

It's Time – Living For Jesus In Our Day (Part 2)

Sunday, November 24, 2019

OVERVIEW

VIDEO: The Bible Project - Esther

The book of Esther is set during the era when the Persians ruled over Judah, in the reign of King Xerxes (Hebrew “Ahasuerus”). The Jews became subjects of the Persian Empire when Cyrus the Great, king of Media and Persia, conquered Babylon in 539 BC. (Babylon had taken over Judah in 605 BC, and many Jews were deported to Babylon as captives from 605 to 586 BC.) Even though Cyrus had issued a decree allowing the Jewish captives to return to their homeland, many had chosen to remain in Babylon. After living there for almost half a century, they had become well settled and prosperous. The thought of returning to the ruined and isolated land of Judah had little appeal to them. Some of these Jews made their way even farther east, to the new seat of power in the Eastern world: Susa, the capital of Persia. There they again found that ambitious and capable individuals could attain positions of affluence and influence, as the case of Nehemiah, cupbearer for King Artaxerxes I, demonstrates. Esther's story is set in this community of Persian Jews — far from their homeland, yet true to their heritage.

As we begin this series on Esther, I want to pull from a message that I preached 4 years ago on the Book of Esther when we were working our way through the entire Bible in our series Our Incredible, Amazing Bible. In that message I outlined the book of Esther and presented the following summary of the book's meaning

What We Learn:

While there is certainly no doubt as to the historical authenticity of the events of Esther and their record bearing witness as such, one might look at Esther as a beautiful picture (an allegory if you will much like C.S. Lewis' The Chronicles of Narnia) of many of the components of God's plan of salvation. It is with this thought in mind that I want us to take a look at what we learn from the story of Esther.

NOTE: I am not trying to directly relate each and every character to a corresponding character in God's plan of salvation but rather see some related ideas which help me perceive the awesome gift of God's salvation.

The picture of two kingdoms - God's Glorious Kingdom to which nothing can compare (though implied by its absence and perhaps by the reality of the Jewish homeland which had been restored) to which nothing can compare and the kingdom of this world that tries to regain what God had prepared for us, but

through inadequate means. Even the most elaborate kingdom on earth can not compare to that of God's

The picture of a beautiful creation, that through rebellion, loses her position of relationship with the King

The picture of the beautifying transformation of salvation which prepares us as a bride without spot or wrinkle, worthy of being in the presence of The King

The picture of an orphan whose beauty is desired by the King

The picture of the providence, provision and protection of God - The Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The picture of an eternal enemy bent on our destruction

The picture of a King who never forgets

The picture of a King who delights to give his beloved anything she asks for

The picture of the battle for and cost of our salvation

The picture of the triumph of good over evil

The picture of remembering and celebrating our salvation

Last week we said that Esther Chapter 1 teaches us that...

It's Time To Stop Swimming In Cultural Currents

- 1. Cultural Currents pull us in the wrong direction**
- 2. Cultural Currents entangle us and keep us from being productive for God**
- 3. Cultural Currents can sweep us away**

Somehow, Mordecai and Esther found a way to live differently than the cultural currents of their day. They were in the world but not of the world. Likewise you and I must find a way to stop swimming in cultural currents living in the world but not of the world

Esther 2 New International Version (NIV)

2 Later when King Xerxes' fury had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what he had decreed about her. **2** Then the king's personal attendants proposed, "Let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king. **3** Let the king appoint commissioners in every province of his realm to bring all these beautiful young women into the harem at the citadel of Susa. Let them be placed under the care of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women; and let beauty treatments be given to them. **4** Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." This advice appealed to the king, and he followed it.

5 Now there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, named Mordecai son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, **6** who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, among those taken captive with Jehoiachin[\[a\]](#) king of Judah. **7** Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother. This young woman, who was also known as Esther, had a lovely figure and was beautiful. Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died.

8 When the king's order and edict had been proclaimed, many young women were brought to the citadel of Susa and put under the care of Hegai. Esther also was taken to the king's palace and entrusted to Hegai, who had charge of the harem. **9** She pleased him and won his favor. Immediately he provided her with her beauty treatments and special food. He assigned to her seven female attendants selected from the king's palace and moved her and her attendants into the best place in the harem.

10 Esther had not revealed her nationality and family background, because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so. **11** Every day he walked back and forth near the courtyard of the harem to find out how Esther was and what was happening to her.

12 Before a young woman's turn came to go in to King Xerxes, she had to complete twelve months of beauty treatments prescribed for the women, six months with oil of myrrh and six with perfumes and cosmetics. **13** And this is how she would go to the king: Anything she wanted was given her to take with her from the harem to the king's palace. **14** In the evening she would go there and in the morning return to another part of the harem to the care of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the concubines. She would not return to the king unless he was pleased with her and summoned her by name.

