

Introduction: Most people react in one of two ways when something happens they did not want or plan. Every once in a while they realize what happened was too good to be true and they thank their 'lucky stars' and tell a few friends. But usually what happens is viewed as bad, even a disaster. They call it an accident and they become unsettled. They may become angry; but, more often than not, they settle into a resigned apathy and do nothing. *** A minority of people know God, who He IS and His Ways. Most of all, even though His Ways are often puzzling to these people, they trust His goodness and rest in the truth that all things are under His control and part of His perfect Plan. This means that wherever they are and whatever happens to them is NOT an accident; and, God will bring good from it as He makes them more like Jesus and is glorified through it (*Romans 8:28-30*). *** This truth about God is beautifully illustrated in the life of Esther, a Jewish woman in exile in Susa and under the mentorship of her relative Mordecai. The event we are considering this morning happened in 473 BC after Persia defeated Babylon. Haman sought to exterminate all the Jews, but God had other plans. *** Although He is never named in the book, God was behind queen Vashti's rebellion against her husband, king Xerxes (*Esther 1*). And when beautiful virgins from all the provinces were chosen to come to Susa to enter the king's harem, and each one spent a night alone with the king to be returned to a different harem, God moved the king's heart to be most attracted to Esther and make her queen (*Esther 2*). *** But the king's highest ranking servant Haman hated Mordecai the Jew for refusing to bow before him, a mere mortal man. Therefore, he got the king to issue a letter to destroy all the Jews in all the provinces (*Esther 3*). *** We are now ready to see how God puts all these events together to deliver His people.

I. Mordecai reacts to Haman's letter by putting on sackcloth, which caused Esther to be grieved;

then, Mordecai commanded her to go before the king because she became queen to do this. (*Esther 4:1-17*)

A. Mordecai puts on sackcloth and ashes in response to Haman's letter to destroy all Jews; and, this causes Esther to be exceedingly grieved and she asks him to explain. (*Verses 1-8*)

1. When Mordecai learned, he put on sackcloth, wept bitterly, then went only to the king's gate; in every province the decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews; and, fasting, wailing, and many were in sackcloth. (*Verses 1-3*)

Haman and king: Haman means 'magnificent'. Pagans named their sons after qualities only God possesses.

He had favor with the king and held back from him his hatred of the Jews.

Mordecai: Mordecai means 'little man'. Those in power overlooked him, but he was wise before God.

May we be willing to wail in lament, as he did, for God's people.

Provincial Jews: The provincial Jews exercised spiritual disciplines Americans do not often do especially fasting.

True fasting practices were given through Isaiah (*Isaiah 58:6-14*). Let us pray about practicing these, especially fasting.

2. When Esther heard, she was in agony, sought to clothe Mordecai and learn what and why. (*Verses 4-5*)

Esther: This was not her Jewish name but her Persian name meaning 'star'. The abominable goddess of Sidon had the same name. (*1 Kings 11:1-6; 2 Kings 23:12-14*)

Learn what and why: Mordecai's extreme Jewish practices greatly upset her and she wanted him to blend in; but, out of love and respect for him she wanted an explanation.

3. Mordecai told her servant about Haman's plan, the sum of silver he pledged to the king to complete the Jews destruction; and commanded her to entreat the king for her people. (*Verses 6-8*)

Destruction for silver: The sum of silver was in the letter from Haman to Xerxes (*Esther 3:9*) that Mordecai gave Hathach.

Supplication: He commands Esther to petition her husband, making supplication to him for her people.

B. Then Mordecai commands Esther to go before the king, in spite of his golden scepter rule, to plead for her people, because they will be delivered and she became queen for this time. (*Verses 9-17*)

1. Hathach told Esther Mordecai's words; then, she commanded he tell Mordecai no one going to the king uncalled will live, unless he extends the golden scepter; he has not called her. (*Verses 9-12*)

Golden scepter rule: Everyone knows the king has a decree that anyone who will go to him in the inner court without being called is put to death, unless the king extends the golden scepter and he will live.

Esther's reply: She explains the king's deadly practice to any approaching him uncalled, and she has not been called these thirty days.

2. Then Mordecai said, 'Do not think you will escape more than others; surely, if you keep silent at this time, deliverance will stand from another place and you will die; who knows if to a time as this you have attained the kingdom?' (*Verses 13-14*)

Mordecai's wise reply: As queen, you are not exempt. If you keep quiet, deliverance will come from elsewhere. With this, Mordecai expresses great faith in God. And, you and your father's family will be destroyed.

Good question: Mordecai means God made her queen to save His people. If she does not make use of His making her queen, she will die.

