**ESTHER**

**Today’s Decision, Tomorrow’s Results, Esther 1 & 2**

Sunday, January 9, 2022

**WE** **Slide 1 KALAHARI? 7/30+ Turn in your Bibles/devices to the book of Esther, pg. 510, as we jump into this true story about how God used a Jewish orphan girl to save the nation of Israel from destruction.** LAST WEEK **Slide 2** I mentioned a truth that we see in Esther- “God will always do what He says He’ll do”- no matter how long ago He promised it. **It’s true because of what we call God’s PROVIDENCE. Slide 3** This is a theological term that we don’t use much today which refers to “God’s foresight and power to watch over His creatures and accomplish His eternal plans.” **What catches our attention in the Bible are the miracles God performs to accomplish His plans, but most often, in the Bible and in our lives, He uses His infinite knowledge and power to accomplish His eternal plans through the DECISIONS we make.**

**The author of Esther, by never mentioning God’s name nor recording any miracles, is focusing our attention on God’s PROVIDENTIAL care of His people THROUGH human decisions.** I’ve summarized this in a TRUTH FOR LIFE that we’ll see in Esther and more importantly we need to build our lives on. **Slide 4**

1. **TRUTH FOR LIFE- God works through our earthly decisions to accomplish His eternal plans.**
2. The Eternal Plan for Israel- to ensure its survival so He could bring Jesus Christ into the world.
3. The Eternal Plan for Christians- to make us more like Jesus and through us draw people to Him for salvation. If we can keep this eternal plan in mind it will give us greater courage to face what we face and help us respond as God commands us to respond.

**EACH WEEK we’ll see this TRUTH FOR LIFE worked out in the life of Esther and then apply what we learn to our lives.** Today we’ll see that even before Israel was threatened with extinction God was working through the earthly decisions of Ahasuerus, Haman, Mordecai, Esther, and others to ensure Israel’s safety. **I don’t want to spoil the story so let’s jump into it and see what God has for us this morning. Slide 5-13**

**THE AUTHOR begins by describing massive parties that King Ahasuerus throws for the leaders and people in the capital of Susa.** The map behind me shows the extent of his empire.

**GOD**

1. **SCENE 1- AHASUERUS FLAUNTS HIS POWER AND PRESTIGE, Esther 1:1-22**
2. **Through a 6- Month Party, 1-4**
3. 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia, including Israel, modern-day Turkey, and Bulgaria.
4. His father- Darius the Great, Daniel served, expanded the empire to its present size.
5. His mother, Atossa, was the daughter of Cyrus the Great, the 1st king of Persia.
6. He allowed the 1st group of Jews to return to their land after being defeated/scattered by Neb/Bab.
7. **CRAZY FACT!** 150 years before Cyrus, even before Israel was defeated and scattered by Neb, God told Isaiah that a king named Cyrus from an empire called Persia would send the Jews back to the land. **TALK ABOUT PROVIDENCE!**
8. All of this has was accomplished by his father- empire, wealth, power and prestige, yet he thinks very highly of himself- archeologists- King of Kings/King over the Whole Earth/The Great King.

**Slide 14 3 years into his reign he gives a massive 6-month party for his political/military leaders.**

1. He wanted to display “…the riches of his royal glory and the splendor of his great majesty…”
2. Some believe he used this time to plan his future military campaign against Greece for their support of an uprising in Persia during his father’s reign.
3. He used the party to gain the support of his political/military leaders and show he had the money to finance a military campaign; a big party to pump everyone up for war.

**He followed up that party with a much shorter party, but one that had a larger number of attendees- everyone in the citadel, the fortified portion of the city around the palace, was invited.**

1. **Through a 7- Day Party, 5-22**
2. The least to the greatest were commanded to eat/drink as much as/little as they wanted.
3. He pulls out all the stops- Expensive tapestry, marble columns, couches of gold/silver, patio made of porphyry- a speckled stone, marble, mother-of-pearl, and precious stone.
4. Persians were known to flaunt their wealth- soldiers wore gold into battle, men wore jewelry in their beards. **Slide 15-16 Some guys still do that today!**
5. People drank out of all kinds of golden vessels- Jewish historians, some from the temple/Neb.
6. Even Queen Vashti gave a party for the women! If you wondered the palace was Ahasuerus’.

**LIFE WAS GOOD…but not for long!** On the last day of the party, after a week of showing off all his wealth and getting hammered, he had the “great” idea to have his guys fetch Queen Vashti from her party to his.

1. The king commands Queen Vashti to attend his party.
2. She was to come “with her royal crown” to display her beauty to the people/princes- **i.e. A BUNCH OF DRUNK GUYS!**
3. Some Jewish historians believe he meant she was to just wear her crown- no clothes.
4. Whatever she was to wear it’s never good when a drunk husband wants to parade his wife in front of crowd of drunk men.

**Queen Vashti, the granddaughter of King Nebuchadnezzar wants nothing to do with it/refuses.**

1. Queen Vashti refuses.
   * + - 1. This makes the king VERY angry; now he’s drunk AND angry, not a good combination.
         2. Historians say he was known for his anger- bridge, storm, had water whipped, beheaded men.

