wealth and his strength as this powerful king. But the way Ahasuerus lived was also the way in which the Persians were encouraged to live.

But even though the Persians, they were encouraged to live for themselves, to do what they desired, even though they were encouraged to do it, they didn't dare stand up to their king.

[18 : 51] Because Ahasuerus was a man who couldn't be told what to do by anyone. He wouldn't take no for an answer.

And he would eliminate anyone who stood up to him, even his own wife. And that's what happens in chapter 1. Ahasuerus throws the drunken party, and he calls in his wife, Queen Vashti, to come and dance in this sexual manner before all the dinner guests, and she refuses.

And as you would expect from a man like Ahasuerus, he puts his wife to death. And you know, I was thinking that we ought to take lessons from each of these people.

Not the extreme lesson. But you know, when we look at Ahasuerus, there is such a temptation when power or position is given to us that we abuse it and we lord it over people, whether we're at home or in the workplace or even in church.

There's always the temptation to boss others about or to be controlling or to have authority over others. And when we don't get our own way, there's always the temptation to be stubborn and angry and defensive where we can't be spoken to, we can't be told what to do because we're right and that's it.

[20 : 19] But the truth is, in the Christian life, there is only one king and one throne. And King Jesus states that he who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.

And it was from that that the early church father, Augustine, he said that the defining feature of a Christian should be humility, humility, humility.

That's a hard one to follow. Anyway, we'll continue. A few years later, Ahasuerus started looking for a new wife to replace Queen Vashti.

And this is how Mordecai now comes onto the scene. Because we're told, as we jump into chapter 2, we're told, chapter 2 at verse 5, it says, Now there was a Jew in Susa, the citadel, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jer, son of Shimei, son of Kish, a Benjaminite, who had been carried away from Jerusalem among the captives, carried away with Jeconiah, king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had carried away.

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.

[21 : 46] And when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter. And so Mordecai, he's introduced to us as a Jew.

He's a Benjaminite. He's part of the southern kingdom of Judah that went into exile in Babylon during the reign of Jeconiah. And Jeconiah was the last king to rule over the kingdom of Judah before the exile.

But what we know about Mordecai is that he was the first cousin of Esther. And because Esther was an orphan, she had lost her mother and her father, probably because of the exile, and so it was down to the responsibility of this man, Mordecai, to raise Esther as one of the Lord's people in a foreign land.

And by raising Esther like his own daughter, Mordecai had a great influence over Esther because Esther trusted and obeyed Mordecai. She trusted and obeyed him to the point that when Esther eventually became queen, we'll see that soon, when she became queen, two officials sought to put the king to death.

But Mordecai overheard the plans and he told Esther who relayed the message to King Ahasuerus. And the result was that the two men who were plotting treason against the king, they were hanged on the gallows.

[23 : 13] But for his act of protecting the king, Mordecai received nothing. He wasn't thanked, wasn't promoted, wasn't even thought of.

Nothing happened to him. Wasn't exalted. But five years later, when one night the king couldn't sleep, Ahasuerus gave orders for the book of memorable deeds, the history of Persia.

The book of memorable deeds was to be read to him to try and make him fall asleep because it was a boring book. So if it was read to him, he'd probably fall asleep. But what was read to Ahasuerus was the occasion when those two eunuchs came and tried to kill the king.

They tried to commit an act of treason against the king. And when the king remembered Mordecai's act of kindness to him, he immediately sought to put it right. And in the end, when you reach the end of the book, Mordecai, he's promoted, he's exalted to the second highest position in the empire.

He was, in effect, made the prime minister. And you know, the lesson we can learn from Mordecai is the lesson to be faithful and to wait upon the Lord.

[24 : 35] And being faithful and waiting upon the Lord is a hard lesson. And one which I'm sure that we all struggle with. But what we see with Mordecai is that he silently and faithfully taught Esther to be one of the Lord's people.

