

A Practical Study of ESTHER

Study Number Three – Esther 3:1-4:17

If you can get in your mind's eye that Esther has been married now for almost five years. We got her married in the last study and the wedding was in 478 B.C.

It's now 474 B.C.. There's only one more year left in her life (as far as the recording in the book is concerned) and we don't know what happens to Esther after she fades out of the picture. We're concentrating these remaining studies in this last very, very significant time in her life.

Xerxes served from 486 B.C. to 465 B.C. We're at 474 B.C. This is his twelfth year of serving. He has nine years left before he is assassinated.

3:v. 1 After these events, King Xerxes honored Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, elevating him and giving him a seat of honor higher than that of all the other nobles.

“After these events,”

In the last study Mordecai happened to be working Homeland Security at the gate and heard these two guys that had access to the palace were going to assassinate Xerxes. He told Esther

what happened and Esther told the king and those two guys were executed. That was the end of the study.

Now what would you think? You'd think that certainly they did something for Mordecai. Show appreciation and kindness? Well now almost five years have passed and they haven't done anything. On top of that, in the first verse you get a whole new guy on the block and he has nothing to do with any of it to this point.

Isn't that the way life is?

“After these events, King Xerxes honored Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, elevating him and giving him a seat of honor higher than that of all the other nobles.”

Here comes a guy immediately elevated and promoted to one of the highest positions.

Xerxes has been one to make emotional decisions and to do stuff on the spot and not think things through clearly. He obviously didn't do that with Vashti and you're going to see he's not doing something very nice in this situation.

Now there are a lot of differences of opinion who Haman is so I want to have just a few minutes with you. When you think of Haman and you think of Agag, you think of the Amalekites. If you'll remember, when Saul was told to go and destroy the Amalekites, he kept King Agag alive. Of course God's plan was that the Amalekites would be completely destroyed.

Do you remember why? When the children of Israel left Egypt, just shortly into the trip they were attacked by the Amalekites. The battle went on so badly but as long as Moses could hold the staff up, the battle was a victory for the Israelites. In the afternoon he got so tired that Aaron and Hur had to roll a rock up for him to sit down and hold him up on both sides so that the battle could be fought and the victory won.

If this indeed is a descendant of the Amalekites, which is a very real possibility, then what Saul failed to do now had to happen some six hundred years later.

God in His master plan had these people that were set apart as enemies of the children of Israel to be destroyed. I just chased back to two passages so that you can get the feel for this because there's another opinion and I'll give that to you before we go on.

Exodus 17:8-15—They have just crossed the Red Sea. They're on their journey and they aren't to Mount Sinai yet so they're early in the journey.

Exodus 17:8-15

The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. Moses said to Joshua, "Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands." So Joshua fought the

Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, and Aaron and Hur went up to the top of the hill...

Of course they won a wonderful victory that day. They not only won a wonderful victory, but Moses built an altar and he called it The Lord My Banner—referring to the fact that he was holding his hands up.

Now the other passage:

1 Samuel 15:1-35

Samuel said to Saul, I am the one the Lord sent to anoint you king over his people Israel; so listen now to the message from the Lord. This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them...

This is one of those passages where it’s total destruction.

1 Samuel 15:3, 4

...Do not spare them; put to death men, women, children, infants, cattle, sheep, camels and donkeys.” So Saul summoned the men...

And of course went to battle. As he was a leader, he always rationalized and he always came short of what he was

supposed to do. And this is where he loses the kingdom.

...Then Saul attacked the Amalekites all the way from Havilah to Shur, to east of the river. He took king Agag of the Amalekites alive, and all his people he totally destroyed with the sword. But Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and the cattle, the calves, lambs—everything that was good. ... (see 1 Samuel 15:7-9)

He comes to Samuel and says, “I did everything the Lord said.” And he said, “No you didn’t and you have just lost your kingdom. God is going to replace you with someone else.” That was a very emotional time.

The other possibility, because of the long time period between that story with Saul and where we are here in 474 B.C., could be that Agag refers to a place in Persia. Archeologists have found the name Agag as though it’s a location in Persia.

It would be just like if I said you’re from Dallas so you’re a Dallasite. Well you’re an Agagite if you are from Agag.

The other thing that you need to remember is that Mordecai is from the tribe of Benjamin and what you’re going to get to see is, if this is indeed true, that this is an Amalekite. He wouldn’t be caught dead bowing before an Amalekite.