**Drunk/angry he checks with his wise men on what the law says about how to punish her.** Their plan…

1. The king seeks advice from his advisors on how to deal with the queen.
2. 1st remove her, don’t ever let her in your presence again, and find someone more worthy of you.
3. 2nd write an edict/law- all men are the masters of their homes so other women don’t follow her example and think they can disobey, or have words with, their husbands.
4. Sounds exactly like what a drunk and angry king would decide to do.

**THAT BRINGS US TO ESTHER 2. Slide 17 Between 1:22 & 2:1, 3-4 years have elapsed.** After dismissing Vashti Ahasuerus heads off to war with Greece where though he wins the battle (THE MOVIE 300), he suffers huge losses on land and sea- 7K Greeks hold off 100K+ Persians, finally the Persians break through and win, but Greece destroys his entire navy. **He returns down, discouraged, depressed, looking for something or someone to make him feel better.** Vashti used to do that for him but he’s banished her to his harem. **Once again he turns to his trusted servants.** Let’s see what they suggest he do, Esther 2:1. **Slide 18-21**

1. **SCENE 2- ESTHER BECOMES QUEEN, Esther 2:1-20**
2. **Ahasuerus Advised to Find a New Queen, 1-4**

Overseers go out to all 127 provinces and take young women of marrying age back to Susa.

Some believe there may have been over 400 young women taken from their families.

**The author continues…** **Slide 22-25** Enter Mordecai and Esther as we begin to see God’s PROVIDENCE take shape. **We see it because we’ve read about it, but Mordecai/Esther are in it, not aware of it.**

1. **Mordecai and Esther Introduced, 5-7**
2. Their family was brought to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar around 120+ years earlier.
3. They were of royal birth through the line of King Saul.
4. Mordecai was responsible to raise Esther whose parents had died.
5. **Esther Chosen Queen, 8-20**
6. Esther along with these other young women are entered into basically a beauty pageant with the winner becoming queen.
7. Each woman would receive a year-long spa treatment prior to going into the king.
8. After their night with the king, they would go into the harem and wait to see if the king chose them; if he did they would become queen, if he didn’t they would remain in his harem.

**Imagine what Esther, who doesn’t know what we know about why she’s in this situation, is thinking!**

1. We’re told she finds favor with Hegai (v. 9), all who see her (v. 15) and eventually the king, (v. 17).
2. Hegai puts Esther first in line for her cosmetic treatment/special diet, gives her servants.
3. He gives her what she needed to win the favor of the king when her time came.

**Why? What was so special about her?** **You mean there were no other women as beautiful as her?** Why does she stand out over 400 other women?Is this Esther’s doing or God working through people?

1. We’re told 2X that Esther didn’t let people know she was a Jew, v. 10, 20 **Why?**
2. **Why wouldn’t Mordecai/Esther want people to know this? OR here’s another question.**
3. **Why didn’t Mordecai say “NO! You’re not taking my niece to marry a non-Jewish king?”** Why didn’t Esther say “NO!”
4. Other Jewish heroes, Daniel, Shadrach, et al before them, said NO and God miraculously protected them- surely they had heard of them.
5. **Were they right in what they did? Were they wrong in what they did?** **We’re not told because that’s not the point of Esther**.
6. God’s point in these events is that He works through our earthly decisions to accomplish His eternal plans.

**Whether their decisions were right or wrong, God would still work through Esther who Ahasuerus chose to be queen.**

1. Esther spends the night with the king in the 7th year of his reign- 4 years after he dismissed Vashti.
2. The king loved her more than any of the other women and made Esther queen.
3. The king gave a banquet in her honor and turned it into a holiday for the nation.

**The chapter ends with events that move the story forward for next week.** Let’s read that and then look at some TAKEAWAYS for us. **Slide 26-28**

1. **SCENE 3- MORDECAI SAVES THE KING, Esther 2:21-23**
2. **Mordecai “sitting at the king’s gate”-** Mordecai is in a position of influence in the business/legal world, not sure if he’s always been there (royal ancestry) or just now after Esther was made queen.
3. **Mordecai Thwarts a Plot to Assassinate the King**
4. Hears Bigthan and Teresh- king’s bodyguards; **poor military showing in Greece? Anger issues?**
5. Mordecai tells Esther who tells the king, and the two bodyguards were hung.
6. This was written in the king’s Book of the Chronicles- official writings of the king.

**Feel free to read ahead and come back next week as we see how all of this impacts future events.** For now, what are the TAKEAWAYS for us today as it pertains to the TRUTH FOR LIFE- God works through our earthly decisions to accomplish His eternal plans. **Slide 29 Think of the major issues going on in your life.**

**YOU TAKEAWAYS**

1. **DON’T EVER FORGET THIS!** God’s using your life/situations to draw others to Jesus for salvation.
2. **God’s working in your life now for future results.** It took 4+ years and a lot of events for Esther to become queen.
3. **Be obedient to what God’s commanded you to do and let Him work His eternal plan through you.**

**LET GOD USE YOUR EARTHLY DECISIONS TO ACCOMPLISH HIS ETERNAL PLANS.**

**PODCAST: Find out how God uses our earthly decisions to accomplish His eternal plans. Esther 1:1- 2:23**