



Esther 1-3

7153-55 Esther CHAPTER 1

Let's turn now to the book of Esther. The events in the book of Esther cover a period of about twelve years, and it is a fascinating book. It gives to us the historic setting for a Jewish feast called the Feast of Purim. The Feast of Purim is something that the Jews celebrate to the present day. It's celebrated in the twelfth month of the Jewish calendar, which is equivalent to the month of March on our calendar. And to the present time, over in Israel in the month of March, they still celebrate Purim: much different, I'm sure, than they did originally.

Purim has become sort of the Jewish equivalent to our Halloween, in that, all of the children dress in costumes for the Feast of Purim. They have a special cookie that they bake called the Hamantasch which has sort of the shape of an ear, and it has a poppy seed filling in it: a delicious cookie, but they are called "Haman's Ear," Hamantasch. The villain's, the little boy villains, dress up as Haman. And, of course, the girls dress up as Esther. And it is quite a sight to see the children over in Israel during the Feast of Purim and their celebrations of this particular period of history when God, in His providence, spared them extermination from this descendant of Agag, the Amalek.

And so the interesting thing about the book of Esther is, even though the word "God" is not mentioned in the book of Esther, His hand print is seen through the whole book. We can see how that God is preparing in advance for what He knows is coming.

The purposes of God are fascinating. God is always in that work of preparation for the future. Our problem is that we don't know what the future holds, and thus, we don't understand the work of God that is happening in our lives at many different junctures of life. And we are prone to judge the entire story by one bad chapter, or what appears to us to be a bad chapter. And when things go wrong, there are disappointments and discouragement. We're prone to think that God has forsaken us, that God isn't concerned with us. And some people in this condition even begin to make foolish accusations against God. But when we see the full cycle, then we understand what God is doing, and we see how God was working all the while.

And in the book of Esther, we have this interesting insight into backgrounds. Knowing the full story, (it takes away a lot from the excitement and the intrigue of it), but we see that God is working far in advance, setting people in strategic places in order that He might at that particular strategic moment in history, save the Jews from this attempted extermination. And we see how God's hand was working in the whole background.

So the first three chapters are sort of setting the background for the stage, and it is just giving us some of the ways by which God was moving behind the scenes years in advance to fulfill His purposes in times to come. And as God works in our lives, sometimes the things that God is doing today are not really for today: they're for five years, or twelve years down the road before we really see what God had in mind. And then we say, "Oh, can you beat that? Remember what happened to us when..? Wow!" And you see God's hand was there guiding, and God was overseeing the whole program. And it's exciting when the cycle comes around, and we can look back, and we can see the hand of God.

And so, Esther is one of those kinds of stories where God is laying out years in advance for His purposes to be fulfilled at a strategic moment of history.

So it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (now this is Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over a hundred and twenty seven provinces:) [when Darius and Cyrus were the kings of Persia. Persia at that time only reigned over a hundred and twenty provinces, but now seven more provinces have been added; from India to Ethiopia, the reign of Ahasuerus. He is thought to be the Xerxes of secular history] that in those days, when king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace, [now, Shushan was the winter palace for the Persian king. It is in a desert area. It gets much too hot to stay around there in the summer, and so it was the winter palace of the Persian monarchy] in the third year of his reign, [so, mark this: it's the third year of his reign that this particular incident took place] he made a feast unto his princes and his servants; and the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and the princes of the provinces, were assembled before him: and then he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honor of his excellent majesty for many days, even a hundred and eighty days. And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto the great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace; --

So, nobles had been brought from the hundred and twenty seven provinces, the chief, and notable people. And they had this great feast for a hundred and eighty days, as he displayed to them all of the glory, all of the wealth of the Persian empire. And, of course, according to Herodotus the historian, it was one of the wealthiest of all early empires. And when Alexander the Great finally conquered Persia, he was an extremely wealthy man; for he conquered and took the wealth of this great empire. And so, this feast lasted for a hundred and eighty days. And after that, they had a seven day continuation in which everybody participated, it was a general feast for all of the people. And the palace was all decked out.