That will explain some of the things that you’re getting ready to look at in the verses. I felt the need to give you a quick preview so that it fits and you’ll understand the possibilities of

what's getting ready to happen.

v. 2 All the royal officials at the king's gate knelt down and paid honor to Haman, for the king had commanded this concerning him. But Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor.

“All the royal officials at the king's gate knelt down and paid honor to Haman, for the king had commanded this concerning him. But Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor.”

There has to be a reason. But you remember in the last study he made a big issue over the fact that Esther nor he would ever tell anybody that they were of Jewish descent.

Anti-Semitism was very strong in the Persian administration. I would bet that it's almost as strong as it is today.

So Mordecai is standing all alone at the gate when old Haman comes by. All the rest of the guys are kneeling and bowing before him because the king had said that they had to.

v. 3 Then the royal officials at the king's gate asked Mordecai, “Why do you disobey the king's command?”

“Then the royal officials at the king's gate asked Mordecai, ‘Why do you disobey the king's command?’”

Wouldn't it be great if he just gave you in the next verse, “Well

I'm a Jew and I wouldn't do it." He didn't do that and so it leaves us and interpreters to try to figure out the chemistry that's going on here and why he's so upset.

Now just stop and think about it. He could be really ticked off that Xerxes never did pay him honor for anything and here comes a new kid on the block and he's put up as the prime minister of the whole empire. Those things can create all kinds of emotional upheaval and it's payback time. When he's expecting everybody to honor him, Mordecai isn't going to do it.

"Why do you disobey the king's command?"

v. 4 Day after day they spoke to him but he refused to comply. Therefore they told Haman about it to see whether Mordecai's behavior would be tolerated, for he had told them he was a Jew.

"Day after day they spoke to him but he refused to comply. Therefore"—well they went ahead and told Haman.

I think Haman is so caught up in himself he didn't even notice he wasn't bowing along with all the rest of them.

"they told Haman about it to see whether Mordecai's behavior would be tolerated, for he had told them he was a Jew."

Now you have a clue. It could be that what I just described for you is true. This guy is of Amalekite descent. He is from the

tribe of Benjamin and he is not going to be on his face before a rejected Amalekite. That's for religious purposes.

Is there any precedent in that? You remember when Nebuchadnezzar built that gold thing 90 feet tall and he told everybody they had to bow? There were three toothpicks still standing up when everybody was on their face—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They wouldn't bow before that and they ended up in the fiery furnace and God carried them through that. They stood against the culture.

You see Daniel doing the same thing when it came time for that diet. That did not fit the requirements of his religious life and he asked to beg off. He purposed in his heart that he wouldn't defile himself with the king's meat. God blessed and took care of that situation.

In this situation, it is a whole lot different because there are some horrendous ramifications for the fact that he is not going along with the program. He did tell them that he was a Jew which is different from what he had told Esther previously.

Joyce Baldwin, a great commentator, wrote a book on Esther and she says:

“It's either pig-headed pride or loyalty to principle.”
(source unknown)

I'm going to stick with the fact that he's a Jew and that he really has religious reservations about going along with it.

v. 5 When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged.

“When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was [ticked, he was] enraged.”

He lost it. Isn't it amazing how you can go along for so long and then just one thing triggers such horrible anger? But the anger is not by itself. There's been a build-up of offenses, of things unwilling to forgive. Situations that have continued to rise and accumulate create a volatile situation. He just flat loses it.

v. 6 Yet having learned who Mordecai's people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes.

“Yet having learned who Mordecai's people were,”— he knows now that he's a Jew. That information has been passed on to him.

“he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai.”

I don't want to just get rid of one of these guys. He comes up with this horrendous ambitious plan in his hatred and anger to wipe out the whole Jewish population in the Persian Empire. That is close to fifteen million people in 127

provinces. This is a big, big operation.

Isn't it interesting how one guy failing to do what the Prime Minister wants and what the king has commanded, would lead to something as devastating as all this? And the thought process?

I think he just literally snapped.

“Instead Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes.”

Does that remind you a little bit of Hitler's Germany? The hatred and accumulation of all of that? For some reason to spew out all that poison. It's just a satanically inspired thing that's described here according to John MacArthur. I think Haman's hatred for the Jews, if he is of Amalekite descent, is probably historical.

