

Chapter 5-7 “Hope for the Hopeless”

Good morning and thank you for joining us! Would you please turn in your bibles to the book of Esther, chapter 5? We’re continuing our VBV study through this incredible book

We had our picnic at the park last week, so because it’s been a couple of weeks since we were in Esther, let’s remind ourselves of what’s happened so far.

Esther was an orphan – raised by her older cousin, Mordecai. Both are Jews living in the kingdom of Persia. The king of Persia, his name is Ahaserus or Xerxes, he got rid of his wife after she refused to parade herself in front of others. So Esther is one of many young women taken into the king’s harem to determine who will be the next queen. Think of it as an ancient version of The Bachelor.

In a miraculous series of events, Esther has been elevated to queen of Persia.

Meanwhile, Esther’s cousin Mordecai has a run-in with a powerful Jew-hater named Haman. Haman was the king’s administrator. And Haman is an egomaniac and expects everyone to bow to him.

But Mordecai refuses to bow to anyone other than God, so Haman convinces King Ahaserus to sign a decree to kill all the Jews within the year. But the King doesn’t know that his wife Esther is a Jew.

So as we pick up our study in chapter 5, for every Hebrew living in Persia, the situation looks hopeless. Every Jew knows that the death sentence has been issued. Genocide will occur.

Mordecai tells Esther that perhaps God has placed Esther in the king's palace "for such a time as this." Mordecai pleads with Esther, it's her duty to go before the king on behalf of the Jews to intercede to save their lives.

But this isn't as simple a solution as it sounds. Esther knows anyone who approaches King Ahasuerus uninvited runs the risk of losing their head. After mulling it over, she's willing to risk it all, chapter 4 v 16 "If I perish, I perish."

This morning we're gonna study chapters 5-7, and the title of this morning's message is "Hope for the Hopeless"

Let's pray

1 Now it happened on the third day that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, across from the king's house, while the king sat on his royal throne in the royal house, facing the entrance of the house.[fn] Imagine what Esther is feeling at this moment. Her hands are shaking, she knows her life is on the line. If the unexpected sight of his queen doesn't please King Ahasuerus, Esther will be executed on the spot. If someone approached the king uninvited, death would be pronounced.

Esther shows incredible bravery here doesn't she? It's been said "a rash person acts without fear, a brave person acts in spite of fear." Esther is a brave young woman.

So she's standing in the inner court of kings palace...

2 So it was, when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, that she found favor in his sight, and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther went near and touched the top of the scepter. Can you imagine the drama of this scene! Esther trepidly approaches her husband the king, and King Ahaserus holds out the scepter, offering Esther to touch it, which means she's not going to die for approaching the king without an appointment!! Can you imagine the relief Esther felt at that moment?

3 And the king said to her, "What do you wish, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given to you—up to half the kingdom!" Wow, King Ahaserus is in a generous mood! How did Esther know to approach the king at this very time when he's in a good mood? Did she send out informants to check the kings attitude that day?

Well perhaps there's another possibility...

Proverbs 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD,
Like the rivers of water;

He turns it wherever He wishes. As Esther is miraculously granted access to the king, we see again that God is behind the scenes, weaving everything together in a perfect way that fits His plans.

Now most historians think this phrase of giving away up to half the kingdom isn't literal, but rather simply an expression of great favor.

4 So Esther answered, "If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared for him."

Esther is acting shrewdly... Remember King Ahasuerus was a renowned boozier. He was probably an alcoholic. And in verse 6 we see this "banquet" – was quite literally, a "banquet of wine."

But notice who else Esther wants to join her and the king at this banquet. It's Haman, the one who hatched the plot to convince the king to order the decree to destroy the Jews.

5 Then the king said, "Bring Haman quickly, that he may do as Esther has said." So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther had prepared. Hey what's better than being invited to a small, intimate feast with all your favorite food? You can picture the king and Haman's excitement.

But the King is no dummy. He knows Esther has a request. Why else would she so boldly approach the king yesterday without being invited?

6 At the banquet of wine the king said to Esther, "What is your petition? It shall be granted you. What is your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!" The King asks Esther a second time to make her request.

7-8

7 Then Esther answered and said, "My petition and request is this: 8 If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, then let the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said." Esther invites Ahasuerus and Haman to another banquet the next day. She says at that banquet she will reveal her request to the king.

Now there's debate here amongst theologians. Was Esther's repeated delay of revealing her request a predetermined plot on her part, was this on purpose? Or was Esther too scared to utter her petition, so she panics at the last minute and says we'll have a feast and then I'll reveal my request.

My personal belief is that Esther sensed the timing to make her request was not right.

Has that ever happened to you?

In Acts 3 Peter and John saw the man that had been lame since birth. Surely they had walked past this man dozens if not hundreds of times before. But this time, in Acts 3 something was different. They had received the power of the Spirit, and also must've sensed it was the time to say, "In the name of Jesus Christ, rise up and walk"

Sometimes as believers we think we can randomly move in the arena of the miraculous. Yes we have been given the power, but we must wait for the authority, the timing that's right from God.

