

07-09-2017

Message: Good News!

Text: Esther 8:1-17

Introduction

- A. In the recorded history of the Bible, God performed many of what the Bible calls “signs and wonders,” miracles observable to the naked eye, even to the eyes of unbelievers.

Deuteronomy 26:8 and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with great terror and with **signs and wonders**;

Acts 5:12 At the hands of the apostles many **signs and wonders** were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico.

- B. But during the era of Biblical history there were also periods when God did not perform signs and wonders.

Psalm 74:9 **We do not see our signs**; There is no longer any prophet, nor is there any among us who knows how long.

- C. The decade of 5th century BC Persian history recorded in Esther appears to be one such period. Esther contains no mention of God, Scripture, prayer, prophets, worship, or of any signs and wonders performed by God, and yet God inspired Esther to be written in such a way that we are to see God the unseen God very much at work in all of life. This is important, because ...

- D. We here today appear to be in such a period where we don't see any signs and wonders being performed by God at the hand of any of us. This might tempt us to live our daily lives thinking subconsciously that God is not sovereignly active and working in all situations in our lives and in all of creation.

- E. So the surprising absence of God's name in Esther appears to be deliberate, not to make the point that he is inactive in human situations, but on the contrary, that though He is hidden in Esther's period of history, as He is in our own, He is nonetheless in complete control, working behind all human and world events to carry out His gracious purposes to glorify Christ and to bless those who love and trust Him (Romans 8:28).

- F. The way God has inspired the author of Esther to communicate this truth to us is through several means ...

1. satire/irony - poking fun at the folly of those who, thinking they are in control, oppose God's people and purposes.
2. extreme reversal of fortunes between the righteous and the wicked
3. apparent coincidences that are too extraordinary to be truly coincidental to those with eyes

of faith.

I. 7:10 - 8:2 God's ironic reversing of fortunes.

- A. God wants us to understand Haman's downfall as a manifestation of God's providential working to humble those who are proud and wicked and to exalt those who are humble and righteous.

Esther 7:10 So **they hanged Haman on the gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai**, and the king's anger subsided.

Psalms 147:6 The LORD supports the afflicted; **He brings down the wicked to the ground.**

Proverbs 15:25 **The LORD will tear down the house of the proud**, but He will establish the boundary of the widow.

- B. God also wants us to understand Mordecai's receiving honor as a manifestation of God's providential work in exalting the humble and righteous. The property of traitors in Persian law was given to the king.

Esther 8:1 On that day King Ahasuerus gave the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews, to Queen Esther; and Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had disclosed what he was to her.² **The king took off his signet ring which he had taken away from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.**

Proverbs 29:23 A man's pride will bring him low, **but a humble spirit will obtain honor.**

- C. God is also reminding us to humble ourselves before Him, before His Son Jesus Christ as Lord, and wait for Him to exalt us at the proper time. For those who do, look at how God has already brought about a great reversal of our fortunes.

1 Peter 5:5 ... **all of you**, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.⁶ Therefore **humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,**

Ephesians 2:3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.⁴ **But God**, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,⁵ **even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ** (by grace you have been saved),⁶ **and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,**

II. 8:3-8 God's people are to complete God's purposes for their lives.

- A. Recall that Esther, at risk to her very life, entered the king's presence without invitation to plead for the life of her people who by Haman's edict were destined for annihilation. She did so being convicted that God's had raised her up as queen for this very purpose.

Esther 4:13 Then Mordecai told *them* to reply to Esther, "Do not imagine that you in the king's palace can escape any more than all the Jews.¹⁴ "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish. **And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?**"

Esther 4:15 Then Esther told *them* to reply to Mordecai,¹⁶ "Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; ... And thus **I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.**"

- B. 8:3,4 Esther would need to continue to make appeals to the king, continue to trust God to turn the king's heart in her favor. Haman was dead, but his edict encouraging the extermination of the Jews was not. The threat to Mordecai was over, but the threat to the Jews was not.