The big thing is his colossal pride and self-centeredness. His arrogance is seen in what he wants to do, not only to Mordecai.

The word is “enraged.” He lost it. He got very, very angry.

v. 7 In the twelfth year of King Xerxes, in the first month, the month of Nisan, they cast the pur (that is, the lot) in the presence of Haman to select a day and month. And the lot fell on the twelfth month, the month of Adar.

“In the twelfth year of King Xerxes,”

Where are we? Twelfth year—we’re at 474 B.C.

“in the first month, the month of Nisan, they cast the pur”

Now that’s not a cat. That word stands for “lot.” When a Persian guy wanted to get a date or wanted to do something governmentally, they asked the spirits so they would cast the lot—the pur. And wherever that fell, he would draw up the decree on that date.

If you don’t see God behind all this take another look—this is the first month. And the lot’s going to fall on the twelfth month so our fine folks are going to have almost eleven months to brace themselves and get ready.

God is so wonderful the way He orchestrates time and circumstances when you become aware of it. And He does it and it comes out to the first month of Nisan:

“they cast the pur (that is, the lot) in the presence of Haman to select a day and month. And the lot fell on the twelfth month,”—so we’re at the first month. We’re going to go all the way to the twelfth month—“the month of Adar.”

And so on the first day of the year in Nisan—which is April and May, 474 B.C.— at the beginning of Xerxes twelfth year, he has nine years left in his administration.

Since God is not mentioned in this, I want to take a couple of minutes to read some Psalms and a couple of Proverbs at this point because I think you need to see the hand of God and be convinced that He's there and orchestrating all of these things even though He's not mentioned.

Psalm 31:15—this is the NIV:

Psalm 31:15

My times are in your hands;
deliver me from my enemies
and from those who pursue me.

I love the NET Bible. I want to read these two verses in the NET Bible just to entice you:

Psalm 31:15-16

You determine my destiny!
Rescue me from the power of my enemies
and those who chase me.
Smile on your servant!
Deliver me because of your faithfulness!

Isn't that good? I mean it lets you get the feel of what's actually going on here.

Now two verses from Proverbs:

Proverbs 16:9

In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.

Proverbs 19:21

Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.

That's what's happening here. God has written an unconditional covenant with Abraham that the Messiah will come and that they'll be protected and they'll live in a land where they are living today. Also the Davidic covenant is unconditional and there will be a future kingdom that's going to come.

None of our politicians believe that. They don't look at the Scriptures so their whole view of the Middle East is skewed because they rule out everything biblical. Personally they are God's chosen people and here is another illustration of somebody being foolish enough by trying to wipe out the Jews in his own empire. Watch how God sovereignly orchestrates all of these things around them.

Here comes the edict. You talk about a politician just really blowing smoke and trying to get a signature without really looking at all the details.

v. 8 Then Haman said to King Xerxes, “There is a certain people dispersed and scattered among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom whose customs are different from those of all other people and who do not obey the king’s laws; it is not in the king’s best interest to tolerate them.

“Then Haman said to King Xerxes, “There is a certain people”—he will not mention their names.

He knows that Xerxes will probably throw up a red flag here.

They are “[dispersed and] scattered among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom whose customs are different from those of all the other people and who do not obey the king’s laws;”—now that is really blowing something all out of proportion.

He’s saying, “There’s one guy in Susa who won’t bow according to your edict and demand—he’s the only one—but I’m going to include the whole Jewish race in this disobedience. They won’t do the things that you asked them to do.”

Naturally he’s going to get upset.

“it is not in the king’s best interest to tolerate them.”

“a certain people” they do not obey the king’s commands, and then his proposal is in the final part of it:

“it is not in the king’s best interest to tolerate them.”

”What are you going to do with them?”

v. 9 If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will put ten thousand talents of silver into the royal treasury for the men who carry out this business.”

“If it pleases the king,”—and this is the way you always talk to the king—“let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will put ten thousand talents of silver into the royal treasury for the men who carry out this business.”

Do you understand what that is? That’s 375 tons of silver. That is 2/3 of the annual Persian Empire income from taxation.

“Finance anything that I want to accomplish, I’ll pay the money and take care of it.”

