

STUDY 5 – ESTHER CHAPTER 6 and 7

Chapter 5 ended with the situation for God's people being as dark as it was at the end of chapter 5. We sense that God is at work – Esther has been allowed to address the King, but the law is still in effect, and Haman is determined to get rid of Mordecai. Things are looking critical. In the morning Haman is going to ask the King (who we know is weak and likely to agree to everything Haman says) for permission to hang Mordecai on his home made gallows.

Chapter 6 begins with another “lucky” incident. There is humour in the description of what happens. The King can't sleep so requests a copy of the record of his reign (ideal for producing sleepiness!). It just so happens that the page he reads refers to Mordecai's reporting of a conspiracy (see 2:19-23). The King is then determined to reward him.

The rest of the chapter plays out with great ironic humour. We know why Haman is up so early to see the King (remember 5:14), and we know his great pride and self centredness. This is shown as the King and Haman talk at cross purposes (verse 7-8). You can only imagine the shock and anger of Haman when the King explains in verse 10 that this is to be done for “Mordecai the Jew”. This is made worse for Haman by the fact that Haman himself has to lead Mordecai through the streets in great honour.

It is important to notice what is going on in this chapter. Up until this point the fact that Mordecai is a “Jew” is seen as a bad thing – it is his Jewishness, his membership of God's people that has produced Haman's hatred of him. Yet here Mordecai “the Jew” (verse 10) is honoured. There is a great reversal. Even Haman's friends recognise this (6:13-14). There is more going on here than a simple reward for a good action. The world is called to recognise that to be part of God's people is to be honoured.

This helps us to understand the application of these last few chapters of Esther. In these last four chapters a number of things happen which we may find hard to apply, and we may feel uncomfortable with. But just as the crisis of chapters 1-5 is a concrete example in history of the opposition God and his people face in all history, the solution and blessing of chapters 6-10 is a concrete picture in history of the final reversal of that crisis. The honour Mordecai experiences at

the hand of the King before the world is a picture of the honour God's people will experience before the world on the last day.

In chapter 7 we return into the King's banqueting hall. Esther has not yet made her request of the King, but in 7:3 she does. It is a surprising request – basically she says “let me live”. The King is amazed by this. Why should she fear for her life? But remember, until this point neither the King nor Haman would have known she was Jewish (see 2:20). The King is livid – it may be that he didn't really understand the edict that had gone out in his name, Haman had not named “the certain people” who he claimed threatened the King (3:8).

The situation gets even worse for Haman as the King leaves the hall in anger only to return to see him all over Esther – begging for his life presumably, but appearing as if he was in a compromising position. One of the King's eunuchs' takes this moment to pass on the interesting information that Haman has just built a massive gallows outside his house. The King calls for Haman to be hung on it.

Chapter 7 is the counterpoint to chapter 6 as just as Mordecai (one of God's people) is honoured, Haman (the enemy) is condemned. But just as in chapter 6, the message is not simply a moral one (that bad guys won't win), but that the accusers and haters of God's people will be judged. The pride of the enemies of God will be burst, and even when they think they are secure they will fall.

However this is not the end of the story. The law is still in force. Our final study in chapters 8-10 will show how God deals with that.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS (I've struggled with these so don't just use them as they are)

What was the conclusion to chapter 5? What needs to happen to stop Mordecai from being killed?

What evidence do we have in verses 1-3 of God at work?

What further evidence do we get of Haman's proud character in verses 4-9?
Why would verse 10 have been such a shock to him?

Why has Haman hated Mordecai so much in the book of Esther? How is Mordecai described in this chapter (see verse 10, 13)? Why is that significant?

What happens to Mordecai in verse 11? How is that a reversal of what we've seen so far in Esther?

What is Esther's plea to the King? Why is that such a surprise to the King?

What is the King's reaction? What happens to Haman at the end of the chapter?

Read Revelation 20:1-6. What reversal will happen when Christ returns? *(Don't get bogged down in the thousand years. I've included this just to show that there is a day coming when Satan and wickedness will be judged, even though it appears to have the upper hand now, and a day is coming when God's suffering people will be honoured)*