**ESTHER**

**The Chess Match Begins, Esther 3, 4**

Sunday, January 16, 2022

**WE Slide 1 Turn in your Bibles to Esther 3, pg. 512, and as you do let me encourage you to do a 2 things- register for the CONNECT Class and THE PARTY- show them how easy it is to register.**

**Slide 2 We’re looking at this TRUTH FOR LIFE that is seen throughout the Bible but really seen in the real-life story of Esther- a Jewish orphan girl whom God used to save Israel from annihilation.** The TRUTH FOR LIFE is that God works through our earthly decisions to accomplish His eternal plans. **That’s right!** Despite what you may thing God can and will use your decisions to accomplish His plans. **Slide 3-4 Dr. A. W. Tozer- ocean liner, New York to England.** The people on the ship are free to do as they please, but they aren’t free to change the course of the ship. “The mighty liner of God’s sovereign design keeps its steady course over the sea of history. God moves undisturbed and unhindered toward the fulfillment of those eternal purposes which He purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began.” (The Knowledge of the Holy, p. 118).

**NOW, WE NEED TO TALK! I’ll teach on a topic then get calls during the week for advice on that exact topic.** I don’t want to beat anyone up but let me encourage you to LISTEN CLOSELY to what the Bible says, take notes, ***DO the TAKEAWAYS***, and give God room/time to work in and through you. **Remember… Slide 5**

1. **God’s eternal plan for you who are Christians-** He uses your daily experiences to make you more like Jesus and through you/your responses draw others to Jesus for salvation. **INVITE STAN UP**
2. **God’s eternal plan takes time-** He doesn’t force us or others to change but over time as we go through the challenges of life and turn to Him for wisdom/strength that change happens.
3. **God uses the decisions of non-believers-** you might freak out when other people make your life difficult but God doesn’t, nor does it hinder His plans; He’ll just use their decisions to accomplish His eternal plans in you and in others. **HEADS UP!! This is one of the TAKEAWAYS for today- God USES THE DECISIONS OF NON-BELIEVERS to accomplish His eternal plans.**

**Let’s continue on in Esther and see what God has for us.** Esther’s been queen for 4 Years (God’s plan takes time)- life is good, she’s queen, Mordecai is a hero! **What could go wrong?** **Like things typically go in life, just as things are going along smoothly- BOOM!** Life is turned upside down. **Slide 6-12 Conflict in the King’s Court as Haman is promoted… WHAT, who’s Haman??!!** He’s not mentioned as an advisor in Esther 1&2. How unfair! Mordecai should’ve been promoted!! He saved the king’s life. **Nope!** King’s says everyone is to honor/bow to Haman every time he walks by.

**GOD**

1. **SCENE 3 CONFLICT IN KING’S COURT, Esther 3:1-15**
2. **Haman Promoted, Esther 3:1-6**
3. **The Conflict-** Mordecai refuses to honor/bow to Haman. **Why?** Quick Week 1 review…
4. Haman- descendent of King Agag/Amalekites, Mordecai- descendent of King Saul /Israel.
5. The Amalekites have hated and attacked Israel since the days of Moses/Exodus.
6. God commanded King Saul- completely wipe out King Agag/Amalekites/possessions.
7. Saul disobeyed, let King Agag live and took all their possessions- he said as an offering to God.
8. God wants obedience, not sin/sacrifices, so He takes the throne from Saul and gives it to David.
9. The servants ask Mordecai why he didn’t bow down and he says it’s because he’s Jewish.
10. The servants ask Haman if it’s true that Jews don’t have to bow down to him.
11. This ENRAGES Haman- he’ll not only kill Mordecai but ALL Jews throughout the empire.

**Once and for all his nation’s hated enemies would be wiped from the earth!!** He devises a plan. **Slide 13**

1. **Haman Devises Plan to Kill All Jews, Esther 3:7-11**
2. He casts lots once for every day of the year; determined the best day to destroy the Jewish people.
3. The “Pur” is the casting of lots, throwing colored rocks or picking a colored rock out of a bag.
4. **Slide 14-15 Interesting, speaking of casting lots/God’s providence, Proverbs 16:33**
5. Haman withholds information by saying “a certain people”, not “Jews”, don’t obey him and then outright lies. **He doesn’t say Jews, why?**
6. The king may now know Esther is a Jew, he loves her 2:17, and wouldn’t want to kill her.
7. Then he lies and says all the people don’t obey him when it’s only Mordecai who hasn’t.
8. **Slide 16** Haman bribes the king and gets the king’s approval.
9. The king would receive 10K talents of silver, probably estimate of Israel’s overall wealth they’d steal once they are killed.
10. Herodotus- Greek historian of that time, it would equal 2/3 of the annual royal income.
11. In today’s money- $204,102,000; silver is $270/lbs., a talent= 75.6 lbs./10K is 756K pounds.

