**ESTHER- Fractured People, Flawless God**

**God’s Eternal Plan, Esther 8-10**

Sunday, January 30, 2022

**WE** **Slide 1 THE PARTY- Biggest event of the year is this Friday, 6-8!! You sign up yet?** This here is great, but God has made us a family through faith in Jesus and a family hangs out together, enjoys each other’s company, and encourages each other. **That’s what our desire is for The Party so I hope you’ll take a few minutes, come hang out, eat some food, bowl if you want, play some other games or just talk with others.** Hanging out together is a great way to celebrate what God has done these past 5 years and look forward to the next. **Slide 2**

**BTW THAT’S WHAT OUR NEXT SERIES IS ABOUT- EO3: Everyone on 3.** 1 church/3 locations each impacting their area for Christ which will take EVERYONE at our 3 campuses joining the mission to make it happen. **We’ll be laying out what we believe God wants us to do in/through us over the next 3 years.** God’s Plan A-Z for reaching our world for Christ is you and me, His church, and all of us who claim to know Christ are commanded to sacrificially work and give financially to accomplish His mission. **Some of that plan has already been started in the Grace Kids’ area thanks to your faithful financial giving and the hard work of several of our church family.** So come back next week to hear the plan we’ve been working on.

**BUT FOR NOW we’ve come to the end of our Esther series. Slide 3** So turn to Esther 8, pg. 515, and let’s see how God made sure His eternal plan of securing Israel’s survival was accomplished through the earthly decisions of Mordecai and Esther. **God is working HIS ETERNAL PLAN whether you know it or not or want to acknowledge it or not.** As Christians His ETERNAL PLAN for us is to go through our challenges in a way that grows us spiritually and then through our response draw others to Christ for salvation. **We who commit to join Jesus and respond as He commands experience that growth and will see others in our life come to Jesus for salvation.**

**ESTHER RECAP: Well, we’ve just experienced the heart-pounding TWIST OF PROVIDENCE where Esther reveals to the king that it’s Haman who planned to annihilate Esther and her people- the Jews.** The king is ticked and commands his servants to have Haman impaled on the gallows he had built for Mordecai. **Then we read this in Esther 8. READ THE STORY 8:1-8 Slide 4-10** Haman’s law, as terrible as it was, could not be revoked but another decree could be written to counteract the first so the king gives Mordecai permission to write up a new decree. **Here's what it said.** **READ THE STORY 8:11-12 Slide 11-12 9 months before the annihilation of Israel was to happen Mordecai writes his new law**.

**GOD**

1. **SCENE 9 ESTHER PLEADS FOR HER PEOPLE, Esther 8:1- 17**
2. **Mordecai Has a New Decree Written**
3. Unlike Haman’s law Mordecai’s was written in everyone’s language including the Jewish people’s.
4. In Mordecai’s law the Jews were given the right to defend themselves, to do to their attackers what the attackers were allowed to do to them; word for word of Haman’s law.
5. This law was in place for only 1 day- the day Haman’s law would take affect, the 13th of Adar.

**TELL THE STORY, 8:13-17 We’re told the couriers headed out “hastened and impelled by the king’s command…riding the royal steeds”.** As the law goes out through the empire, Mordecai is cheered and honored by all the people throughout the capital city.

1. **Mordecai’s Impact**
2. Susa goes from being an emotional basket-case, **remember 3:15? thrown into confusion by Haman’s law**, to shouting and rejoicing knowing that Mordecai was a good and honorable man and they would not have to kill their Jewish neighbors.
3. The Jews who were weighed down, fearful, mourning, fasting, wailing, **4:3** under the gloom of annihilation with the new law experienced the removal of their gloom and were filled with gladness, joy, honor, feasts, and created a holiday as new life was breathed into them.
4. **Even many Persians gave up worshiping their gods and turned to worship the God of Israel- they turned to God because of how God worked in the lives of the Jewish people**.

**Then the day of the CLASH OF DECREES finally arrives.** Let’s see how it plays out. **READ THE STORY, 9:1-6 Slide 13-18**

1. **SCENE 10 THE CLASH OF DECREES, Esther 9:1-22**
2. **The Jews “gain the mastery” over those who attacked them.**
3. No one could stand before them, fear/dread of them had fallen on the people. **Who could have caused this kind of heart-change in the people? We know it’s God who can even work in the hearts of unbelievers to accomplish His eternal plans.**
4. All the officials and servants of the king sided with Israel because the dread of Mordecai had fallen on them- the circumstances showed that no doubt Mordecai was blessed by his God.

**We’re told that…**

1. **The Jews Victory**
2. The Jews killed 500 men in the citadel in Susa including Haman’s 10 sons.
3. Esther gets the kings approval to impale the dead bodies of Haman’s sons on the gallows- common Persian custom for those who died in an insurrection to act as a deterrent.
4. The next day, the 14th, Jews in the city of Susa had to assemble again and kill 300 more men.
5. The Jews throughout the empire killed 75,000 attackers.
6. BUT NO JEW plundered their attackers, taking the possessions of those who attacked them.
7. They were given permission by the king to do so if they wanted.
8. Their refusal to do so shows they were only about defending themselves not looking to gain financially from it.

**Once they had gained the victory the Jews throughout the empire celebrated with feasts and giving gifts.** Esther 9 tells us that this celebration became what we know today as the Festival of Purim.

1. **The Festival of Purim Is Established, Esther 9:20-22**
2. “Purim”- from the Pur- the lots that Haman cast to determine the best day to kill off Israel.
3. The Jews throughout the empire rested on the 14th and made it a day of feasting/rejoicing.
4. The Jews in Susa, due to those who attacked them on the 14th rested and feasted on the 15th.
5. Mordecai sent letters throughout empire commanding Israel to celebrate on the 14th & 15th of Adar from that day and forever- March in our calendar.
6. Esther sent letters confirming Mordecai’s command to celebrate and declaring “peace and security” for Israel throughout the Persian empire.

**The story closes in Esther 10 with the sense that peace and security has returned to the empire with the king going about his business with Mordecai at his side, and the people glad for this leadership team.** So as the band makes their way up… **Slide 19 As we finish this series out and look forward to next week’s new series what can we TAKE AWAY from these final events? Slide 20**

**YOU TAKEAWAYS**

1. **God Fights Our Battles with Us-** the Jews did the next right thing and God literally put the fear of God into the hearts of their enemies. The Jews still had to do what they were told to do but God was working in their enemies to give them the victory. **Going along with that… Slide 21**
2. **Only God changes hearts, including the hearts of unbelievers- What changed in the hearts of those who decided not to attack their Jewish neighbors?** God changed their hearts. **LESSON-** Let God do His work in people’s hearts; don’t be God for others just respond to them in sacrificial love and let God do His work in their hearts. The Jews spent 3 days fasting, spending time dedicated to God and then God worked in the hearts of their neighbors. Let’s commit to do that rather than WE TRYING to change the hearts of others. **Last… Slide 22**
3. **Only God draws people to Himself and normally does it through our responses to life’s situations.** Many of the people of Persia saw what had happened to Israel and turned to their God.

**Let’s stand and close in a song.**

**PODCAST: Where is God in your battle? Take a listen to this final message in Esther. Esther 8-10.**