There were white, and green, and blue, hangings, that were fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to the silver rings and the pillars of marble: and the beds were of gold and silver, upon the pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black, marble. [The floor of mosaics, beautiful marble mosaics. And all of these curtains that quartered off different sections for the different groups. And they had plenty of booze.] They gave them drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse from each other,) royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king. And the drinking was according to the law; no one was compelled to drink: [or, "was compelled to stop drinking." So you could get just as sauced as you wanted] for so the king had appointed to all of the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure. [Drink all you want. Drink as little as you want.] Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to King Ahasuerus. And on the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, and Biztha, and Harbona, and Bigtha, and Abagtha, and Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains [or, the "eunuchs"] that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king, to bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to show the people and the princes her beauty: for she was beautiful to look on.

Vashti, a very beautiful queen. The king is a little drunk, and he wants to show off her beauty. Now, in that culture it wasn't proper for a woman to go out into public without her veil, without her coverings. What the king is asking her to do is just to come over, and he might just display her glorious beauty without her veil so that everyone can see the beauty of the queen.

But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains: therefore the king was very angry, and his anger burned in him.

It is sad when people drink and lose their sense of judgment. Oftentimes a person will do things under the influence of alcohol that they would not normally do. The tragic thing is that it robs a person of

natural inhibitions and of good judgment. And, so many things that have been done under the influence of alcohol are later rude. The person is so sorry when they finally realize what they have actually done. And so the king, because of his being in a state of drunkenness, is angry. He's upset that she would not obey his command to come before him.

Now, Persian kings were pretty high potentates and they weren't used to people saying, 'no' to them. In fact, you remember as the story progresses, and Mordecai suggests that Esther go into the king to speak for the defense of her people, that she said, "Look, you just don't go in and see him at your own wish. If I go in before the king without being called, it could mean my life. If he doesn't raise the golden scepter to me, they'll take my head off right there. And so, the Persian king was not one to mess with. But Vashti had the courage to say, "No." And according to Josephus, these fellows came several times but she insisted in not coming in.

Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for thus it was the king's manner toward all that knew the law and the judgment: [he called the lawyers in, the fellows who understood the laws, and so forth] and next to him was Carshena, and Shethar, and Admatha, and Tarshish, and Meres, and Marsena, and Memucan, [and this is the guy we're interested in, Memucan, because he's the one that came up with the right advice] and the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king's face, and those which sat first in the kingdom;) [and he said] What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to the law, because she has not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by his eunuchs? [What shall we do to her? What's the law in this case?] And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all of the princes, and to all of the people that are in all of the provinces of king Ahasuerus. For this deed of the queen will come abroad unto all of the women, so that they will despise their husbands in their eyes, and when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she didn't come.

So he said, "Look, this is serious, man. Word gets out in the province of this, we go home, and our wives hear that Vashti didn't come when you called, we're going to have a real revolt on our hands, a women's lib. Can't have this, we've got to do something drastic. This is serious."

Likewise all of the ladies of Persia and Media will say this day unto all of the king's princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. And thus shall they arise too much contempt and wrath. ["Man, we've got real trouble on our hands if she gets by."] So if it please the king, let there go forth a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it might not be altered, --

We do know that the law of the Medes and the Persians could not be changed. Remember when Darius, (it happened earlier in history, but we won't get it until later in Daniel), when king Darius had signed the decree that no one could pray to anybody but him for thirty days, and he sealed it with the signet ring; the laws of the Medes and the Persians could not be broken. The king even himself could not alter the law that he had made. And Daniel, being caught as a violator of the king, did his best to deliver Daniel from the king's own edict, but he was bound by his own edict; for the laws of the Medes and the Persians were an edict of the king that was sealed with his ring. It could not be broken.