Esther 8:3 Then Esther spoke again to the king, fell at his feet, wept and implored him to avert the evil *scheme* of Haman the Agagite and his plot which he had devised against the Jews.⁴ The king extended the golden scepter to Esther. So Esther arose and stood before the king.

1. Esther's beginning act of courage in initially coming before the king to expose Hamon's wicked plot did not relieve her of her responsibility to finish the purpose for which God raised her up as queen - to be used to bring deliverance to God's people.
2. Imagine if your aging roof was in need of replacement, and you carefully measure the areas, order all the necessary materials and have them delivered to your property, along with a large dumpster. You work hard to remove all the old shingles and tar paper. You carefully pick up all the discarded shingles and nails around the property, and remove several 4.8 foot plywood boards that are soft or rotting - and then stop and do no more. What will happen to your house? Will all of the diligent and hard work at the beginning of the project be of any value? No, only if you finish the work.
3. So also with Esther, and so also with you and me. If we begin to follow Jesus, if we begin to yield everything we are and have to Him as Lord, yet stop following, stop yielding, what good will have been our beginning if we don't continue to the finish of our lives?

Luke 14:28 "For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?"²⁹ "Otherwise, when he

has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him,³⁰ saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' ...³³ "So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.

4. God is calling us to be conformed to the image of Jesus, who as the end of His life was approaching could pray ...

John 17:4 "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.

B. 8:5,6 Esther's unselfish, sacrificial heart reflects the heart of the Lord.

Esther 8:5 Then she said, "If it pleases the king and if I have found favor before him and the matter *seems* proper to the king and I am pleasing in his sight, let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the king's provinces.⁶ **"For how can I endure to see the calamity which will befall my people, and how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?"**

1. That she and Mordecai were safe was not enough. Unfortunately, her attitude is not typical of the world.
2. Even righteous people can be tempted to be satisfied with their own well-being, with their own salvation, and not that of God's elect - E.g., king Hezekiah. "But you did not learn Christ this way" (Eph. 4:20).

Isaiah 39:5 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD of hosts,⁶ 'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house and all that your fathers have laid up in store to this day will be carried to Babylon; nothing will be left,' says the LORD.⁷ 'And *some* of your sons who will issue from you, whom you will beget, will be taken away, and they will become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon.'"⁸ Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good." **For he thought, "For there will be peace and truth in my days."**

Colossians 1:24 Now I rejoice in **my sufferings for your sake**, and **in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church**, in filling up what is lacking in **Christ's afflictions**.²⁵ Of *this church* I was made a minister according to **the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit**, so that **I might fully carry out** the *preaching* of the word of God,

- C. 8:7,8 King Ahasuerus could not reverse an edict he previously authorized, but gave his signet ring to Mordecai to authorize any additional edict.

Esther 8:7 So King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Behold, I have given the house of Haman to Esther, and him they have hanged on the gallows

because he had stretched out his hands against the Jews.⁸ "Now you write to the Jews as you see fit, in the king's name, and seal *it* with the king's signet ring; for a decree which is written in the name of the king and **sealed with the king's signet ring may not be revoked.**"

Esther 1:19 "If it pleases the king, **let a royal edict** be issued by him and let it **be written in the laws of Persia and Media so that it cannot be repealed,**

1. It would no doubt become a comfort to the Jews to know that their fellow Jews, Esther and Mordecai, were given access to the king's presence, and were invested with the king's authority.
2. How much greater comfort is given to us believers, knowing that God's Son who is not ashamed to call us brothers, has been exalted to the right hand of God, being given all authority in heaven and earth, and the Holy Spirit to seal us for the day of redemption.

III. 8:9-12 A counter decree of deliverance for God's people

- A. 8:9,10 Seventy days after Haman's decree (3:12), Mordecai writes and sends a decree to all the provinces and peoples in the empire to counter the decree against God's people.