He is willing to go to this extent of 375 tons of silver and that’s worth millions and millions of dollars—750,000 pounds. In our present currency that would be beyond our comprehension.

What is so weird about this, Xerxes is so vulnerable. He doesn’t ask who the “certain people” are. He doesn’t ask how they’re disobeying the laws of the land. Nothing! He’s just living in another world. And whatever they say to him, he’s

going to go with it.

In this kind of situation, you really feel sad for what's about to happen.

v. 10 So the king took his signet ring from his finger and gave it to Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews.

“So the king took his signet ring”—do you understand that?

That's when somebody gives you their credit card. I mean you do everything you want to do with their name.

It was the same as putting your signature there. So he gives him his “signet ring”:

“So the king took his signet ring from his finger and gave it to Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews.”

We know this guy, if he is an Amalekite, he is indeed an “enemy of the Jews.”

Now one of the things you have to understand and you'll remember this if you studied the book of Daniel, when the Persians wrote an edict and the king stamped it with his signet ring you could never violate it. You could never change your mind.

Do you remember the deal about Daniel? When the Babylonian empire fell, Darius hired Daniel in his administration and he was one of the top three guys. Then he was even going to elevate him to Prime Minister just like Haman. The other guys got jealous so what'd they do? They tricked the king into signing an edict with his signet ring that nobody would pray to anybody but Darius for 30 days. He's vulnerable. He's on an ego trip but he goes along with it.

Then he finds out that the one guy who violates this is Daniel because he prays three times to his God. So they run and tell him. And they say, "Therefore the edict says he has to be thrown in the lions' den."

Darius had that painful day trying to figure out how he could avoid Daniel being executed and he was unsuccessful. Of course he didn't sleep all night but he was there first thing in the morning. He says, "Oh Daniel! Are you still there?" What a thrill to hear Daniel say "My God protected me because I hadn't done anything wrong."

That's the power of the Persian Empire. This edict is getting ready to be stamped and cannot be nullified. It has to be carried out on this particular date. You'll notice that the decree specifies exactly what's going to happen.

v. 11 "Keep the money," the king said to Haman, "and do with the people as you please."

First of all, Xerxes says "Keep the money." Now he doesn't

mean that. That's kind of like, I'll pay for it and then you don't pay for it. You just meant it as kind of a gracious statement.

“Keep the money,’ the king said to Haman, ‘and do with the people as you please.’”

“the people”—not the Jews. He doesn't know who they are. His favorite person who saved his life from assassination happens to be a Jew and the sweet lady that he married five years ago happens to be a Jew too. He's not even aware of it!

We often get tricked because of lack of information or care about the decisions that we make in our lives.

v. 12 Then on the thirteenth day of the first month the royal secretaries were summoned. They wrote out in the script of each province and in the language of each people all Haman's orders to the king's satraps, the governors of the various provinces and the nobles of the various peoples. These were written in the name of King Xerxes himself and sealed with his own ring.

“Then on the thirteenth day of the first month the royal secretaries were summoned. They wrote out in the script of each province and in the language of each people all Haman's orders to the king's satraps, the governors of the various provinces and the nobles of the various peoples. These were written in the name of King Xerxes himself and sealed with his own ring.”

The day that the decree was dispatched is the month of March 474 B.C. You get an idea that we have just about 11 months left before the decree will take effect.

v. 13 **Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews—young and old, women and little children—on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods.**

“Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order”

Now notice the HOT WORDS. These are terrible—“to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews.”

Hang on to those three words because they're going to come out of the lips of somebody else.

“—young and old, women and little children—on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods.”

The reason I think he put that in there is because when he kills fifteen million Jews he's going to be able to have a real estate windfall. He'll be able to apprehend and sell the property and recover a whole bunch of this horrendous amount of money that he is putting into the whole project.

So March 7th 473 B.C. is the date of Adar. That's when it's going to happen. That's the last time we're going to see Esther and the story of Esther will end. So we're in 474 B.C.. We're going to be working within the confines of about eleven months here in these next experiences.

Go “to all the king’s provinces,” order them to “destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews—young and old, women and little children—on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar,”—March the 7th, 473 B.C.

v. 14 A copy of the text of the edict was to be issued as law in every province and made known to the people of every nationality so they would be ready for that day.

“A copy of the text of the edict was to be issued as law in every province and made known to the people of every nationality so they would be ready for that day.”