So, here they say, "Make this commandment and seal it so that it cannot be altered." And it may be that they knew that the king was a little drunk, and he loved Vashti, (and it was well known his love for her), so that they wanted to really seal this thing so he couldn't, when he sobered up, change his mind about the whole thing.

--That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she. And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all of his empire, (for it is great,) all of the wives shall give to their husbands honor, both to the great and the small. [And so, you know, --'the women, it'll teach them a lesson. They'll learn, and they'll not rebel against the men.'] And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan: for he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule over his own house, [the man rules the house] and that it should be published according to the language of every people.

So, throughout the hundred and twenty three provinces, this decree went written in each of the language groups so that they would all understand that the man was the ruler of the house.

CHAPTER 2

After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, (sobered up) he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her.

And, evidently, he was a little despondent over it at this point. And his servants saw that, 'Uh-oh, he's getting lonely.'

And then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king: and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all of the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, in the custody of Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given them: and let the maiden which pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so.

So, a Miss Universe contest: and all of the young virgins, the beautiful girls from throughout the kingdom, were brought in to the area of Shushan and there placed under the charge of this eunuch, Hegai; and they were to go through a twelve month beautification course: six months with oils, and six months with perfumes. And after that period of time, they would be brought in, night by night; each night a new one to the king, until he found one that really pleased him, who would be then the queen in the place of Vashti.

So, now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite; who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah the king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.

Now, Mordecai was probably himself not personally carried away captive, because that would mean that he would be about a hundred and twenty years old at this point, which is not very practical, but the Benjamites were carried away, and he was of the tribe of Benjamin, of the family of Kish; and so, of the family of Kish carried away in the captivity, his family was. And so, he is of this tribe.

And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter.

So she was a cousin to Mordecai, his uncle's daughter; a very beautiful young girl. Her parents both died, and thus, he raised her as his own daughter.

So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan to palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, the keeper of the women. And the maiden pleased him, (that is, Esther) and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her all of the things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, the seven maidens, which were necessary to be given to her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids to the best place of the house of the women. But Esther did not show her nationality nor her family: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not show it.

So, she did not reveal that Mordecai was her cousin. She did not reveal that she was a Jewess. Her cousin Mordecai had commanded her not to do it.

And Mordecai every day paced in front of the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what would become of her. Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after she had been twelve months, according to the manner of women, (so were the days of their purifications accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, six months with sweet perfumes, and with other things for the purifying of the women;) Then thus came every maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given to her to go with her out of the house of the women into the king's house. She had her choice of gowns, jewelry, and everything else to go in. And in the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned to the second house of the women, in the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines: and she came unto the king no more, unless the king would call her by name. And so Esther became a part of the harem of this Persian king. Now when Esther's turn came, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come when her turn was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all of them that looked on her. So Esther was taken unto the King Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

Now, what year of his reign did he have the big feast? Third year. Good. This is the seventh year; so a four year period has transpired between chapter one and chapter two. This is four years later. During that period of history, there was some battles against Greece, which had begun sort of a rebellion. And there were some battles fought: and now he is back. And when he got back from the battles, and so forth, then he started thinking about Vashti. And so this whole thing was planned to take his mind off of the queen that he deposed.

And the king loved Esther above all the women, she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all of the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and he made her the queen instead of Vashti. Then the king made a great feast unto all of his princes, his servants, even Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, he gave gifts, probably canceled taxes, back taxes according to the state of the king. And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king's gate. Now Esther had not yet showed her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him.

As she was obedient, he guided her through her early years. And she remained obedient to his work, even though she is now queen.

And in those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains,

Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were angry, and they sought to lay hands on king Ahasuerus. And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told it to Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king thereof in Mordecai's name.

She said, "I've got a report from this fellow, Mordecai, that two of the men who watched the gate are out to assassinate you.

And so, there was an inquisition, and it was found out; therefore both of the men were hanged on a tree: and this was written in the books of the chronicles before the king.

