

## The Tables are Turning

Call to Worship: Psalm 113

Hymn #70- *Praise My Soul, the King of Heaven*

1<sup>st</sup> Scripture: Acts 2:1-39

Hymn #86- *Now Thank We All Our God*

2nd Scripture: Esther 6

Hymn #13- *O Worship the King*

### Introduction:

By the grace of God, Esther had been granted access to the king, when the king gave her the nod of his golden scepter. God had received and honored the prayers and the fasting of the Jews, on her behalf. And furthermore, the king had assured Esther that he would grant her whatever she desired, even up to half the kingdom. However, biding her time, Esther requested that the king, along with Haman, come to another feast tomorrow, where she would then bring forth her request. The king concurred, and everything seemed to be falling so well, into place.

But then, as we follow Haman home that evening, we are brought face to face with an unexpected twist, which seems to intrude upon the will and power of God. At the advice of his wife and friends, Haman determines to have Mordecai hung on a gallows, the very next day, *before* he attends Esther's feast. He has the gallows set up, and intends on going to the king, first thing in the morning, in order to gain his approval. We might possibly wish to believe that the king would refuse such a request, were it not for the fact that he has already granted Haman, his most respected and trusted servant, permission to have a decree sent out, guaranteeing the execution of all of the Jews, in all of the provinces of Persia, at the end of the year. A king does not hand his signet ring to just anyone.

This morning, we forge ahead into the second half of the Book of Esther, and beginning right here in chapter 6, we will find God starting to turn the tables on Haman, and on all of the enemies of the Jews. God will step in, and glorify His Name, in some of the most profound ways, without the use of a single miracle, on behalf of His troubled and helpless people.

## **I. A Survey of Esther 6**

It just so happened that the king was unable to sleep that night, and it just so happened, that he commanded one of his servants to bring him "the book of the records of the chronicles" (sort of like a royal diary of the affairs of the kingdom), to be read to the king, since he could not sleep. And it just so happened, that the servant read all that was written about the time when Mordecai had exposed the conspiracy of Bigthana and Teresh, the two eunuchs who had plotted to kill the king. And it just so happened, that the king was concerned about what kind of honor Mordecai had received for saving the king's life. And it just so happened that, upon the king realizing that nothing was done for Mordecai, Haman had arrived in the court, preparing to ask the king for permission to have Mordecai hung on the gallows. And it just so happened that the king was now prepared to ask Haman for advice, on how he could best honor Mordecai for what he had done for the king, in the past. Haman was coming to ask for Mordecai's life, and the king was preparing to ask Haman, how he could best honor Mordecai, at the same time. And the dialog that follows (vs. 6ff), takes place in a most ironic and almost comical way, doesn't it?

The king calls for Haman, and he immediately says to Haman, "What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?" (vs. 6). And it just so happened, that Haman, who is so full of himself, actually thinks that the king could only possibly be speaking about him. And so, he is going to advise the king to elevate this person into the dream world that Haman has organized for himself. Loving accolades and the praises of men, Haman responds, "For the man whom the king delights to honor, 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. 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!'" (vs. 7-9). Concluding his own personal dream, and probably salivating as the king's eyebrows begin to indicate that this is acceptable advice, Haman is utterly shocked when he hears the king respond in this way:

"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" (vs. 10). Now brethren, if I were making the Book of Esther into a movie or if I were directing this one

scene even, I would have the camera pan down to the back of Haman's pants, right at this moment, allowing the audience to view a sudden and immediate sag take place! I would have no better way of explaining what Haman must have felt at that very moment. The very one whom Haman despised, hated, looked down upon and was preparing to murder, was inserted into Haman's ultimate dream for himself, and Haman was the one who would serve to parade Mordecai around, while shouting aloud, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!" I mean, what a coincidence, right? Because these kinds of things just happen to happen, absent from any divine interference? Now, of course, I am being facetious all along, because clearly divine sovereignty is written all over this. Clearly, God has ordered all of these events, setting up Haman for utter embarrassment, shame and humility, before having him killed in place of Mordecai. And clearly, God is exalting the lowly, faithful Mordecai, who has been mourning in sorrow and anguish on behalf of his people, who were soon to be doomed. Our invisible God was leaving His large, divine imprint on the soil of His creation.

And so, the high and lofty Haman is given the wonderful, paradoxical, privilege of clothing Mordecai in royalty and ushering him all throughout the city on the king's horse, shouting aloud, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor" (vs. 11). To be sure, his insides; all of his internal organs must have been melting in agony the whole time.

Following this, Mordecai returns to the gate, and Haman hurries home, mourning, with his head covered. The reality of his human frailty hits home, and he is utterly devastated by all that has just transpired. After telling his friends and his wife all that had happened, they wisely, though "a dollar short and a day late," reply, "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" (vs. 13). Even they had begun to realize that divine intervention had taken place here, and that the God of the Jews was a God with whom one could not contend.