**The SCRIBES come and write up the law.**

1. **Law Written to Kill All Jews, Esther 3:12-15**
2. The date of the slaughter- Adar 13- ALL THE PEOPLE were to kill ALL JEWS even the young, old, women, children- citizens turning on citizens.
3. Interesting that they chose to wait almost a year to do this.

**Imagine how the Jews felt having to wait a year knowing they would be slaughtered by their neighbors. Why not sooner? Could it be God’s providence?** We’re not told. **But as the couriers rode off…**

1. Haman/king celebrate their plan to annihilate an entire nation and the city of Susa is in “confusion”.
2. “confusion”- buk, to mill around, to wander aimlessly; confused state of mind/activity.
3. The Persians are probably wondering why the king would want them to kill their neighbors.
4. The Jews had no clue what they were going to do. **What could they do?** Things were hopeless! They would all die including their children!

**From the best of days to way beyond the worst of days in 4 years!!** Here’s how Mordecai and the Jewish people responded to the news. **Slide 17-19 Mordecai hits the streets crying out in emotional pain…**

1. **SCENE 4 MORDECAI’S RESPONSE, Esther 4:1-14**
2. **Mordecai Mourns Publicly, Esther 4:1-3**
3. This is all Mordecai’s fault- his unwillingness to honor Haman would be the end of his nation.
4. He showed his regret/sadness by tearing his clothes, putting on sackcloth/ashes and headed toward the king’s gate.
5. “wailed loudly/bitterly”- verb tense; doing it over and over until he reached the king’s gate.
6. If he went further it would mean immediate death, no one was to mourn/be sad near the king.
7. The response of the Jews was the same throughout the entire empire- **estimated 15 million Jews**
8. The only reference to a religious response in the entire book comes in response to their situation though it doesn’t necessarily mean they were calling out to God.
9. Other religions fasted, put on sackcloth/ashes as a demonstration of grief, repentance.

**Esther, who is not aware of the edict, is told of her COUSIN’S actions. Slide 20**

1. **Mordecai Challenges Esther to Step Up, Esther 4:4-12**
2. Esther- “writhing in great anguish”; she doesn’t know why Mordecai is upset, but she’s concerned he’ll get himself killed so she sends him clothes to change into.
3. Mordecai returns the clothes which concerns Esther so she sends Hathach to find out from Mordecai what’s going on.
4. Mordecai tells Hathach about the edict and tells him to tell Esther she needs to plead to the king for “her people”. **This guys must have been in really good shape running back and forth!**
5. Hathach, now knows Esther is a Jew, tells Esther of the edict to kill all the Jews, that includes her.
6. Esther is afraid for her life, **look what she says, Slide 21-22**

**If she goes to the king without being summoned she could be killed and she doubts he’ll summon her; he hasn’t for 30 days.** Mordecai then challenges his cousin with these well-known words. **Slide 23-24**

1. Mordecai Challenges Esther, 4:13-14
2. He reminds her that she’s a Jew and would be killed too if she doesn’t do something.
3. He seems to think that God will deliver them, but if she doesn’t help, God may not spare her life.
4. FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS- He then speaks to God’s providence- who knows if God hasn’t worked all this out for you to be queen so you can plead for and deliver your people.

**Esther responds to the challenge... Slide 25**

1. Esther commits to go to the king
2. She tells Mordecai to get all the Jews in Susa to fast for 3 full days and she/her maidens would do the same.
3. Then after 3 days she’ll go to the king and if she dies, she dies.

**Mordecai heads off to do what Esther told him to do. Is God powerful enough to overcome Haman’s plans?!** You’ll have to read ahead and come back next week to find out whether she survives or not.

**BUT FOR US Slide 26 what are some things we can TAKE AWAY from this part of the story as it relates to the TRUTH FOR LIFE that God works through our earthly decisions to accomplish His eternal plans?**

**“FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS.”**

1. **What situation has God allowed you to find yourself in?**
2. **Have other people’s decisions had a negative or destructive impact in your life?**
3. **Do you believe God can overcome those people’s decisions?**
4. **How does God want to use your earthly decisions to accomplish His eternal plans of making you more like Jesus, growing you spiritually, and through you drawing others to Him for salvation?**

**Slide 27 AS THE BAND COMES UP…whatever your situation, however you got to where you are move forward in confidence knowing…**

**YOU TAKEAWAYS**

1. **God USES THE DECISIONS OF NON-BELIEVERS to accomplish His eternal plans-** they aren’t able to hinder God’s plan, He’s got this, He’s got you, be still and know that God is God.
2. **God’s Plan Takes Time-** He doesn’t force change in you or others. Growth and impact take time. Between Esther 1 and Esther 3 it’s been 6-7 years of God working.
3. **Do the next right thing and give room for God to work**.

**PODCAST: Can God overcome the decisions of other people that negatively impact me? Great question.** Grab some coffee, your Bible, turn to Esther 3 and see what God has for you. Esther 3:1-4:14, Proverbs 16:33