Now, the stage is set. This is all background. It's been happening over a four year period of time. Vashti rebels against the order of the king and is thus deposed from being the queen. A beauty contest is held, and Esther comes out number one. When the king sees Esther, he falls in love with her, he gives her the royal crown. Esther is now queen. But now, this second little incident; her cousin Mordecai, who hangs around the gates, sort of as a protector to Esther, interested in her welfare; while he is there, somehow he becomes knowledgeable of a plot to assassinate the king. And so he tells Esther about these two fellows planning this assassination. Esther tells the king in Mordecai's name, they have an investigation, they find that it is true, that there is a real plot to assassinate the king, the men are hanged, and the whole thing is recorded in the chronicles of the king. Now a reward is given to Mordecai for the information at this point. That's all a part of God's plan. This whole thing, the stage is now set by God. He's got Esther on the throne, the king owes a favor to Mordecai that has not yet been paid. That's all background. Now as the story begins to unfold, we'll see how God's hand was here working in advance, years in advance; setting people in strategic places that they might be there at the appropriate time, that they can be the instrument of God for salvation.

God sets His people in His places, sometimes years in advance. We don't know what God has in mind five years down the road, ten years down the road. God works over a long term period. And I say so often, when we are in the midst of a situation that we do not understand, we are prone to complain against the LORD.

My mind goes back to the story of Joseph: how that being favored by his father Jacob, it has created a jealousy in his brother's hearts, and his ten older brothers become extremely jealous of him. He has a couple of dreams that really don't help the situation, because in the dreams, it puts his brothers in a subservient position to him. And he, being the youngest of them, or of the eleven, he had one younger brother, Benjamin, later; but he being the youngest of the eleven, it really upset them that he would have these dreams, and that he was his father's obvious favorite.

So, when his father sent him out to find his brothers and to see how they were doing, as they were watching Jacob's flocks, when they saw Joseph coming, they said, "Ah hah, here comes this dreamer. Let's kill him, and then we'll see what happens to his dreams."

And so, as he was approaching them, Reuben, one of his older brothers said, "Let's not kill him." Reuben said, "Let's throw him in this pit here, and we'll just let him starve to death. Why should you get your hands bloody?" And so, when Joseph came up to them, they grabbed him, wrestled him down; they ripped off his robe that his father had made for him, or given to him, a princely robe, and they threw him in the pit. And they just sort of sat, and talked, and jested while he was down in the pit crying, pleading with them to let him out.

They saw this caravan coming along, it was headed towards Egypt, a bunch of traders; and they said, "Hey, why don't we sell him as a slave? We can get something for him. Doesn't matter if he's not dead.

He'll be gone. Let's just sell him." So they stopped this caravan of traders, and they said, "Hey, we've got a slave here. How much do you give us for him?" And they bickered with the guys, and bartered, till they finally got twenty pieces of silver for Joseph; and they sold him as a slave. And as this wagon train continued to Egypt, Joseph was bound, and he cried to his brothers. He said, "Please, please don't do this." They just laughed, and said, "Tough luck, dreamer."

When he came to Egypt, he was sold on the slave market to a man by the name of Potiphar; who happened to be one of the king's attendants: chief attendants, actually. And Potiphar's wife took a real shine to him, and sought to entice him to go to bed with her. And he steadfastly refused, but she became more insistent. Until one day, she grabbed by the coat, and was determined to force him into bed. But he got free and ran out, leaving the coat in her hand; and he had no fury like a woman's scorn. And she began to scream, "Rape!" Called in the guards, and said, "Look what this Hebrew has done; he tried to rape me. And when I started screaming, he ran out." And so, he was put in the king's prison, because of the position of Potiphar.

And after a time, the king's butler, and the king's baker both displeased the Pharaoh. He threw them into prison. While they were there, they had dreams, dreams that Joseph interpreted for them. And the dream that the butler had was interpreted as being, in three days, you're going to be serving the Pharaoh his wine again, you're going to be restored to your position. The baker's dream was different: he was carrying these loaves of bread that he had baked for the king, and the birds came and ate the loaves. And Joseph said, "That's the bad one. In three days, the Pharaoh's going to have your head."