And then, ironically; or better yet, providentially, right at the moment that they were all talking, the king's eunuchs had arrived to quickly take Haman to the second feast that Esther had prepared. It was as if the words of Haman's wife and friends were prophetic, ushering Haman toward their immediate fulfillment! Clearly, these events had transpired so rapidly and so ironically, that one would have to be absolutely brain dead, to miss the hand of God at work here. God was making a very loud and clear statement in the rapid, paradoxical downfall of

Haman, and then his children, and then the enemies of the Jews, all of which we will consider in the weeks ahead.

What then can we learn from the events that have transpired here in Chapter 6?

## **II. Practical Applications Taken from these Events**

1) Five years had passed since Mordecai had exposed the plot of Bigthan and Teresh, when they had conspired to kill the king. And though Mordecai had done such an honorable thing, he received no honor for doing this, five years ago. It were as if his great kindness was overlooked and ignored. However, in God's good providence, it was documented in the chronicles of the king (Esther 2:23), and now five years later, God took that seed and brought it to blossom, when the king could not sleep, the evening that Haman had plotted to hang Mordecai.

Now brethren, get this wonderful point here for a moment. While God is always and forever all-sovereign, and that, independent of the actions of man, God uses the actions of man to unfold His glorious and sovereign will. Here, God had taken a faithful action committed by Mordecai; a seed, sown in the ground of faith, and in due time, He used it to preserve, prosper and exalt Mordecai. The fruit was not immediate, nor was it obligated of God, but God brought it about in due time. And here is the point, brethren: When you sow seed in the Spirit, in due time, God will bring an increase from that seed. Now, there are preachers out there, who will use this as a means of creating greedy, money hungry, people in the church, calling them to sow money seeds into the purses of the preachers, with the assumption that God will give them back more money with interest. That is not what I am saying. I am talking about sowing any act of faith in the Gospel, trusting that God will bring about fruit from such actions in His perfect time. When you sow in the Spirit, you will reap spiritual things in the kingdom of God. All of your labor "in the Lord," is never done in vain.

You see, the blessed advantage of working out of our faith, is that we work unto a God who is all-wise and all-sovereign. And that being the case, we can assume that nothing sown will go to waste, but in due time; in just the right time, God will bring the increase, for our good;

for the good of His kingdom, and for His glory. Mordecai had absolutely no expectation that he would be exalted by the king because of his faithfulness; he simply did what was right before God, and God graciously honored Mordecai, by means of that faithfulness...five years later!

2) Notice, a "just" principle of "reversal" starting to take place here, which we find throughout Scripture, and especially in the Proverbs. Esther, as we will see in the upcoming weeks as well, is a Book that presents us with a wonderful picture of "reversal," where God humbles those who exalt themselves (the proud), and exalts those who are humble. Here, Mordecai, the lowly Jew, is beginning to rise to a state of God ordained exaltation, and Haman, the proud Agagite, is beginning to fall to a state of God ordained humiliation.

Friends, it would do us much good; young people, it would do you much good to consider this principle of "reversal," as you live in a world that grossly promotes "pride" as an honorable virtue. Pride is of the devil, and nothing good can ever come from it. And your flesh craves it! What is pride? In a general sense, pride is the desire and push to be God. It exists where created beings; beings fashioned, gifted and equipped by God, strive to exalt themselves and to rob God of His glory, by accrediting every God instilled gift/ability to themselves. It is idolatry of the worst kind, and that form of idolatry which is most common to all of us, namely, self-idolatry. You see, humility recognizes that God is the Author and Creator of every blessing, ability, gift, talent and person, and that without Him, we can do absolutely nothing. Are you in the battle to be better than everyone else; to be recognized; to receive praise and honor from others...then understand the principle of reversal. In due time, God will greatly humble you. If He saves you, He will begin by bringing you down to the dust, where you belong. And if you die in your sin, you will reap the consequences of your pride and your sins for all of eternity in hell, with no one to relieve you, ever. At some point, you will find yourself to be powerless; would it be that God would bring that about in this lifetime, before it is too late. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God!" God is a just God, and He repays sin, according to its just due. Humble yourself now in the sight of God, while you still have breath. Young people, humble yourself now and bow the knee to Christ; don't rise any higher in your own estimation; for the higher you rise, the greater your fall will be, even should God be pleased to save you.

3) Lastly, brethren, notice the principle of reversal here expressed, manifested in our blessed Lord and Christ. I believe that this is one of the ways in which we see the glory of Christ in the Book of Esther. Mordecai would seem to be a glorious, finite picture of our infinite, far more glorious Christ!

Did not the proud, applause loving, religious leaders of His day, think that they had won the battle, at the cross? Did they not believe that they closed His lips for good, enabling them to go back to stealing the praise and adoration of the people? And yet, by their wicked intentions, and in the guilt of their bloodshed, they both brought Him into the accomplishment of our atonement, and seated Him in the highest position of authority, at the right hand of God! Their murdering of the Messiah brought about His very exaltation! Or better yet, God made use of their wicked intentions to bring about; to be the very gateway to His exaltation! We saw this in our first Scripture reading, in Acts 2, when Peter, preaching to the Jews, proclaimed, "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know--Him, being delivered *by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God*, **you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;** *whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it...* Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that *God has made this Jesus*, whom **you crucified**, both Lord and Christ! (Acts 2:22-24 & 36).

AMEN!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25