In other words, now anti-Semitism is going to come to the surface. They have all these months to get ready for this day, to kill these Jewish enemies that are in the Persian Empire. Get ready for that day.

v. 15 Spurred on by the king’s command, the couriers went out, and the edict was issued in the citadel of Susa. The king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Susa was bewildered.

“Spurred on by the king’s command, the couriers went out, and the edict was issued in the citadel of Susa.”

You know the hardness of heart? Make an edict to kill fifteen million people and then sit down and celebrate it with a glass of wine with a guy who wrote the edict and you’re the king of the land.

“The king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Susa was bewildered.”

Everybody was just devastated! It’s like getting hit with a shot broadside. They can’t even comprehend why an edict like this would be coming from the pen of the king.

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

“When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly.”

Is this a normal approach? Is this in fact normal for a Jew to put on sackcloth and ashes?

You read it over and over again in so many passages where there’s great brokenness, there’s great battles that are fought, there’s lives that are lost. At that time they expressed their

mourning with sackcloth and ashes.

And so he is devastated. He thought that things were going really well. Here's Esther the queen of the empire and she's now had about four and a half, almost five years of marriage and things have been rocking along. There haven't been any attempts of assassination at the gate in his Homeland Security Department and he's had a good time. All of a sudden this edict is posted like the 95 theses in the beginning of the Reformation.

What a devastating thing. He was "wailing loudly" and weeping bitterly.

In *The Red Sea Rules* this is a statement that kind of describes what God's doing with us.

(The Red Sea Rules: Ten God-Given Strategies for Difficult Times by Robert J. Morgan)

"God sometimes raises difficulties in the way of His people," said Matthew Henry, "that He may have the glory of subduing them, and helping His people over them."

The Lord devises ways of turning difficulties into deliverances and problems into praise. He gives beauty for ashes and an attitude of worship for the spirit of heaviness. He *will* glorify His name in the lives of His children, whatever their afflictions. He *will* gain honor for Himself over our adversarial situations. In the process, He will leave behind such blessings as make the burdens melt away like wax in the

sunshine.
pp. 23-24

We're going to see how God is working behind the scenes. Poor Mordecai, he is just literally devastated.

Here is Xerxes and Haman sauced out with drinking a glass of wine. And here's our poor hero down here Mordecai in "sackcloth and ashes," wailing and weeping loudly because his ground time is going to be brief. He knows exactly the date that this is going to all come into effect. He understands Persian government and knows that the edict cannot be nullified.

v. 2 But he went only as far as the king's gate, because no one clothed in sackcloth was allowed to enter it.

"But he went only as far as the king's gate, because no one clothed in sackcloth was allowed to enter it."

That was as far as he could go.

v. 3 In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

"In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and

ashes.”

So it's not just Mordecai. It's scattered throughout the whole kingdom. This wild edict that doesn't make any sense.

Now remember, Esther's not privy to this. She doesn't know anything yet. So what she's getting ready to do would be normal for her without the information.

v. 4 When Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai, she was in great distress. She sent clothes for him to put on instead of his sackcloth, but he would not accept them.

“When Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai, she was in great distress.”

What's happened to Mordecai?

“She sent clothes for him to put on instead of his sackcloth, but he would not accept them.”

The relationship they have with each other has been incredible. You've watched that in the first couple of studies. This is a situation where I wish they'd had email because things are going to fly back and forth between them.

You wish they had it because messages are going to go back and forth to try to open up communication between the two of them and it's going to get pretty tense here before we wrap

this thing up.

v. 5 Then Esther summoned Hathach, one of the king’s eunuchs assigned to attend her, and ordered him to find out what was troubling Mordecai and why.

“Then Esther summoned Hathach, one of the king’s eunuchs assigned to attend her, and ordered him to” do TWO THINGS

1. “[go] find out what was troubling Mordecai and”
2. then find out “why.”

What it is and why?

v. 6 So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king’s gate.

“So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king’s gate.”

v. 7 Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him, including the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews.

“Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him,”

Now here’s the statement:

“including the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews.”

It had to be included some way in that decree for Mordecai to know that it was going to be 375 thousand tons of silver that was being paid for this operation to be effective and accomplished. So star that verse when it comes to the process of the money.

v. 8 He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation, which had been published in Susa, to show to Esther and explain it to her, and he told him to urge her to go into the king’s presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.

