

OLD TESTAMENT LITERATURE - Dr. Chris Miller

Session 6 - Esther - God's faithfulness and love for His people

Identifying and getting rid of our assumptions!

Esther is a Proverbs 31 woman!

She is a model of devotion to her people and her God.

All of you women would do well to emulate her character...

You never have to be afraid to do what's right.

What exactly does God want us to see?

Theological - revealing WHO God is to draw the reader into relationship with him.

-What's good? -What's the problem?

Background...

- The return to the land in 536 BC
- No King - poor Zerubbabel
- Squatty little Temple
- God didn't come back to his home!
- Serious doubts about God's interest in continuing the "relationship"

Agree or disagree?

God is present?

- Name? Never mentioned (Apocryphal writings fill in the blanks)
- Esther and Her Elusive God - How a secular story functions as Scripture *by JA Dunne*
- Law?
- Worship

Esther is a role model

- Foreign soil - Susa, post exile
- Food
- "Jewishness" (hid to live in the palace)
- Contest

Mordecai = "good guy"

- What's his lineage?
- "Son of Kish, son of Shimei" relative of Saul who hated David.

Who is Shimei?

Then king David came to Bahurim. There a man from Saul's extended family named Shimei son of Gera came out, yelling curses as he approached. He threw stones at David and all of King David's servants, as well as all the people and the soldiers who were on his right and on his left. As he yelled curses, Shimei said, "Leave! Leave! You man of bloodshed, you wicked man!

So David and his men went on their way. But Simei kept going along the side of the hill opposite him, yelling curses as he threw stones and dirt at them.

2 Samuel 16:5-7, 13

Haman - What's his lineage? What's an "Agagite"?

Samuel hears the "bleating of sheep"

*Saul says, "I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king." So Samuel said: "Has the Lord **as great** delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord: Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, **And** to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion **is** as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness **is as** iniquity and idolatry.*

Then Samuel said, "Bring me Agag, king of the Amalekites." Agag came to him confidently, thinking, "surely the bitterness of death is past." But Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so will your mother be childless among women." And Samuel put Agag to death before the Lord at Gilgal."

1 Sam 15:22-23, 32-33

Background Chapters 1-3 Queen Vashti Deposed

This king knows how to party, but is he in control?
Is anyone in control? God is - the only one who isn't named.

At that time King Xerxes reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa... For a full 180 days he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty...

*On the seventh day, when King Xerxes was **in high spirits from wine**, he commanded the seven eunuchs who served him—Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar and Karkas—to bring before him Queen Vashti, wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to the people and nobles, for she was lovely to look at., Queen Vashti refused to come. Then the king became furious and burned with anger.*

Then "Memukan" replied in the presence of the king and the nobles, "Queen Vashti has done wrong, not only against the king but also against all the nobles and the peoples of all the provinces of King Xerxes. For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women, and so they will despise their husbands and say, 'King Xerxes commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, but she would not come.' This very day Persian women will rebel everywhere'... There will be no end of disrespect and discord. Esther 1:1-18

Esther made queen Chapter 2:1-20

The rules of the "contest": does she "please" the king? Pagan culture, she's part of the harem.

Meet Mordecai: don't miss his lineage, 2:5

Note 4 things about Esther: Diet, "witness", "morality", "success"

Now there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, named **Mordecai son of Jair, the son of Shimei**, the son of Kish, who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon . . . Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother. This young woman, who was also known as **Esther**, had a lovely figure and was beautiful. When the king's order and edict had been proclaimed, many young women were brought to the citadel of Susa and put under the care of Hegai. Esther also was taken to the king's palace and entrusted to Hegai, who had charge of the **harem**. **She pleased him** and won his favor. Immediately he provided her with her beauty treatments and **special food**. **Esther had not revealed her nationality and family background**, because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so. Before a young woman's turn came to go into King Xerxes, she had to complete twelve months of beauty treatments prescribed for the women, And this is how she would go to the king: Anything she wanted was given her to take with her from the harem to the king's palace. **In the evening she would go there and in the morning return** to another part of the harem to the care of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the concubines. She would not return to the king unless he was pleased with her and summoned her by name. Now the king was attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women, and she won his favor and approval more than any of the other virgins. So he set a royal crown on her head and **made her queen** instead of Vashti.

Esther 2:5-18

Mordecai Rescues the King 2:21-22

Haman's Plot to Exterminate the Jews 3

Meet Haman: don't miss his lineage!

"But Mordecai would not bow down or pay him honor" Ether 3:2

Is it an issue of religious faith to not bow down in honor of a court official?
No. Daniel did it all the time. Mordecai just hated him.

What is the "pur"?

	English	Hebrew
(Singular)	Die	Pur
(Plural)	Dice	Purim - Festival to destroy the Jews, God turns into a day of victory.

The Conflict 4:1-7:10

Esther's Decision to Approach 4

Does she go at first? "Sorry cousin, it's been 30 days and I'm not goin"

Is Mordecai's statement a reference to Yahweh? Text doesn't say either way. If he was referring to Yahweh, wouldn't this be a good place to say so?