Esther 8:9 So the king's scribes were called at that time in the third month (that is, the month Sivan), on the twenty-third day; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded to the Jews, the satraps, the governors and the princes of the provinces which *extended* from India to Ethiopia, 127 provinces, **to every province according to its script, and to every people according to their language** as well as to the Jews according to their script and their language.¹⁰ He wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, and sealed it with the king's signet ring, and sent letters by couriers on horses, riding on steeds sired by the royal stud.

- B. 8:11,12 The edict authorized the Jews to defend against, defeat, and destroy any who would come against them on the 13th day of the last month of the year, the very day and month Haman had selected by lot to have the Jews annihilated.

Esther 8:11 In them **the king granted the Jews who were in each and every city the right to assemble and to defend their lives,** to destroy, to kill and to annihilate the entire army of any people or province which might attack them, including children and women, and to plunder their spoil,¹² **on one day** in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month (that is, the month Adar).

IV. 8:13-14 The good news is to be proclaimed to all the peoples

- A. This good news was to be quickly proclaimed among all the peoples and provinces in the Persian Empire.

Esther 8:13 A copy of the edict to be issued as law **in each and every province was published to all the peoples**, so that the Jews would be ready for this day to avenge themselves on their enemies.¹⁴ **The couriers, hastened and impelled by the king's command, went out, riding on the royal steeds**; and the decree was given out at the citadel in Susa.

- B. How much more the good news of deliverance from the power of sin, Satan, and the last enemy - death, through faith in the crucified, risen, reigning, and returning Lord Jesus Christ is to be quickly sent out among the peoples of every nation and language.

Matthew 24:14 "**This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations**, and then the end will come.

Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth**."¹⁹ "**Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations**

V. 8:15-17 The good news is to be celebrated with joy and gladness

- A. 8:15 Notice once again the reversal of fortunes that the Lord in His sovereign providence brought about. When Haman's edict went out, Mordecai was mourning, dressed in sack cloth and ashes, and the city was in confusion. Now Mordecai is dressed in royal attire and the city is rejoicing.

Esther 8:15 Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal robes of blue and white, with a large crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple; and the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced.

Esther 4:1 When Mordecai learned all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city and wailed loudly and bitterly.

- B. 8:16,17 God's people celebrate their provision and promise of deliverance with joy and feasting.

Esther 8:16 For **the Jews there was light and gladness and joy and honor**.¹⁷ In each and every province and in each and every city, wherever the king's commandment and his decree arrived, **there was gladness and joy for the Jews, a feast and a holiday**. And many among the peoples of the land became Jews, for the dread of the Jews had fallen on them.

- C. Haman sent out his edict the day before the Jews celebrated Passover, no doubt to ruin their celebration of God's deliverance of them from their bondage in Egypt. While the Jews responded to Haman's edict of annihilation with sorrow and fasting, the king and Haman sat down to a feast. But now their sorrow was turned in to joy, their fasting into feasting,

and in the city of Susa where there had been confusion there was now heard shouts of joy.

Esther 3:15 The couriers went out impelled by the king's command while the decree was issued at the citadel in Susa; and **while the king and Haman sat down to drink, the city of Susa was in confusion.**

Esther 4:3 In each and every province where the command and decree of the king came, **there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing;** and many lay on sackcloth and ashes.

Conclusion

A. Our God has promised us, His people that one day ...

Isaiah 51:11 the ransomed of the LORD will return and come with joyful shouting to Zion, and everlasting joy *will be* on their heads. They will obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

B. Though we do not presently see His working toward this end with the signs and wonders, we do see with eyes of faith the continual working of His hand of Providence behind all things visible and invisible, leading to that day when He turns our fasting into feasting, our corruptible bodies of humiliation into incorruptible bodies of glory, and our temporary sorrows into everlasting gladness.

C. Until that day, we who sincerely trust in Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior presently have a feast in which we celebrate our deliverance by His death and resurrection, and celebrate His promised return for us. No edict of man can ruin or counter what this feast signifies and promises.

1 Corinthians 5:7 ... for **Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.**⁸ Therefore **let us celebrate the feast,** not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but **with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.**