

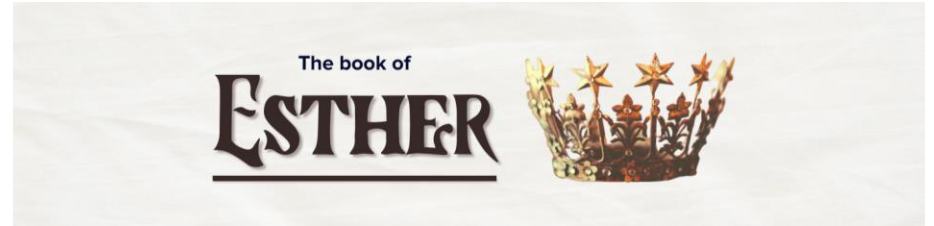


Pray

Does this passage bring to mind a situation you are facing that you should bring to the Lord in prayer?

Who do you know that is facing an intense crisis? What should you be praying for them? How often do you need to pray for them?

As unlikely as it might seem, how does this passage move you to praise God?



Lots and Letters | Esther 2:19-3:15

Study Guide 3 for sermon on 10/11/20



Introduction

True or false? *Good things come to good people.* Many people believe this to be true and are crushed when they find out it isn't. There is a sense of dread that comes to God's people when we do what God requires of us and the outcome is not what we expect. In these moments, we are left with questions for God. *Why? What are you doing? Where are you? Why do the wicked prosper while the righteous suffer?* Our passage in Esther presents this very scenario. Mordecai did what was right and the result was not what anyone could have predicted. However, the crisis that unfolds in Esther 3 is a sort of "holy of holies," where God's people meet the preserving hand of their Redeemer.



Overview

Context: Esther has the crown and her uncle Mordecai also has a position in the palace. His presence at the King's Gate (2:19) is most likely descriptive of his job and not merely a place he would linger. Mordecai's position gives him access to insider information about a plot against the King. Mordecai reports the plot and saves the King. One would expect Mordecai to be rewarded lavishly. Instead a man named Haman, an ancestral enemy of God's people, is promoted by the King, offended by Mordecai, and crafts a plan to eradicate the Jewish people from the face of the earth. The final line of chapter 3 is one of the most chilling in the entire Bible. God's people are under

threat and God's enemies are having a drink. Little does Haman know the cup of God's wrath that awaits him.

Structure:

- I. Mordecai stops the plot against the King (2:19-23)
- II. Haman promoted by the King and offended by Mordecai (3:1-4)
- III. Haman persuades the King to eradicate the Jews (3:5-11)
- IV. The decree of destruction is written and distributed throughout the empire (3:14-15)



Engage

1. In 3:1, we are introduced to the number one bad guy in the book of Esther: Haman the Agagite. Being introduced as an Agagite means he is a descendant of Agag the Amalekite. Understanding the history of conflict between Israel and the Amalekites will help you understand why Haman's promotion is especially vile. Read Exodus 17:8-16 to learn the story, Deuteronomy 25:17-19 to learn God's judgment, and 1 Samuel 15:1-9 to learn King Saul's blunder.
2. Now that you understand more of Haman's ancestry, why would his promotion be especially disturbing to Mordecai and the Jewish people?
3. Why is doing what is right for people who have done us wrong so difficult? How can the gospel fuel our obedience here?
4. Why do you think we're surprised when, after walking in obedience, we seem to be rewarded with struggle?
5. The narrator does not explain Mordecai's refusal to bow to Haman (3:2-4). Why do you think Mordecai refused? Was he being prideful? Was he being faithful? Or perhaps some other reason?
6. In verse 8, Haman makes three statements about the Jewish people to the King. Which statement is true? Which statement is "true-ish"? Which statement is an outright lie?
7. The length of time between the issue of the decree of destruction to the date of destruction is nearly an entire year. What do you think it would have been like to be a Jewish person in the Persian empire for that year? How would that date effect you emotionally? Spiritually? Otherwise?
8. When have you suffered from an unjust attack because of your ethnicity or faith? How did you respond? If you feel comfortable, consider sharing this experience with your Growth Group.
9. How does the cross help us to make some sense of what God is doing by allowing attacks to come against us? How can a crucified Christ reshape our hearts to respond in a different way than we normally would?