“For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish” Esther 4:14

“For if you remain silent at this time WILL relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place? and you and your father’s family will perish” (There’s no help coming from anywhere else) BUSH, Ruth & Esther, p.90

So Mordecai’s persuasion is “You’re our only hope!” Note Esther’s request:

*“Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and **fast for me. (and pray?)** Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.” Esther 4:16*

Esther’s Approach 5-7

Slow start (5:1-8) sets us up for another day and night’s worth of intrigue.

... The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance. 2 When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter. Then the king asked, “What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given to you.”

“If it pleases the king,” replied Esther, “let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him.”

So the king and Haman went to the banquet Esther had prepared. As they were drinking wine, the king again asked Esther, “Now what is your petition? It will be given you. And what is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted.”

*Esther replied, “My petition and my request is this: If the king regards me with favor and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, **let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them. Then I will answer the king’s question.**”*

Note Haman’s 3 boasts! 5:9-12

Later, his wealth, sons and honor will go to his enemy... Mordecai.

*Haman boasted to them (family and friends) about his vast **wealth**, his many **sons**, and all the ways the king had **honored** him and how he had elevated him above the other nobles and officials. “And that’s not all,” Haman added. “I’m the only person Queen Esther invited to accompany the king to the banquet she gave. And she has invited me along with the king tomorrow. “But all this gives me no satisfaction as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king’s gate.” His wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, ‘Have a gallows built seventy five feet high and ask the king in the morning to have Mordecai hanged on it. Then go with the king to dinner and be happy.” Esther 5:11-14*

How high does the gallows need to be for a 5 ft man? They're impaled on long sticks, humiliation not execution. Deuteronomy... God removes a curse if you hang a corpse on a tree.

Insomniac King decides to honor Mordecai 6:1-6

That night the king could not sleep; so he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him. It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes.

*"**What honor and recognition has Mordecai received for this?**" the king asked.*

"Nothing has been done for him," his attendants answered.

The king said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the palace to speak to the king about impaling Mordecai on the pole he had set up for him.

His attendants answered, "Haman is standing in the court."

"Bring him in," the king ordered. When Haman entered, the king asked him,

*"**What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?**"*

Now Haman thought to himself, "Who is there that the king would rather honor than me?" "Go at once," the king commanded Haman. "Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended."

*So Haman got the robe and the horse. **He robed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city streets, proclaiming before him, "This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!"** His advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, "Since Mordecai, before whom your downfall has started, is of Jewish origin, you cannot stand against him—you will surely come to ruin!" Esther 6:1-13*

Does this mean that Zeresh is a believer in Yahweh? Prior to this she said to kill the Jewish Mordacai. Probably not, but she's noticed the Jews tend to come out on top.

By the way, I'm Jewish... and Haman is trying to kill me.

"Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining. The king exclaimed, 'Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?'"

NOT a good time to fall on the Queen!! Now where can we find a good gallows???

THE VICTORY 8-10

The Preparation for Victory 8

Mordecai gets Haman's

1. Honor & position (signet ring)
2. Wealth (estate)
3. But not his sons

The Experience of Victory 9:1-17 Israel slaughters all her enemies on the day of "Purim"

The point?

*For Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them and had cast the pur (that is, the lot) for their ruin and destruction. But when the plot came to the king's attention, he issued written orders that **the evil scheme Haman had devised against the Jews should come back onto his own head**, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. (Therefore these days were called Purim, from the word pur.) Esther 9:24-25 You can feel Genesis 12... "Bless those who bless you, curse those who curse you"*

Daniel 9:24-27

Micah 5:2

2 Sam 7

Genesis 49

Genesis 12

Genesis 3:15

No King

No God in the Temple

No "hot-line" to heaven

Squatty little Temple

God, have you given up on those promises?

If God is still caring for his people even when they don't care for him, the promises are still unconditional.

Esther isn't a role model for courage, God is a God of grace. It's Hosea loving a Gomer in another story. God loves Gomer's like us.

What is this telling me about who God is?

Observations

Author's Big Idea = God is faithful to his people even when they are faithless to him.

Applications Theology: God will be faithful to Israel no matter what. Yahweh - I AM

Humility: Because of God's faithfulness when I have been faithless.

Rom 2 - sometimes it's the kindness of God that leads us to repentance.

Behavior: I want to be faithful to those who are faithless to me.

IMAGINE HOW MUCH A MAN'S LIFE WOULD BE CHANGED IF HE TRUSTED THAT HE WAS LOVED BY GOD? He could interact with the poor and not show partiality, he could love his wife easily and not expect her to redeem him, he would be slow to anger because redemption was no longer at stake, he could be wise and giving with his money because money no longer represented points, he could give up formulaic religion, knowing that checking stuff off a spiritual to-do list was a worthless pursuit, he would have confidence and the ability to laugh at himself, and he could love people without expecting much in return. **IT WOULD BE REALLY QUITE BEAUTIFUL.**

Don Miller "Searching for God Knows What"

God is never going to give up on you! Yet we keep looking to other idols for acceptance. The problem can be... we just don't know if we love God. The book speaks to that too. He will continue to pursue you. This is amazing grace!!