God is THE Sovereign King of everything, so all people must stand up and do His will wherever He puts them.

God makes the right person to stand at the right time

3. Esther replies, 'Gather the Jews in Susa; you must hold a three day total fast for me, and so will we; thus I will go to the king against his decree and if I perish, I perish.' (*Verses 15-17*)

Esther's reply: She commands the Jews in Susa to join her on a seventy-two hour fast of all food and water. Jews never fasted without praying to their God. God is 'hidden' throughout this book, but He is behind everything that is narrated.

Civil disobedience: She will act convinced God called her, risking disobeying man rather than God.

Call: God calls all His people, even now, to be as Esther and seek Him to know why He has put them where they are and to do what He has planned for them.

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The rest of the story: After the fast, God does many things SO the Jews triumph over all their enemies and Mordecai becomes Xerxes' right hand man. Finally the fest of Purim is established.

II. Jesus tells His disciples they are salt and light, so they must let their light shine before people because the time to set people free is fulfilled in Him. (*Matthew 5:13-16; Galatians 4:4-5*)

- A. Jesus tells His disciples they are the salt of the earth and the light of the world, being lifted up. (*Matthew 5:13-14*)
1. Y'all are being the salt of the earth, but if the salt should have lost its savor in what will it be salted? It is yet nothing, having been cast out to be trodden underfoot by men. (*Verse 13*)
Disciples salt: Jesus' disciples are the salt of the earth, to replenish soil and to give food flavor.
If lose saltiness: But if salt loses its salty properties it will be cast out and trampled by men.
 2. Y'all are being the light of the world [and] a city being set on a hill is not being hidden. (*Verse 14*)
Light: They are the light of the world reflecting Jesus who came to be the light of life shining in darkness (*John 1:1-9*). And, he declared Himself to be The Light of the world (*John 8:12-20*).
Community: As all disciples of Jesus, living as God's city, let Him make them witnesses to His Light, they will be like a city having been stood (high) on a hill.
Not hidden: Then their reflected light will not be hidden, as Jesus now illustrates in a metaphor.
- B. Men light their house, so disciples must shine light before all so their good works are seen and their Father is glorified. (*Matthew 5:15-16*)
1. Neither are men lighting a light and placing it under an eight quart basket, but on the candlestick; and, it is giving light to those in the house. (*Verse 15*)
On stand for all: Lifting a lit candle high on a stand gives light to all (as a city of light on a hill)
 2. In this way y'all must shine the light of y'all before men; in this way they may see the good and beautiful works of y'all and they may glorify The Father of y'all in the heavens. (*Verse 16*)
Light before men: Jesus' disciples are commanded to be light before men.
Purpose: God has a two-fold purpose for this: That others may see their beautiful good works AND others may glorify their Father God in heaven who made them lights in Jesus His Son. Notice both results are contingent (may) and not guaranteed (will).
- C. In the fullness of time God sent His Son of a woman under Torah to set people free and be God's children. (*Galatians 4:4-5*)
1. But when had come the fullness of time, God sent out The Son of Him, having been out of a woman, having been under the Torah. (*Verse 4*)
Fullness of time: From *Genesis (3:15)* on through all the prophets God spoke of a One who would cleanse people from sin by faith as a majestic light shining in a dark place (*2 Peter 1*).
God sent: The apostle Paul declares God has now sent that One.
 2. In order that He might set free the ones under the Torah, in order that we might receive the adoption of sons. (*Verse 5*)
Set free: Because Jesus came to fulfill the Torah (*Matthew 5:17*), He is able to set people free from the penalty of breaking the Torah by the price of his life that He paid for people on the Cross. Redemption for a slave happens when someone pays a price to set the slave free. We are all slaves to sin, but since Jesus paid for us with His life, we are now redeemed in the fullness of God's time.

When the time had fully come, God sent His Son to redeem

Adoption: Through Him we are also adopted as God's children. And this gives us peace with God (*Romans 5:1-11*)

Bottom Line: Once people are set free from the penalty of sin, by grace through faith, they are to do good and beautiful works for all to see, that they may glorify God. After being set free (redeemed) from sin they may glorify God by the way they live.

Disciples of Jesus are the right people at the right time to declare The King and His Kingdom. They have more than Esther had when she fulfilled God's will to do her part in the deliverance of the Jews using the position in which God placed her.

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Conclusion: Let us learn from the lives of Mordecai and Esther that even when people do not explicitly acknowledge God, He is working in every person and every event to bring about deliverance and freedom for all people. Let us also learn from The Gospel and apostle that God's work of deliverance and freedom has been fulfilled in His time, in His Son, Jesus THE Savior.

God makes the right person to stand at the right time