He taught the next generation to love and to serve the Lord. And for Esther to put the Lord first in her life, that's what he was teaching her all the time, put the Lord first before anyone or anything else.

But Mordecai not only taught Esther to be faithful to the Lord, he practiced what he preached. Because when it came to bowing down to Haman, Mordecai refused.

There was only one king and one throne. And that was the Lord. And when you read through the book of Esther, you see how in his faithfulness and patiently waiting upon the Lord, Mordecai didn't seek promotion, position, or power.

And yet the Lord blessed him with all these things. It's safe to say that Mordecai was a living example of what Jesus spoke about. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

[25 : 53] then all the other things will be added to you. Seek first the kingdom of God. So then we move on. And then comes the twist in the plot.

The twist in the plot comes from a man called Haman. He's the third person in the story. Because as we jump into chapter 3, Ahasuerus promotes Haman to the position of prime minister.

And when Mordecai refuses to bow down to Haman, Haman is angry and seeks to destroy all the Jews including Mordecai. And we're told about that in chapter 3 and verse 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. If it please the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed. And I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who have charge of the king's business that they may put into the king's treasuries.

[27 : 03] So the king took a signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman the Agagite, the son of Hamadatha, the enemy of the Jews. 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. In one conversation, Haman convinced Ahasuerus that the Jews were standing up to him and they need getting rid of.

And as Ahasuerus didn't like anyone who stood up to him, he agreed to Haman's plans to put the Jews to death. Now the interesting thing about Haman is that he's described he's described as an Agagite.

It's in verse 10. He's described as an Agagite which first of all indicates that he was from a place in the Persian Empire called Agag. But more than that, the place Agag was named after a king called Agag.

Agag. And this king, Agag, who hundreds of years before this point in time, he was the king over the Amalekites. I know all these names might seem heavy, but stick with me.

[28 : 23] The Amalekites were the sworn enemy of the Jews dating back to the time of Moses. And this hatred of the Jews by the Amalekites, it was fierce and it was a long-standing hatred.

Because when the children of Israel, if you remember, when they left Egypt, they were going towards the Promised Land and the Amalekites attacked the Jews seeking to destroy them.

And that was the time when Moses was on the top of the mountain with his hands in the air and down below Joshua was fighting the Amalekites and as his hands were held up, they were winning.

And, of course, well, the Amalekites, they lost the battle. But this hatred for the Jews, it remained for centuries and it's still alive here in the heart of Haman.

So much so when that Haman had written his decree in the name of Ahasuerus and sealed it with the king's signet, we're told in verse 13, if you follow with me to verse 13, it says, 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.

[29 : 51] And I was thinking, well, how do you apply this? Well, as you know, there are many people throughout the centuries of history who have hated the Jews and who have hated Christians and sought to put them to death.

And to this day, there are still people in life, you may have come across them, and they have this immediate hostility towards you because you're a Christian.

They may not persecute you, they may not say anything outwardly against you, but there's this antagonism and this opposition towards you because of the gospel.

And sometimes you can't understand why they are the way they are, but the reality is they hate the Christ in you. They hate the Christ in you.

But as John reminds us in his letter, greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world. Greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world.

[30 : 56] So when you come across opposition, always remember who is in you rather than who is coming to you. Anyway, we carry on. As Haman and Ahasuerus, as they drink to their decision to destroy all the Jews, Mordecai was informing Queen Esther as to all these plans.

And it's at this point that the main character comes onto the scene. She comes to the fore. And it's then that Esther, she takes the risk of going to King Ahasuerus to persuade him to change his mind.

And Esther, as we know, she was a Jew. She's the younger cousin of Mordecai. She was chosen by Ahasuerus to be his queen over this huge Persian empire.

And the narrative describes Esther as one who had a lovely figure and she was beautiful to look at. And it seems that it was her beauty which won her favour in the eyes of the king.

But the real beauty of Queen Esther arises when Mordecai reminds Esther that Ahasuerus will have no problem killing her if this decree goes through.