So he said to the butler, "When you are restored to the Pharaoh, would you tell him about me? You know, see if you can do something for me here. Because I'm here on a bum rap. I'm not comfy." In three days, when the butler was restored to his position, he forgot all about Joseph.

Two years went by, Joseph is sitting there in the prison in Egypt. When the king has a bad dream, and when no one can interpret the king's dream, the butler says, "Oh, I remember today, a fellow in prison that I promised I would do what I could to help him. He's a Hebrew, but he can tell you what your dream is about."

And so, Joseph came in, and heard the dream, and he told the Pharaoh the interpretation. There would be seven good years followed by seven lean years. The lean years would be so bad, all of the surplus of the good years would be eaten up. And so, the king sought to appoint a man through the seven years to build large granaries and silos, and all; throughout Egypt, gather the surplus, so that when the lean years came, they would be able to make distribution to the people. And the king said, "There's no one wiser in the kingdom wiser than you. I appoint you to that task." Gave him the king's ring so he could make all of the official proclamations, and all; and set Joseph second only unto the Pharaoh in all of Egypt.

Now, this took a process of a period of time. But in that story, if Joseph had never been in the pit, he would never have gone to Egypt. Had he not been in prison, he would never have been brought in contact with the Pharaoh.

Now, if you would stop the story in the pit, or as Joseph is bound in the wagon, being taken to Egypt, if you'd stop the story there, Joseph would have real cause for saying, "Well, God, what are You doing? Why are You doing this? God, You don't love me. God, you don't care what happens to me." If, while he was in prison, the story was stopped, again there would be cause for that false charges against God. "You don't care about me at all;" these false charges: "I'm here..." and, you know, there's plenty of room to fault God.

But God is working out purposes. And sometimes it's necessary, in the purposes of God, that I spend some time in the pit. Perhaps in a prison. But God has me there for His purposes, for His strategic timing. And when you read the final chapter, you see the plan and the purpose of God. And then you realize the wisdom of God. And the hand of God was there in the experience in the pit, the hand of God was there in the experience of the prison. It was all to work out God's purpose in this man's life.

Our problem is that we freeze-frame the story in the midst of the pit, and we really begin to complain against God, and we begin to object to the ways of God. We begin to challenge God, we begin to question God, and sometimes even charge God foolishly. But God is working.

God's hand was upon Joseph in the pit. God's hand was upon Joseph in the prison. It was all a part of God's plan to ultimately bring him before the Pharaoh, that he might make him second in command over the whole land of Egypt, in order that during this tremendous famine that was coming, he would be able to ultimately sustain his family alive. That was God's ultimate purpose: to sustain Jacob and the family alive. So He gets Joseph down to Egypt in advance, and all of this is a part of God's whole program.

That's why I say, never judge the story of your life until you read the final chapter, because there are times when the story looks pretty grim. There are times when it seems like the hero is going to get blotted out. You know, all of the forces against him seem to be so powerful.

And you remember that in the midst of this whole experience, the sons of Jacob came back with the bloody coat of their brother, and they said, "Look, Dad, what we found out in the wilderness. This sort of looks like Joseph's coat to us." And Jacob examined it, and he said, "It is the coat of Joseph my son, and surely some wild beast has torn him." And Jacob grieved and mourned for years over the loss of his son Joseph.

When the brothers came back from Egypt, going down to buy grain, and they said, "Man, the guy down there in Egypt, the head honcho, he is a tough cookie. Man, was he rough to us. He gave us a bad time. He thinks we're spies. He's certain we're spies, and man, we just got out by the skin of our teeth. In fact, we had to leave one of the brothers down there as a hostage. That guy's mean. And he said that if we ever come back, we'd better bring our younger brother with us, or he knows we're spies, and he'll throw is all in jail." Jacob said, "Why did you tell him you had a younger brother?" They said, "Well, the guy asked us directly; and how did we know he was going to say, 'Bring him down'?"