“He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation, which had been published in Susa, to show to Esther and explain it to her, and he told him to urge her to go into the king’s presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.”

He can’t go in and ask him to change it but he can go in and ask him, “Please, I’m pleading for my people and tell him who you are and ask for mercy. Plead for them. Beg for mercy.” That’s all that he sees she could do.

There’s another problem. That problem is that access to the king is next to impossible if you’re not invited. His recommendation to her is going to be tough. She’s going to

have to write back.

He urged “her to go into the king’s presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.”

v. 9 Hathach went back and reported to Esther what Mordecai had said.

“Hathach went back and reported to Esther what Mordecai had said.”

Well there goes an email. He goes back, gives her everything.

v. 10 Then she instructed him to say to Mordecai,

“Then she instructed him to go to Mordecai,”

Here we go—back and forth we fly from verses to verse.

Now notice what she says. This is kind of hard because when you process something like this, what do you think about first? You think, “Well in my position I’m going to be protected. They’re certainly not going to kill me. I’m the queen of the land.”

I mean selfishly she could think that—subconsciously—in this situation.

Mordecai’s going to put that to bed really quick in what he’s going to say to her because it’s very serious.

v. 11 “All the king’s officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that he be put to death. The only exception to this is for the king to extend the gold scepter to him and spare his life. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king.”

“All the king’s officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that he be put to death. The only exception to this is for the king to extend the golden scepter to him and spare his life. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king.”

You see, all of this time she is the queen out of the loop. Now she’s been blindsided by this horrible edict. She’s thinking in her heart, “Did he find out that I’m a Jew and so he went along with this?”

She’s just exploding with a feminine mind of just horrible possibilities. “Why hasn’t he called me for 30 days? No flowers, no cards, nothing for 30 days! Did I say something the last time we were together? Did I do something stupid?”

She’s pouring it all on herself and she’s scared to death. If she shows up there uninvited she’s going to lose her life. That has

to be in the mix here.

v. 12 When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai,

“When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai,”

Here goes another email.

v. 13 he sent back this answer: “Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape.

“he sent back this answer: ‘Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. “

“Esther, if you're trying to avoid this because you're thinking all these other things, don't you think for a minute you're going to be exempt as part of the Persian Empire in failing to lose your life in all of this.”

I want to read from Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost For His Highest*. This is only a short paragraph but put it in this context and tell me this is not a God-thing. Tell me it does not really speak to your heart when you hear what Oswald Chambers is saying.

(My Utmost For His Highest by Oswald Chambers)

If you allow physical selfishness, mental carelessness, moral insensitivity, or spiritual weakness, everyone in contact with

you will suffer.
(February 15)

That spoke to my heart. I have to be the man of God that I need to be for the people who depend on me. You have to answer the same questions.

If you're a woman there are so many who depend on you. Are you letting others around you suffer because of selfishness? Or are you really waking every day to be a servant? You wake up to yoke up. You give of yourself in sacrificial service to the benefit of others.

Marcus Rainsford wrote a book called *Our Lord Prays For His Own*. It's an older book on John 17. He says:

(Our Lord Prays For His Own: Thoughts on John 17 by Marcus Rainsford)

The curse of our day is that people are trying to serve two masters—the world on the one hand and God on the other; *it cannot be done*: we must either come out of the world and be with Christ, or we must sink with the world into the condemnation of those who reject Christ.

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Esther has a big decision to make in verse 14.

I love verse 14. Here is the providence of God without mentioning God!

v. 14 For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?”

“For if you remain silent”—my daughter—“at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from some other place,”—that’s God behind it.

I want to say this to you, I wonder how many of us are going to stand before the Lord and realize there were assignments that He wanted us to accomplish and He had to go to some other place to get the job done.

That haunts me with a nightmare that I am not buying up every day and every opportunity to see to it that I’m getting the job done while I still have.

In this situation, “if you remain silent...relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from some other place.”

Then he has something very strong to say:
“but you and your father’s family will perish.”

Then the big question. This is the whole theme of the book right there:

“And who knows but that you have come to royal position for

such a time as this?”