[32 : 12] But Esther's response to Mordecai shows that she is more than willing to risk her own life for the sake of the Jews. So jump into chapter 4 and read at verse 10.

Then Esther spoke to Hathach and commanded him to go to Mordecai and say 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. And they told Mordecai what Esther had said. Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews.

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 not come to the kingdom for such a time as this.

Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai Go gather all the Jews and hold a fast on my behalf and do not eat or drink for three days night or day and my young women will also fast as you do.

[33 : 33] Then I will go to the king though it is against the law and if I perish I perish. Mordecai could see the lord's hand in positioning Esther as queen over Persia because he says who knows whether or not you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this.

But Esther's response it also shows that she could also see the lord's hand leading into all these events because she takes the risk and she says I will go to the king though it is against the law and if I perish I'll perish.

Now Esther's words they weren't careless or thoughtless they were thought through and calculated because if Esther didn't go to the king she and all the Jews would perish but if she did there was the possibility that the king would change his mind and what we ought to learn from Esther here is that she was willing to take a risk but it wasn't just a risk of hidden hope it was a prayerful risk she and the others were prayerfully bringing their petition before the lord but it was no use just praying about it Esther knew that she had to act upon it providence had led her to this point in time and she knew that if the opportunity came up if it arose she would ask the king she would make the move and you know my friend as Christians we have to be willing to take risks we have to be willing to prayerfully do things that are outside of our comfort zone and completely alien to what we ever thought we could do but like

Esther we're called to prayerfully take risks whether that risk is to challenge someone about their faith or the risk is to invite someone to church or the risk is to stand up for Jesus in the workplace just like Esther did or to prayerfully step out and do what the Lord may be calling you to do there has to be an element of risk of stepping out in faith we don't know what the future holds we don't know how it will all turn out we don't know what's ahead but if we do nothing then nothing will happen it's as simple as that if we do nothing nothing will happen and so the lesson from Esther is prayerfully take a risk for the kingdom of God prayerfully take a risk for the kingdom of God and that's what happened because in chapter 5 roll down into chapter 5 verse 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 and when the king saw queen Esther standing in the court she won favour 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 Esther knew that everyone who went into the inner court of the king would be put to death immediately except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter and so when Ahasuerus holds out the scepter to Esther he asks her what is your request and her request is that Ahasuerus and Haman come to a feast that she will prepare for them the following day and I want us to see that in Esther's risky request the plot and all the people they come together in this wonderful providence and so we've considered the plot the people but let's lastly consider the providence this providence go to the end of chapter 5 and verse 14 chapter 5 and verse 14 then his wife that's

[38 : 05] Haman's wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him let a gallows 50 cubits high be made and in the morning tell the king to have Mordecai hanged on it then go joyfully with the king to the feast this idea pleased Haman and he had the gallows made so in the evening before Esther's feast Haman crossed paths once again with Mordecai and Mordecai still wouldn't bow down to the prime minister Haman and so Haman still in a rage still hating Mordecai even more and hating the Jews and that hatred is increasing all the time so he thinks right build gallows 50 cubits high 75 feet high 23 metres high and they were built and they were built so that Haman would get the king to have Mordecai hanged on them in the morning but that night the king couldn't sleep and as we mentioned earlier when king

Ahasuerus couldn't sleep he gave orders for the books of memorable deeds to be read to him to try and make him fall asleep and out of all the books of memorable deeds which spanned hundreds of years the book which the king's servant picked up to read and the section which the king's servant read was the occasion when two of the king's eunuchs sought to commit an act of treason against the king but Mordecai intervened and you know I just want to say that when we speak about providence we mean that God has seen it all take place beforehand this night tonight was seen beforehand before it ever took place the Lord knew who would be here and who wouldn't be here that's what the word providence means seen beforehand God has seen it God has planned it and he planned it before it ever happened which means that nothing takes place in this world by random there is nothing that is a chance event and every little minute detail in our lives it's ordered by the