So when they ran out of the grain that the brothers had brought back, Jacob said, "Well, sons, you'd better go down and get some more grain. They said, "No way, Dad. Not without Benjamin." He said, "I'll never let Benjamin go." And they said, "Well then, that's tough; because we're not going to go without him. That guy's too mean. No way are we going to face him without our younger brother."

And so, they waited awhile, and they were really getting low on food, and so, Jacob said, "Well, you've got to go. And if Benjamin has to go, I guess he has to go. But if something happens to him, it'll take me right down to the grave. It'll be the end. Judah said, "Well, I'll be surety for him, Dad." And as they took off, Jacob cried, "All things are against me."

And how many times in the middle of the story are we crying, "Everything is against me"? You don't know the whole story, Jacob. That mean fellow down in Egypt is your son Joseph. He's not only alive, man, this guy is second in command over all of Egypt; your son Joseph. And in a few days, you will be embracing Joseph, and your grandsons by him.

But you see, in the middle of the story when we don't know the end, we're prone to cry, "All things

are against me." Whereas the Scripture tells us, "All things are working together for good to those who love God, and are called according to His purpose." But there are times in the story when we question that. As the story is progressing, and we can't see the end, we are often times prone to challenge the Scripture, "All things work together for good." And we are prone to say, "I can't see how any good can come out of this mess;" and we challenge what God has said. But when the story takes it's cycle, and we see what God had in mind, then we say, "Oh, it's so true. All things work together for good to those who love God."

May God give us the faith to trust in Him when we're in the pit.

It doesn't take any faith to rejoice when you're sitting there second in command in Egypt. Everything's great. You know, "Oh, praise the LORD. Hallelujah, God is good." Great faith. No, no.

But when you're in the pit, when you're in prison: to be able to praise the LORD, and rejoice in Him, that takes faith. Faith in the Word of God. Faith in the face of evidence to the opposite. The evidences of my life right now may dictate, "This is horrible. You're in bad shape." But faith says, "Hey, it's not over, yet. Wait till it's over; and God will bring forth out of this whole experience, His purpose and His good plan."

CHAPTER 3

God is setting the stage. He has Esther as queen. He has Mordecai as a man who the king now owes a favor. And now, as we move into the story, the plot begins to thicken, because now we see God bring another man on the scene, and his name is Haman.

And after these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all of the princes that were with him.

The term "Agagite" is a term for "the king" used by the Amalekites, the descendants of Amalek, who was the grandson of Esau. Esau's son Eliphaz bear a son whom he named Amalek, and he was thus the grandson of Esau.

Esau in the Scriptures is a man after the flesh, living after the flesh, who despises the things of the Spirit. He despised his birthright. He is the only man I can think of in Scripture of whom it is declared that God hated him. But he hated God and the things of God.

And he has become a type of those after the flesh. And through Amalek, the man after the flesh, he becomes a type of the fleshly side of us, or the man of the flesh; Amalek and the Amalekites.

They were the ones that attacked Israel when they first came out Egypt there in the wilderness; attacked the rear part, the weak and the sickly and the aged; defeated later by Joshua. They were the ones that attacked the children of Israel when they tried to come into the promised land from Kadesh-barnea, and joined together with the Canaanites in driving them out.

Later, they joined with the Moabites in attack against Israel. Later on, when the Midianites filled the land at the time of Gideon, they had joined, the Amalekites had joined with them and covered the land like grasshoppers.

They were the perennial enemies of the people of God, and God had declared the He would have war with Amalek from generation to generation; there would be no peace. But God also declared that the day would come when God would wipe out the remembrance of Amalek from off the face of the earth. And

God also declared that Amalek would perish forever.

God told Moses to write in the law, when they came in and settled the land of promise, that they were to settle the score with Amalek because of the way they attacked them there in the wilderness, and they were to go down and to utterly destroy them, not to spare them at all.

