

## **Esther: The Divine Behind the Scenes, “The Divine Savior” Esther 8-10, 3/25/18**

One of the most famous American photos, is this one taken of a sailor embracing in celebration with a nurse on the streets of Time Square. This spontaneous celebration broke out all over the country on August 15, 1945, V-J Day, when news came that Japan surrender and World War II was officially over.

Today we are going to see another spontaneous celebration break out as we close our series in Esther. And if we could have snapped a photo in the streets of Susa, Persia in 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., on Adar 13<sup>th</sup> (March 1<sup>st</sup>) we would have likely seen something very similar. But what became a day of great celebration for the Jewish people, begun as a day of great dread. Because it was that very same day that the Jewish people were marked for annihilation. The enemies of the Jewish people in the kingdom would have been sharpening their blades and looking forward to that same day, Adar 13. Why?

Remember, there is an irrevocable genocide bill that was passed by King Xerxes under the influence of Haman the Agagite, legalizing and emboldening any Persian citizen throughout the vast empire who wanted the Jewish people eliminated to kill them and loot their possessions. But as the date drew nearer there was a sudden reversal of fortunes. While it appeared that Haman that Agagite with the King’s blessing had all the power, instead in a sudden twist, Haman is executed and the King’s favor is shifted to Esther and Mordecai. Of course we know that it was God at work behind the scenes! And because of this, over the next three chapters, 8-10, we see a series of Great Reversals for the Jewish people. And as I was studying these chapters this week I was amazed as I read this through the lens of the Gospel of Jesus, because I believe each one of these 3 Great reversals we see today foreshadowed and pointed to 3 Great Reversals in our lives as Christians.

**1) A Great Reversal of Position**- From a man condemned outside the gate to a place of honor. Just a couple chapters ago, Haman the Agagite, was the big shot. He was second in command wearing the signet ring of the King. Mordecai just a short time ago was a marked man, sitting outside the gate in sackcloth, mourning. No access to the King. No authority. Just a seemingly hopeless situation. But as we saw last week, God in his providence, was at work.

**Esther 8:1-2, 15**

*That same day King Xerxes gave Queen Esther the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came into the presence of the king, for Esther had told how he was related to her. <sup>2</sup> The king took off his signet ring, which he had reclaimed from Haman, and presented it to Mordecai. And Esther appointed him over Haman’s estate.*

*<sup>15</sup> When Mordecai left the king’s presence, he was wearing royal garments of blue and white, a large crown of gold and a purple robe of fine linen.*

**Esther 10:3**

*Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Xerxes, preeminent among the Jews, and held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews.*

Not only does Mordecai now have access to the King, everything that belonged to Haman, now belongs to Mordecai, his estate, the King's signet ring, and position as second in command. He honored and esteemed by all. From rags to riches and royalty. Take in for a moment...When is the last time you heard a story of someone essentially on death row rising to become the 2<sup>nd</sup> most powerful person in the world? God can reverse what appears to be impossible. Now, here's what's amazing for us. In Christ, what happened to Mordecai happens to us when we trust Christ.

**Ephesians 2:12**

*<sup>12</sup> remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

**Ephesians 1:13-14**

*<sup>13</sup> And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, (The King's Signet Ring) the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup> who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.*

**Ephesians 2:4-7**

*<sup>4</sup> But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup> And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*

We, like Mordecai, are invited into the presence of the King by his grace. We too are given a rich estate in eternity. We too are given new clothes. Did you know the Bible tells us we too will be clothed by the King? Revelation 19:8 *Fine linen, bright and clean.* We too are given a position of honor by the King. Everything changes in a moment when we trust Christ as our savior. Do you know your true position? Some of us live as if we are still outside the gate in rags. In Christ, we have a new position as royalty and co-heirs of heaven! Do you believe this?

**2) A Great Reversal of Condition-** from a sentence of death to a declaration of life.

**Esther 8:3-8**

<sup>3</sup> Esther again pleaded with the king, falling at his feet and weeping. She begged him to put an end to the evil plan of Haman the Agagite, which he had devised against the Jews. <sup>4</sup> Then the king extended the gold scepter to Esther and she arose and stood before him.

<sup>5</sup> "If it pleases the king," she said, "and if he regards me with favor and thinks it the right thing to do, and if he is pleased with me, let an order be written overruling the dispatches that Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king's provinces. <sup>6</sup> For how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family?"

<sup>7</sup> King Xerxes replied to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Because Haman attacked the Jews, I have given his estate to Esther, and they have impaled him on the pole he set up.<sup>8</sup> Now write another decree in the king's name in behalf of the Jews as seems best to you, and seal it with the king's signet ring—for no document written in the king's name and sealed with his ring can be revoked."

Essentially the King was saying, I have bad news and I have good news. How many of you like to get the good news first? Who likes to get the bad news first? I'm sure there is some psychology behind that... "Bad News- Even I cannot revoke this edict for the annihilation of the Jews. Legally everyone in the empire can rise up and kill and plunder the Jewish people. But Good News is- I will allow you to write a new counter-edict that just like the first, would go out to all 127 provinces with the full legal force as the first." And that's exactly what Mordecai does.