Lord that's what we're singing about in Psalm 37 the footsteps of a good man they're ordered by the Lord which means that it wasn't by accident that Esther was made queen over Persia it wasn't an accident that Ahasuerus couldn't sleep it wasn't an accident that Ahasuerus wanted memorable deeds to be read to him it wasn't an accident that the servant chose to pick up that particular book and read that particular memorable deed about Mordecai and what we ought to see is that God was providentially working all things together for good because God is in the detail God is in the detail my friend there's nothing in our lives absolutely nothing which hasn't been put there by the Lord there is there are no chance meetings there are no chance relationships no chance events in our lives and sometimes when we consider the things that have caused us pain and sorrow or worry and anxiety it's hard to understand why these things are there at all but you know the greatest comfort and the greatest encouragement is that even in the times of trouble you know that the

Lord's hand is in it all the Lord is working it all out according to his plan and his purpose that's why the psalmist could say in psalm 46 God is our refuge and our strength an ever present help in times of trouble he was there in every time every time even the times of trouble but what we see in the providential outworking of this this wonderful history is that five years later at the right time just as Ahasuerus remembers what Mordecai had done for him five years earlier Haman is walking in the court outside he's just completed the gallows for Mordecai to hang on and Ahasuerus sees Haman and calls him inside so he calls Haman in and we're told in chapter 6 and verse 6 jump down to that chapter 6 verse 6 so Haman came in and the king said to him what should be done to the man whom the king delights to honour and Haman said to himself whom would the king delight to honour more than me and Haman said to the king for the man whom the king delights to honour let robes 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 and let the robes and the horse be handed over to the one the king's most noble officials let them dress the man whom the king delights to honour 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 honour and Haman is convinced he's convinced already that

Ahasuerus is talking about him and he's the man who's going to be honoured but it's at that moment that Ahasuerus drops the bombshell on Haman and says in verse 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 so Haman took the robes and the horse and he dressed Mordecai and led him through the square of the city proclaiming before him thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honour and by this time Haman is gutted he can't believe what's just happened he's been humbled he's been taken down a peg or two but that wasn't the end because on the following day the day of Esther's feast as king Ahasuerus and Haman sit at the feast Ahasuerus asks Esther what her request is and Esther's life is on the line and she explains in chapter 7 and verse 3 then

[45 : 02] Queen Esther answered if I have found favour in your sight O king and if it please the king let my life be granted for my wish and my people for my request for we have been sold I and my people to be destroyed to be killed and to be annihilated if we had been sold merely as slaves men and women I would have been silent for our affliction is not to be compared with the loss to the king Esther explains that her people have been sold to be killed and if they're to be killed she will also be killed and in his confusion he doesn't really understand what she's talking about it says in verse 5 then king Ahasuerus said to queen Esther who is he and where is he who has dared to do this and Esther said a foe and enemy this wicked Haman then Haman was terrified before the queen and in the outworking of God's providence

Ahasuerus is enraged at Haman's attempt of treason against his own queen and so Ahasuerus has Haman hanged on the very gallows which Haman had built for Mordecai and then Mordecai is exalted to Haman's position of prime minister and we can't go into the detail the time has gone I'm taking too long but we're told that Esther Esther pleaded on behalf of the Jews for the edict to be revoked and then we're told that in chapter 8 it says in chapter 8 at verse 3 then Esther spoke again to the king she fell at his feet and wept and pleaded with him to avert the evil plan of Haman the agagite and the plot that he had devised against the Jews when the king held out the golden scepter to Esther Esther rose and stood before the king and she said if it pleased the king and if

I had found favour in his sight and if the thing seems right before the king and I am pleasing in his eyes let an order be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman the agagite the son of Hamadatha which he wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the provinces of the king Esther interceded on behalf of the kings and saved them my friend queen Esther saved the entire race of people because of her faith in the Lord and her prayerful risk in serving him but you know I'll conclude with this the plot which belongs to the book of Esther it's only part of a greater story a far greater story which is still being worked out and these people in this plot in the book of