15 When the turn came for Esther (the young woman Mordecai had adopted, the daughter of his uncle Abihail) to go to the king, she asked for nothing other than what Hegai, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the harem, suggested. And Esther won the favor of everyone who saw her. **16** She was taken to King Xerxes in the royal residence in the tenth month, the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

17 Now the king was attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women, and she won his favor and approval more than any of the other virgins. So he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. **18** And the king gave a great banquet, Esther's banquet, for all his nobles and officials. He proclaimed a holiday throughout the provinces and distributed gifts with royal liberality.

Mordecai Uncovers a Conspiracy

19 When the virgins were assembled a second time, Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate. **20** But Esther had kept secret her family background and nationality just as Mordecai had told her to do, for she continued to follow Mordecai's instructions as she had done when he was bringing her up.

21 During the time Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthana[b] and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, became angry and conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. **22** But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king, giving credit to Mordecai. **23** And when the report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were impaled on poles. All this was recorded in the book of the annals in the presence of the king.

The picture changes dramatically in chapter 2. Here we see so many illustrations of our salvation and relationship to God.

1. The search for a new queen - Gods desire to have relationship with us
2. The virgins like the virgins in the New Testament who were to be prepared for the bridegroom
3. Carried away into exile - the fall of mankind
4. The lineage of Gods people, though hidden for the moment - the truth that we are still Gods children
5. The seven attendants - representative of the seven spirits of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit our comforter, teacher and helper
6. Being brought into the King's Palace - our position because of salvation
7. The beauty treatments - our ongoing process of sanctification and perfection in Christ, 12 months broken into two periods of six months, becoming infused with the fragrance of Christ

Ephesians 5:27 New International Version (NIV)

²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

2 Corinthians 2:15 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁵ For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.

8. The attributes displayed by Mordecai and Esther - wisdom, humility, patience, quietness, gentleness, obedience, beauty, respect of position, kindness, gratitude...

These last two areas are what I want to focus on this morning as we discuss our next point in this series...

It's Time To Clothe Ourselves With The Beauty of Holiness

4 times the apostle Paul uses the phrase "called to be holy" in his letters to the Romans, the Corinthians, the Ephesians and Timothy. To Timothy he writes...

2 Timothy 1:9 New International Version (NIV)

9 He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,

To accomplish this we must answer two questions

1. What are the clothes of holiness?
2. How do we put them on?

We have already begun to answer the first as we look at the attributes displayed by Mordecai and Esther. And there are so many passages in the New Testament that tell us what our lives should look like as we put on the holiness of Christ

Let's look at two...

Colossians 3:12-17 New International Version (NIV)

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. **13** Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. **14** And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. **16** Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. **17** And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

That's Gratitude For You

Posted: 18 Nov 2019 07:55 AM PST

A grandmother was watching her grandchild play on the beach when a huge wave came along and carried him out to sea.

She cried out, "Please God, save my only grandson. I beg of you, bring him back."

Suddenly another big wave came along and tossed the boy back onto the beach, good as new.

The grandmother looked up to heaven and said: "He had a hat!"

That's gratitude for you.

Have you noticed that there are some who just can't be satisfied? There are some — and I'm talking about you and me sometimes — who have a hard time expressing gratitude.

Or even *feeling* it.

In 2001 Stephen Post, a medical school professor of bioethics, created a research group called the *Institute for Research on Unlimited Love*, dedicated to testing and measuring the effects of love, gratitude, and other positive caring emotions in human life.

Dr. Post's research has discovered that spending 15 minutes a day focused on things you're grateful for can have the following effects on our physical health:

1. It increases your body's natural antibodies.
2. It increases mental capacity and reduces vulnerability to depression.
3. It creates a physiological state of resonance, improving your blood pressure and heart rate.

That's gratitude for you. It not only lifts up the recipient, it also gives life to the one expressing it.

This is why we're told time and time again in scripture to give thanks:
A thankful heart puts us in right alignment with God and one another.

Galatians 5:16-23 New International Version (NIV)

16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. **17** For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever[\[a\]](#) you want.

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;

20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions **21** and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Secondly, how do we put them on? Esther gives us a clue, it takes time and we must soak ourselves, immerse ourselves in these attributes until they become infused into our lives. We need beauty treatments which come from spending time in Gods Word, spending time with God, spending time being taught, spending time applying these truths to our lives

There are two more thoughts from Chapter 2 that I want to address briefly

It's Time To Take A Stand For What's Right

- While we might not witness modern day physical assassination events, there are still those who would attack our current president with vicious intent
- There is a world around us filled with what is wrong. As believers it is time to take a stand

It's Time To understand That Everything Is Written Down

- Both the good and the bad
- And while, we may not receive credit or judgement for it here on this earth, we can be assured that God keeps a record of every thought and every deed
- We will be rewarded for what we have done.
- We will be judged for what we have done - But thanks be to God we can wash it away under the blood of Jesus