#### Esther 8:11-12

<sup>11</sup> The king's edict granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves; to destroy, kill and annihilate the armed men of any nationality or province who might attack them and their women and children, and to plunder the property of their enemies. <sup>12</sup> The day appointed for the Jews to do this in all the provinces of King Xerxes was the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar.

Virtually word-for-word he counters the first edict on the very same day, Adar 13<sup>th</sup>. Except for one key difference, this was a self-defense bill. This was not unprovoked slaughter, this is the right to defend themselves from the attack of their enemies with the full support of the King.

For the sake of time, I'm not going to read all of chapter 9 but let me summarize what happens. With the help of the king's resources and under the command of Queen Esther, the Jews in Susa were able to overpower their enemies they kill 800 of them, and then throughout the whole kingdom of Persia, 75,000 enemies of the Jews are killed in this 24 hour war. They also round up and kill the 10 sons of Haman, the Agagite.

And so, in the providence of God, the Jews have their fate reversed- from a sentence of death to a declaration of life. We too, in Christ, have had our fate reversed- from a sentence of death to a declaration of life! From the moment Adam and Eve sinned, we have been under an irrevocable sentence of death, for all have sinned and the wages of sin earn us death the Bible says. When God saved us he didn't undo the first edict. Humanity is still on a crash course of destruction, rather he initiated a second edict through Jesus Christ on the Cross that counters and nullifies the first edict for all who believe in Jesus as their savior.

**Romans 8:1-2**

*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, <sup>2</sup> because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.*

The curse was reversed! And while we still live in the in between of Jesus' two comings, where sin is still present and suffering is still present and the enemy is still present, when the end comes, and Jesus Christ returns, **1 Corinthians 15** tells us that **"The last enemy, death, will be destroyed"** v.54-55

*then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." <sup>55</sup> "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"*

This leads us to the third Great reversal  
Reversal in our Position, Condition

**3) A Great Reversal of Disposition- From mourning to rejoicing.**

**Esther 9:20-22**

*<sup>20</sup> Mordecai recorded these events, and he sent letters to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Xerxes, near and far, <sup>21</sup> to have them celebrate annually the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar*

*<sup>22</sup> as the time when the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month when their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a day of celebration. He wrote them to observe the days as days of feasting and joy and giving presents of food to one another and gifts to the poor.*

On the very day that seemed destined as a day of mourning, becomes cause for great rejoicing. As soon as the edict came to the people, there was spontaneous joy, celebration, they just had a massive party. And so Mordecai establishes a new festival called Purim, a celebration that to this day, centuries later, the Jewish people celebrate. The word Purim is the Persian word for "casting of lots." Remember back from chapter 3, Haman used the lot, essentially the roll of dice, to see what "the gods" would decide about the month of the Jews annihilation. They thought that would be their lucky day...

**Proverbs 16:33**

*Lot is cast into the lap but its every decision is from the Lord.*

And so the Jewish people began calling their celebration Purim- recognizing that the day determined by Haman's lot for their mourning and destruction, God chose for the day of their deliverance and rejoicing.

Purim is a great day of celebration of what God does to intervene on behalf of the people he loves. But it was only a foreshadowing- it pointed to the one who would intervene on behalf of the sins of the world that he loves. It pointed to the one who would bare our griefs and carry our sorrows as it the prophet Isaiah foretold. The prophet Jeremiah saw that day of salvation through the Messiah.

**Jeremiah 31:13**

*I will turn their mourning into gladness, I will give them comfort and joy, not sorrow.*

See it all pointed toward that greater day of celebration- the resurrection of the divine savior from the grave that Easter Morning.

Because one day **Revelation 21:4**

*He will **wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.***

On this Palm Sunday, as we launch into Passion Week, may we with joy in our hearts, look expectantly toward Easter, the great day of permanent celebration. Because Easter guarantees our resurrection. We can celebrate every day like it's V-J Day, everyday like it's Purim, everyday like it's Easter because In Christ we have a Great Reversal of Position, Condition and Disposition.

In closing of the book of Esther let me say this- God is nowhere on the pages of Esther, but he is everywhere working according to his providential plans. This book is here so that we would learn about how God often works in our lives. His silence is not his absence. His silence is his providence. You may not see it now, but further along you will. Know this- **his visible hand of miracles is just as powerful and spectacular as His unseen hand of providence.**

Here in this room are hundreds of providential miracles- spiritual dead people who are now breathing eternally. Few if any because of a visible hand of God. That's spectacular!

If you are here today and you are struggling to see God's hand at work in your life. You are longing to see him in some tangible way. In your tears, in your pain, in your heartache, in your doubt, in your anxiety- Would you trust that God is at work behind the scenes? That Esther is your proof? Would you trust that the God of divine reversals will do it again? That he can deliver you? Both in this life and the next?