

Providence in Salvation- Esther 8:1-17 **Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading**

Notes from the Sermon

Esther is a great story, it has everything. There is a king and his fight for the kingdom. We have a fantastic bad guy, the evil Haman who plots against the human heroes of the story. Which leads to two amazing protagonists. Esther is the orphaned Jewish girl who ascends by chance to the place of the queen. Mordecai is the simple peasant who goes about doing his job day by day and raising little orphan Esther has his own child. While doing his job he just happens to catch wind of an assassination plot against the king which he exposes and saves the king's life. It is a great story which has a happy ending (well, for everyone except Haman). The lives of the Esther, Mordecai, and all of the Jewish people are saved. They rejoice and hold a party to remember it. And the story of Esther is celebrated every year in the feast of Purim to remember these two heroes.

Esther is a great story, but the problem is that reading it this way, reading it to see how Esther and Mordecai pulled off the rescue of the Jews actually misses the point of this story as well as the point of the entire Bible. Reading this story and finding human heroes will leave us looking to their activity and character to find moral tales that will help us live better lives. Don't get me wrong here, Esther and Mordecai are important, their actions do matter in the story. And they are to be honored along with so many other people we find in the story of the Bible. But there is something much deeper and beautiful in Scripture, and reading the Bible will not make sense until you read it through the lens God intends.

We have been mentioning this throughout this series on the amazing story of Esther. There is one character who is not mentioned in the story. God's name is left out and there is no place in the story where the events are attributed to the work or acts of God. Yet, this is a brilliant literary device pushing us to realize that God is always in the shadows at work to accomplish His purposes, keep His promises, display His glory, and bring good to His chosen people. Esther is not a stand alone story, it is part of God's record of redemption, and therefore part of God's grand story. This is what the Bible is about, and this is the central theme of Esther, telling us that our God saves! The whole Bible is the grand salvation story, with the pinnacle arriving in the person of Jesus. But we also learn from Christ himself that the entire Bible is pointing to and about Him (John 5:39, Luke 21:25-27). In fact, it is my belief that the core verse in all of Scripture, the verse that is actually the hub of the wheel comes from Jonah 2:9 as Jonah prays from the belly of the whale. If you are familiar with the story, Jonah ended up here because he rejected the saving missionary call to go to Nineveh in order to preach to the enemies of the Jews. He did this because he did not want God to save them, so he ran the other direction. Hence the awful storm and great sea creature which had swallowed Jonah. But God spared him and from the belly of this "whale" Jonah cried out the Lord, and the last line of his prayers says, "Salvation belongs to the Lord."

Esther is a redemption story, reminding us that salvation belongs to the Lord and giving yet another model of how God rescued His people. Esther is an unlikely queen, one you would not expect to ascend to the place of importance. But Esther is more than just a beautiful queen, she is a mediator who stands for and between the king and her people, giving up even her life in order to save her people. The God who saves raises a mediator who sacrificially stands in the gap to save her people. By now, hopefully you are seeing the picture being painted. Esther is a picture of Christ, our mediator who came as veiled royalty. Nobody expected the True King to be born in a stable and live as a humble Galilean peasant. And while the enemy of the Jews in Esther was the evil Haman, the greater enemy of God's people threatening our lives and robbing of hope are sin, death, the

fallen world, and the Devil. And like in the story of Esther, God saves through this royal mediator who lays down His life to rescue His people. Esther is no moral tale with human heroes. It is a redemption story where God, who is the true hero saves His people to demonstrate that salvation belongs to the Lord.

So why is this important? Because Scripture tells salvation stories, but it has a goal. And that goal is to tell a salvation story in your life. The way we read Esther may indicate the way we are going about life. If we are looking for moral tales from human heroes in order to imitate them this might be a sign that you are still trying to tell your own story, still trying to rescue yourself. Reading the Bible correctly and discovering the Gospel of Jesus on every page is the path to true faith and worship as we realize that Jesus Christ is not only the true hero of every Biblical story, He is the saving hero of every moment of my life. God is still telling redemption stories, and His desire is that you will find Jesus in the pages of the Bible, turn to Him in Faith, and live for His glory.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Exodus 18	Exodus 19	Exodus 20	Exodus 21	Exodus 22	Exodus 23	Exodus 24

Reading from this past week: Esther 8:1-17

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Esther 9:1-19

Family Worship

Song - *God Always Keeps His Promises*

<https://youtu.be/dw-uEcl-neY>

Gospel Project

Story: People Rebel against God

Big Picture Question: What does it mean to sin?

Answer: To sin is to think, speak, or behave in any way that goes against God and His commands.

Scripture: Genesis 10-11

New City Catechism

Question #42: How is the Word of God to be read and heard?

Answer: With diligence, preparation, and prayer; so that we may accept it with faith and practice it in our lives.

Verse: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Scripture

Esther 8:1-17

- If you were a Jew in the Persian Empire and you saw the man on the horse show up in your town with this proclamation, how would you feel?
- How does God save His people in Esther? How does He save His people through the Gospel?
- What happens to “peoples of the country” in verse 17? What does this tell us about God’s goal for our neighbors and our purpose as God’s rescued people?

Prayer

*Praise God that in His sovereignty, He has rescued and redeemed you.

*Pray for all of our workers who set up and break down each week.