Of course we know it's hard to wait on God's timing isn't it?

9 So Haman went out that day joyful and with a glad heart; pause here. Of course Haman was joyful-he's been specifically invited by the queen 2x to a feast of just him and the king. We already studied last time how Haman was an egomaniac, and now you can picture his ego is just bubbling over.

Strutting about that day, and now

...9 but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, and that he did not stand or tremble before him, he was filled with indignation against Mordecai.

10-11

10 Nevertheless Haman restrained himself and went home, and he sent and called for his friends and his wife Zeresh.

11 Then Haman told them of his great riches, the multitude of his children, everything in which the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the officials and servants of the king. He's bragging about his meteoric rise, he's essentially the 2nd in command of Persia. He's showing off all his possessions. But there's a problem...

12-13

12 Moreover Haman said, "Besides, Queen Esther invited no one but me to come in with the king to the banquet that she prepared; and tomorrow I am again invited by her, along with the king. 13 Yet all this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." Haman should've been happy, but he seethes over the Jew who defies his authority.

Tragically, a similar scene often plays out in the lives of Christians! Hey never forget we're the bride of Christ. We're welcomed into the presence of the King. **Ephesians 1:6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.** We're accepted before God because of who we are in Jesus.

We have salvation, we have an eternal hope, we have countless blessings Jesus has given us, but some Christians lose sight of all of that because of conflicts with others.

Haman has the world in the palm of his hand, but all he can think about is Mordecai's refusal to bow down.

14 Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Let a gallows be made, fifty cubits high, (~75') and in the morning suggest to the king that Mordecai be hanged on it; then go merrily with the king to the banquet."

And the thing pleased Haman; so he had the gallows made.

Sadly, Zeresh's suggestion has been an all-too-common response to the Jews. For thousands of years Jews have been hunted and persecuted. In fact, no other race in human history has had to deal with the amount of hatred that Jews have had to endure.

Only looking at the time period from Assyrian exile to the 18th century, I have a list of documented Antisemitism and Jewish persecution. This does NOT include anything prior to Assyria

conquering Israel in 722 BC. Nor does it include anything in the 1800's, 1900's, or 2,000's. The holocaust is not in this list. This list is 62 pages long.

Satan hates the Jews, because they are God's chosen people.

Now we'll learn shortly that the construction of these 75' tall gallows to hang Mordecai took place immediately – the gallows went up overnight. This shows us the influence and power Haman had to have such a construction project done so quickly.

In chapter 6 the scene shifts.

Chapter 6

1 That night the king could not sleep. So one was commanded to bring the book of the records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. The king was tossing and turning and couldn't get to sleep. So the king has an idea-have someone read a few pages of government records-hey that'll put anybody to sleep.

And guess what page was read... Here we go again, God's providence at work. Verse 2 tells us,

2 And it was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, the doorkeepers who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. Remember at the end of chapter 2 Mordecai uncovered an assassination plot against the king. Mordecai told queen Esther, and it saved the king's life.

Esther 2:21 In those days, while Mordecai sat within the king's

gate, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, doorkeepers, became furious and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. 22 So the matter became known to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name. 23 And when an inquiry was made into the matter, it was confirmed, and both were hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king

And you'll recall that Mordecai's bravery and loyalty had been recorded, but had gone unrewarded. How do you think Mordecai felt when there was no recognition or reward that came his way? How would you have felt if you saved the king's life and nobody seemed to care, nobody said a word?

But for Mordecai there was a reason!

And it's a reminder for us that there is always a reason. God has His purposes. When we feel cheated, or go unrewarded, or our circumstances just don't make sense, God has a purpose hidden from our view. We need faith to trust Him.

But now, God's purposes and plans are about to be revealed in Mordecai's life...

3 Then the king said, "What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?"

And the king's servants who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him." This is Amazing! Think about it-what are the odds... out of thousands of pages in the royal register the one that's chosen to put the king asleep happens to mention

Mordecai's saving the king's life? And on the very night where the next morning Mordecai was going to be hung?

This was obviously, no accident and no coincidence. This is God's providence and sovereignty on display!

Folks, in the midst of our struggles, and our suffering we need to remember, God has a plan, and most of the time we have NO idea what it is!!!!

The king wants to reward Mordecai, but Ahaserus needs a courier to deliver Mordecai's reward. The king asks if anyone is in the building to deliver it to Mordecai. And guess who shows up for work early that morning in the king's court?

4 So the king said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace to suggest that the king hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him. As the rabbis say, "Coincidence is not a kosher word."

I pray you know this morning that there are no accidents with God!!

Haman comes to the king early to recommend they hang Mordecai, and watch what happens...

5-6

5 The king's servants said to him, "Haman is there, standing in the court."

And the king said, "Let him come in."