How are you going to respond to this Esther? This is the man you’ve admired. This is the man you’ve been obedient to, submissive to. You’ve listened carefully. You’ve literally worshipped the ground he walks upon because he’s been a surrogate father to you, caring for you in every way.

“For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance” is going to come from some other source.

But know something, you’re going to perish along with your family.

Final question:

“but that you have come to the royal position for such a time as this?”

v. 15 Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai:

“Then Esther sent”—her email back—“this reply to Mordecai:”

You’re going to realize why all of us that teach this book and are involved in it have such great admiration—the power of a woman who really rises to the occasion. She is going to sparkle with beauty that you’ve never beheld in the remaining three studies we’ll have.

v. 16 “Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.”

“Go, gather together all the Jews who are living in Susa,” — There must be quite a crew of them there.

“and fast for me.”—of course with fasting goes prayer.

“Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done,”—here comes the promise—“I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.”

I looked at that and I remember that story of the lepers who were sitting outside the city wall and everybody was starving inside and the Assyrian camp was over here. And they’re sitting there wondering what they’re going to do because they’re so close to physical death. Do you remember that? And they’re talking to each other.

While they’re talking they say: “You know what? If we sit here we’re going to die. You know what? If we go back inside the city we’re going to die. Why don’t we go over to the camp of the Assyrians. All we can do over there is but die.”

And when they go, of course God has created an earthquake or a rumble and they assumed it was forces that had been hired

that came and they just stashed stuff from everywhere. The next day it was great blessing because they went and did it. (see 2 Kings 7)

Esther is going to go do it. We'll watch what she does and how it all works out in the next study.

This comes from Max Lucado but he is also quoting Oswald Chambers:

We shall all feel very much ashamed if we do not yield to Jesus on the point He has asked us to yield to Him. Paul says—"My determination is to be my utmost for His highest." To get there is a question of will, not of debate nor of reasoning, but a surrender of will, an absolute and irrevocable surrender on that point. An overweening consideration for ourselves is the thing that keeps us from that decision, though we put it that we are considering others. When we consider what it will cost others if we obey the call of Jesus, we tell God He does not know what our obedience will mean. Keep to the point; He does know. Shut out every other consideration and keep yourself before God for this one thing—My Utmost for His Highest. I am determined to be absolutely and entirely for Him and for Him alone...

(source unknown)

(Chasing Daylight: Seize the Power of Every Moment by Erwin Raphael McManus)

The power of a moment makes it a source of immeasurable

opportunity and hope. No matter what kind of life you've lived, no matter how many wrong choices you've made, the next moment is waiting to give birth to new life.

p. 22

For Esther, the ball's in her court. It's going to be interesting to see how she responds as a woman in the midst of all of this

v. 17 So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther's instructions.

“So”—the RESPONSE—“Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther's instructions.”

I want to end by reading a very famous statement made by one of the presidents of the United States. You're going to recognize this but it's going to say everything that needs to be said. This is Theodore Roosevelt:

“It is not the critic who counts: not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself for a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and

timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat.”

Theodore Roosevelt

“Citizenship in a Republic,”

Speech at the Sorbonne, Paris, April 23, 1910

(<http://www.theodoreroosevelt.org/life/quotes.htm>)

My good friend always says the same thing when it comes to a crisis:

“It’s one thing to cry Ole! Ole! And it’s another thing to get in the ring with the bull!”

Esther is getting ready to get into the ring with the bull in our next study.

I thought how could I end this? I just jotted down Peterson’s prayer:

(A Year With Jesus: Daily Readings and Meditations by Eugene H. Peterson)

I empty my life, God, of all god-substitutes and all idol-alternatives. I have nothing, so that I can receive everything. A life rich in wonder and blessing. Amen.

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Lord Jesus Christ, I will not deny my vitality or squelch my energy, but I will place them under your rule so that they will

serve your purposes. I will not harness you to my requirements, but offer myself to yours. Amen

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Father, we thank You. We've sensed Your presence as we've walked through these critical situations. It's made us really appreciate the Word of God. It's made us really appreciate the fact that You always remember. You took care of the Amalekites and You always remember Your covenants. You are behind the scenes like putting Mordecai and Esther into positions where impossible things can be done with regard to this edict that we have seen signed. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

A Practical Study of ESTHER

STUDY NUMBER THREE – ESTHER 3:1-4:17

NOTES

3:v. 1 After these events, King Xerxes honored Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, elevating him and giving him a seat of honor higher than that of all the other nobles.