And in the time of King Saul, the time came for this extermination, and he was ordered by God through the prophet Samuel to go down and to destroy the Amalekites. But he failed to do so, he let King Agag live. He brought back the finest of the cattle and the sheep. And for this sin, he was deposed in God's eyes from being the king over Israel.

Haman, the Agagite, the enemy of God's people, the one who hated the people of God; a type of the flesh.

Mordecai on the other hand, becomes a type of God's people, the spiritual man; a type of the spirit, and thus there is the warfare; the flesh against the spirit, the spirit against the flesh.

So all of the king's servants, that were in the king's gate bowed and revered Haman; for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence. And when the king's servants, which were in the gate, said to Mordecai, Why do you disobey the king's commandment? It came to pass, when they were daily speaking unto him, and he did not hearken to them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand; for he had told them that he was a Jew.

They said, "Why don't you bow?" He said, "I'm a Jew." The Jews were under the command not to bow down or to worship any god.

You remember the three Hebrew children, who refused to bow to the image that Nebuchadnezzar had made, because they were Jews. They would not bow down.

And thus, when day after day, they got onto Mordecai for just standing there, they said, "Hey, man, why don't you bow?" He said, "I'm a Jew." So they came to Haman, and they said, "Do you know there's this guy there at the gate, Mordecai, he doesn't bow to you, man, and he just stands there, and he says the reason is he's a Jew."

So Haman then noticed Mordecai. When he came out, he looked for him, and he saw this little Jew standing there who would not bow, and would not do him reverence. And then was Haman full of wrath.

And he wasn't satisfied just to get Mordecai;

for they showed to him that he was a Jew, and there, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai.

His anger and wrath was so great, just to get Mordecai would not appease, or satisfy him, he was going to exterminate the whole Jewish race. Again, the anger or the malice of the Amalekites against God's people. It's demonstrated here.

Now in the first month, that is, the month Nisan, of the twelfth year of Ahasuerus,

What year did he have his feast? Third year. What year was Esther made queen? Seventh year.

Very good. Now, we are five years later. Isn't that interesting? God has had the chief characters in position for five years now. Esther's been there for five years as queen, and yet, the reason for her being there is not yet revealed. The purpose of God for her being there has not yet been fulfilled. Yet, she has been there, God has her there in advance.

And many times, God, in working out His purposes in our life, is working years in advance, and we don't even realize it, we don't even know it. But He is putting us in position, putting us into place years in advance. Our problem, we live on a day by day basis, and we look at today, and we look at tomorrow, and we say, "Nothing's happening in my life. I've been here for two whole weeks, and nothing's happening." Well, God's purposes are not always accomplished in two weeks. Sometimes it's years.

And here it is five years later that we now begin to see why God has put these people in these positions. He's got them there well ahead of the time that they will be used.

And so,

in the first of Nisan, the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur,

or lots; and this is where you get the name "Purim". Because he was determined he was going to try and exterminate them, but he wanted to get the mystical right day; and superstition, you know, there's going to be the perfect date for extermination. So, they cast lots to find out which day this decree should be fulfilled.

So, the first month, that is, the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, until the twelfth month, that is, the month of Adar.

Or, equivalent to our month of March. And this was the psychic month, in which they were to make the decree to kill of the Jews.

And Haman said unto the king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people that are scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of the kingdom;

The Jews had been thoroughly scattered by the Assyrians, until they were in all of the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus.

and their laws are diverse from all people; neither will they keep the king's laws; and therefore, it isn't to the king's profit to keep these people alive. So if it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed; and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king's treasuries.

I'll give you six million dollars if you'll let me carry out this eradication. I'll see that it comes into the king's treasuries.

And the king took his ring from his hand, this is that ring of authority, and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the Jews' enemy. And the king said unto Haman, The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seems good to you.

So, the king just trusts Haman; says, "Hey, you don't have to pay me, the silver is given to you. Do what you want to these people."

And then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded,

I mean, he didn't waste any time; the next day, man, he gets all of these decrees made.

and they were given to the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that were over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province according to the writing, and to every people after their language; in the name of the King Ahasuerus it was written, and sealed with the king's ring.