Esther they're only some of many people which the Lord has used to accomplish his plan and his purposes because we can say about each and every one of the daughters of the king that we've been studying over the past few months they were providentially placed in that particular place at that particular time for that particular purpose and what we've seen in the book of Esther is that sometimes the Lord doesn't use centre stage to accomplish his purposes sometimes he just works backstage he works behind the scenes and it was George Campbell Morgan he was an evangelist in the 20th century he said about the book of Esther while there is no name of God and no mention of the Hebrew religion anywhere no one reads this book without being conscious of God you know I was thinking that that statement it can be applied to the whole of history the whole of our history because while God may not be mentioned in certain aspects and certain places of our history no one can look at the history of our world without being conscious of God and I say that because even though he hoped to

Ahasuerus failed to conquer the rest of the known world and make the Persian empire this world empire because what stopped him and his descendants was the Greeks because the Greek leader and conqueror to overthrow the Persians was Alexander the Great Alexander the Great he destroyed the Persian empire and took over and as a result he implemented Greek to be the common language of everyone the whole empire was to speak Greek which meant that everyone in the land of Israel was taught to speak the Greek language but then Alexander the Great's time had passed and the Romans popped up because they defeated the Greeks and took over the empire and they sought to make the known world part of their empire they wanted it to be the Roman empire and in their attempt to do so the Romans built roads they built roads all over Europe that would aid them in their attempt of world domination and it was at that point in history when the common language was Greek and the roads into Europe were all completed that Jesus was born and so in the perfect providential plan of God

[50 : 53] Jesus was crucified on a Roman cross and that glorious message was written down in Greek and it was sent out using all of the Roman roads and it was sent from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to the uttermost parts of the earth my friend today the story of God's great plan of redemption that plot is still being written and the Lord is still using his people and he's using it through his wonderful providential plan to accomplish all his purposes and when we follow the history and when we look and see the hand of the Lord upon it you know you cannot but praise God for he is good he's wonderful in the way he works in and he works out all according to his good pleasure it's a wonderful thought that like

Queen Esther we can be used by the Lord in our day and generation not to build an empire but to help build the kingdom a kingdom with a king whose will will always be done on earth as it is in heaven may the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray oh Lord our gracious God we thank thee that thou art the one who is sovereign a God who is sovereign over our lives help us Lord to see thine hand in everything to see thine hand in even the smallest details of our lives the small providences that take place each and every day and the big experiences that we're confronted with that might change our world forever help us Lord to see that the Lord the God who sits enthroned on high who is upholding us by his righteous right hand who is graciously working in us and through us and help us Lord then to trust in him to trust in the

Lord with all our heart to lean not upon our own understanding but in all our ways to acknowledge him knowing that he is the one who shall direct our paths all bless us Lord we pray take us to our homes in safety cleanse us we ask and do us good for Jesus sake Amen We shall conclude by singing in Psalm 135 Psalm 135 I hope you didn't have somewhere to go I got lost Psalm 135 page 425 Praise ye the Lord the Lord's name praise his servants praise ye God who stand in God's house in the courts of our God make abode praise ye the Lord for he is good and to him praise his sing sing praises to his name because it is a pleasant thing down to the verse mark 6 of Psalm 135 to God's praise praise ye the

Lord the Lord sing praise his servants praise ye God who stand in God shall sing the course of our God make the Lord praise ye the Lord for he is good unto him praise the same sing praises to his name because it is a pleasant thing for

Jacob to himself the Lord did choose of his good pleasure and he hath chosen Israel for his peculiar treasure because I know oh assuredly the Lord is very great and love the Lord above all gods in glory hath his sea his sea what things so ever pleased the

[56 : 38] Lord that in the heaven did he and in the earth the seas and all the places deep that he the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever more amen