v. 2 All the royal officials at the king's gate knelt down and paid honor to Haman, for the king had commanded this concerning him. But Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor.

v. 3 Then the royal officials at the king's gate asked Mordecai, "Why do you disobey the king's command?"

v. 4 Day after day they spoke to him but he refused to comply. Therefore they told Haman about it to see whether Mordecai's behavior would be tolerated, for he had told them he was a Jew.

v. 5 When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged.

v. 6 Yet having learned who Mordecai's people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes.

v. 7 In the twelfth year of King Xerxes, in the first month, the month of Nisan, they cast the pur (that is, the lot) in the presence of Haman to select a day and month. And the lot fell on the twelfth month, the month of Adar.

v. 8 Then Haman said to King Xerxes, "There is a certain people dispersed and scattered among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom whose customs are different from those of all other people and who do not obey the king's laws; it is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them.

v. 9 If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will put ten thousand talents of silver into the royal treasury for the men who carry out this business."

v. 10 So the king took his signet ring from his finger and gave it to Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews.

v. 11 "Keep the money," the king said to Haman, "and do with the people as you please."

v. 12 Then on the thirteenth day of the first month the royal secretaries were summoned. They wrote out in the script of each province and in the language of each people all Haman's orders to the king's satraps, the governors of the various provinces and the nobles of the various peoples. These were written in the name of King Xerxes himself and sealed with his own ring.

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v. 13 Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews—young and old, women and little children—on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods.

v. 14 A copy of the text of the edict was to be issued as law in every province and made known to the people of every nationality so they would be ready for that day.

v. 15 Spurred on by the king's command, the couriers went out, and the edict was issued in the citadel of Susa. The king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Susa was bewildered.

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

v. 2 But he went only as far as the king's gate, because no one clothed in sackcloth was allowed to enter it.

v. 3 In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

v. 4 When Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai, she was in great distress. She sent clothes for him to put on instead of his sackcloth, but he would not accept them.

v. 5 Then Esther summoned Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs assigned to attend her, and ordered him to find out what was troubling Mordecai and why.

v. 6 So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate.

v. 7 Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him, including the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews.

v. 8 He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation, which had been published in Susa, to show to Esther and explain it to her, and he told him to urge her to go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.

v. 9 Hathach went back and reported to Esther what Mordecai had said.

v. 10 Then she instructed him to say to Mordecai,

v. 11 "All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that he be put to death. The only exception to this is for the king to extend the gold scepter to him and spare his life. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king."

v. 12 When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai,

v. 13 he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape.

NOTES

v. 14 For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"

v. 15 Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai:

v. 16 "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

v. 17 So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther's instructions.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Esther 3:1-4:17 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. According to Esther 3:2, why was Haman upset with Mordecai?

3. Because of his anger, what does Haman propose to King Xerxes, according to verses 8 & 9?

4. According to Esther 4:1, how does Mordecai respond to King Xerxes edict to destroy the Jews?

5. Describe Esther's initial response to Mordecai's strange behavior, according to verses 4-7.

6. Summarize Mordecai's request of Esther, according to verse 8.

7. Describe the danger that Esther faces in this situation, according to verse 11.

8. How does Esther respond to the crisis, according to verse 16?

9. Which verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: So many times in the midst of our celebrations, a crisis is brewing.

LESSON #2: Pride, anger and hatred drive Haman to his own destruction.

LESSON #3: Mordecai, like Daniel, had personal convictions that caused him to refuse to kneel before a human ruler. "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat" (Daniel 1:8).

LESSON #4: God honors those who with conviction stand against the culture. He provides and He protects His own.

LESSON #5: “A wicked scoundrel digs up evil, and his slander is like a scorching fire” (Proverbs 16:27 NET).

LESSON #6: “I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In the world you have trouble and suffering, but take courage—I have conquered the world” (John 16:33 NET).

LESSON #7: Esther’s character, commitment, conviction, and courage shine brightly here.

LESSON #8: Esther’s commitment is just like Paul’s in Philippians 1:20: “according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I shall not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death” (NASB).

LESSON #9: Esther’s struggle is characterized by that of Jesus in Luke 22:42: “Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done” (NASB).

LESSON #10: “But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:37-39 NASB).