This is official business protocol.

And the letters were sent by the messengers unto all of the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to take the spoil of them as a prey.

In other words, if you kill a Jew and his family, then you could have all of his possessions. It was just sort of a reward, and an incentive, really, to go in and kill him, because then you could take everything that they had.

And so, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month was the day that was established for the extermination of the Jewish race.

The copy of the writing for a commandment is to be given in every province, and it was published unto all of the people, that they should be ready for that day. And the messengers went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city of Shushan was perplexed.

I mean, the people wondered, what in the world's going on? Here they can make a decree, "Eradicate all of the Jews," and then they can sit down and drink over it.

You wonder, don't you, if Hitler was maybe an Agagite. It is interesting how that the Jew has been the target for extermination many times in history. No national ethnic group that I know of has had so much hatred and animosity vented towards them as has the Jew.

Tragically, the history of the church is not clean in this matter; but there were times in the history of the church, when the church joined in the assault against the Jews, to the eternal shame of the church, and those that were in charge of the church during that period of time. For no matter what you may think about the Jew today, God has said, and He's given a covenant to Abraham, "I will bless those that bless you, and curse those that curse you."

We are, really, as Christians, compelled by the Scriptures to love them. And surely, Paul manifested a tremendous love for the Jew; so great that he said, "I could wish myself to be accursed from God for my brethren's sake after the flesh." If he could see the salvation and the redemption of Israel, he himself would give himself for it, he said. I could wish myself accursed from God for their sake.

How that should speak to us, and our attitudes toward the Jews today. You say, "But, they rejected the Messiah, and they are doing this, and they're doing that." Ours still is to bless and to love. God will take

care of the Jews, but these people have suffered. They've suffered horrible atrocities throughout history; and of course, the latest being that holocaust.

But God's purposes are yet to be fulfilled. And even as God positioned Esther and Mordecai and all, so God has positioned the Jew today back in the land. It's part of God's total plan. It's a part of this whole overall program of God, and He's getting again all of the characters in position, and now they've been in the land, and they're positioned there ready for these last events of these last days; that the prophesies of the Scriptures might be fulfilled. The plan of God is working out. It may not happen tomorrow or the next day, but it's happening soon. They've been positioned there, and God has them there for His purposes. The nation has been reborn, and the purposes of God shall be established, and it's exciting to see how God works.

And God is working in our lives, and He has us here in this position for a reason. You are where you are for God's purpose. Esther, no doubt, had no inkling at all of why God had her be chosen. She didn't know that five years down the road, she would be the instrument that God would use to save the Jewish people from extermination, even as you have no inkling of why God has allowed certain things to happen, or why you are where you are, but God is positioning each of our lives for His purpose, for His plan.

And as we move on into Esther, we'll see the unfolding of this exciting story, and we'll begin to understand how God was working well in advance His purposes in these lives. And we'll see what God is doing in our lives, and for what purpose.

If you only knew the glorious purposes of God for you. Paul prayed for the church in Ephesus, that they might know what is the hope of their calling. If you only knew the things that God has in store for you as His child; the purposes of God for your life. If you only knew. Surely we would not be moping around, and complaining, and be dreary and downcast, but we would be rejoicing that God is at work.

Let us pray; Father, we thank You for Your purposes and Your plans for our lives. Lord, we offer ourselves to You as living sacrifices; that You might, O God, work in us Your eternal purposes You desire, and as You see fit. Lord, that You will use all of the background that You've brought us through; that the whole story, Lord, will be unfolded, and the purpose of God might be manifest; that we might rejoice, O Lord, even in the midst of the prison, and in the midst of the pit, because, Lord, Your hand has led us all the way. So, continue Your work in our lives dear Lord. Bring it to fruition. May we not bail out before You've accomplished Your purposes, but Lord, may we just hang in there, trusting in You, until You bring it to pass, in Jesus' name.