6 So Haman came in, and the king asked him, “What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?”

Now Haman thought in his heart, “Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?” Haughty Haman assumes the king is talking about him, so he lays it on thick. He gets lavish,
7-9

7 And Haman answered the king, “For the man whom the king delights to honor, (thinking its himself) 8 let a royal robe be brought which the king has worn, and a horse on which the king has ridden, which has a royal crest placed on its head. 9 Then let this robe and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king’s most noble princes, that he may array the man whom the king delights to honor. Then parade him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him: ‘Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!’ ”Here’s Haman’s suggestion to the king: Deck the guy out in royal threads, put him on a mighty stallion, throw a parade in his honor, and sing his praise in the streets. And of course Haman thinks it’s him about to be honored!

10 Then the king said to Haman, “Hurry, take the robe and the horse, as you have suggested, and do so for Mordecai the Jew who sits within the king’s gate! Leave nothing undone of all that you have spoken.”” Can you imagine the shock on Haman’s face! His jaw must’ve dropped. And Haman has no choice. It was now the king’s command.

11 So Haman took the robe and the horse, arrayed Mordecai and led him on horseback through the city square, and proclaimed

before him, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!" Can you imagine how much Haman died inside with every step! And Mordecai's reaction to all this had to be just as shocked. I wonder how Mordecai reacted when his mortal enemy became the leader of a parade held in his honor?

12 Afterward Mordecai went back to the king's gate. But Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered. Haman is mourning the death of his pride, the death of his plans.

13 When Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him, his wise men and his wife Zeresh said to him, "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish descent, you will not prevail against him but will surely fall before him." They know there is no way Haman will prevail over Mordecai.

14 While they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs came, and hastened to bring Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared. For Haman there's no time for mourning. The equivalent of the royal limousine arrives to take Haman to the banquet with Queen Esther. He'll never return home.

Chapter 7

1-2

1 So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther. 2 And on the second day, at the banquet of wine, the king again said to Esther, "What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!"

This is it—it's go time for Esther...

3-4

3 Then Queen Esther answered and said, "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. 4 For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. Had we been sold as male and female slaves, I would have held my tongue, although the enemy could never compensate for the king's loss." Esther shows great wisdom in her statement here. She doesn't just blurt out she's a Jew. She's laying a foundation. She says I'm gonna be killed and so are all my people. And how does the king respond?

5 So King Ahasuerus answered and said to Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who would dare presume in his heart to do such a thing?" You can imagine the king in shock. He's the king of Persia, the most powerful man in the world. Who would dare do this to his wife, the queen? Can you feel the rage bubbling up inside of Ahasuerus?

6 And Esther said, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!"

So Haman was terrified before the king and queen. See Haman knew that Mordecai was a Jew. But remember we were told Esther hid her identity. Now Haman realizes in his attempt to kill Mordecai and all the Jews, he has inadvertently tried to kill the queen.

7 Then the king arose in his wrath from the banquet of wine and went into the palace garden; but Haman stood before Queen

Esther, pleading for his life, for he saw that evil was determined against him by the king. Ahasuerus is furious. His most trusted officer has plotted to kill his wife. He steps out to get some air. He takes a walk in his royal gardens to cool off and calm down. The king is confused-how could Haman do this?

Of course when Ahasuerus leaves the room, Haman begs for his life.

8 When the king returned from the palace garden to the place of the banquet of wine, Haman had fallen across the couch where Esther was. Then the king said, "Will he also assault the queen while I am in the house?"

As the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. The king sees Haman's posture and it looks like he's making a pass or trying to assault at Esther.

And when someone throws a black hood over your head it's never a good sign...

Think about what we've just read in the past few minutes. When Mordecai woke up that morning there's no way he envisioned the change in fortune he would experience that day.

This is why I'm always excited to wake up in the morning! We never know the amazing things God has for our lives.

If you're a Christian this morning, you know where you're going to spend eternity. Which means, with whatever breath we have left on this earth, there is always hope!

9-10 we see the end of Haman as we finish our study...

9 Now Harbonah, one of the eunuchs, said to the king, "Look! The gallows, fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke good on the king's behalf, is standing at the house of Haman."

Then the king said, "Hang him on it!"

10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's wrath subsided. Talk about irony. Haman hangs from the very gallows he built for Mordecai.

How quickly God turned the tables on the enemies of the Jews. And this has been the case throughout their history. God promised Abraham and all future Jews

Genesis 12:3 I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

God told Abraham He'd bless the nations that bless Israel, and curse the nations that curse them.

Hitler, the man who wanted to annihilate the Jews, was the primary cause in the formation of the modern state of Israel. What a strange twist, as Germany crumbled, Israel was reborn.

Our God has an incredible way of taking what Satan means for evil in our lives and turning it around for good.

Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. Years later, Joseph found himself prime minister, second only to Pharaoh. His brothers came before him, begging for food. And Joseph revealed his identity. When his brothers reacted in fear, Joseph said, **Genesis 50:20 "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive."**

Think about the cross of Christ. The horror the apostles and disciples must've felt when they saw Jesus nailed to that tree. Talk about what seemed to be a hopeless situation!

But 3 days later, hope was restored-Jesus rose again!!

And folks, we have hope, because Jesus is coming back!!