

## Esther: #5 “And They Lived ...” – Esther 7 – 10

Dr. Matthew Cassidy – 5/13/2012

### **Video Clip “Another Earth” clip**

*[A husband and wife are in the kitchen and she is fixing him food. He is sitting at the table rubbing his temples, looking as if he is in pain or under a load of stress. The wife comes to the kitchen table, sits down and tells this tale. Over the course of the story, the husband’s countenance relaxes.]*

Wife: Do you know the story of the Russian Cosmonaut? The Cosmonaut is the first man ever to go into space. The Russian beat the Americans. He goes up in this big space ship but the part that is habitable is very small. So the Cosmonaut is in there and he has this portal window and he sees the curvature of the earth for the first time, the first man to ever look at the planet he is from. He is lost in that moment and all of a sudden this strange ticking starts coming out of the dashboard. He rips out the control panel, right? He takes out his tools and tries to find this sound and stop it. He can’t find it; it keeps going. A few hours into this and it begins to feel like torture. A few days go by with this sound and he knows this small sound will break him; he will lose his mind. What is he going to do? He is up in space, alone, in a space closet. He has 25 days left to go with this sound. The Cosmonaut decides the only way to save his sanity is to fall in love with this sound. So he closes his eyes and goes into his imagination and then he opens them. He doesn’t hear ticking any more. He hears music and he spends the remainder of his time sailing through space in total bliss and in peace.

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That is the power of a great story. You can change the way you perceive the world you are living in. A cosmonaut *[tapping pencil on the podium]* who has a ticking in his control panel and he can’t do anything about it. He can’t change the ticking. It is a great story; it is a true story.

### **Review Esther 1 - 7**

We are sharing the great story, the true story of this cute little, innocent, Jewish orphan girl who was literally stolen from the arms of her loving cousin and godfather, Mordecai. She was taken to the king’s palace so that she might audition for the job of being the queen in his bedchamber. There was nothing, absolutely nothing that she could do about it. She just had to go along with it. She lost her dreams and her innocence all at once and she had to figure out how to live with that insanity.

That is not the end of the story because it gets worse from there. Her godfather / cousin, Mordecai, who is an older man, is Jewish; the passage in Esther reads “Mordecai the Jew”. He will not bow down or lower his head to this crazy man named Haman.

Haman is from the family lineage, a 1000-year lineage of Jew killers who had sought since the birth of the nation of Israel to kill every single Jew in the world. Haman is not just from that tribe or nationality; he is literally from the lineage of a former king, known for his Jew-killing skills, whose name is Agag. This was 500 years earlier than our story. So you will see in the story of Esther that Haman is called an Agagite, from Agag.

So it is the law of the land of the insane King Xerxes that Haman the Agagite is the second most honored person, only to the king, and any time he walks near you, you are supposed to kneel down or lower your head to pay honor to him. Day after day, Mordecai will not do it. Then one day, Haman just snaps. He is enraged and he can't take this rebellion any longer because the people are now beginning to talk. So Haman goes to the king and says: Hey, can I have your permission to issue this decree? Can I borrow your signet ring?

The king says: Sure, you do what you need to do.

So Haman writes this decree which is sent to the four corners of the Persian Empire, 127 different provinces. It says that eleven months from now – and the date was picked by lot, a rolling of a die – everyone will have a chance to kill, destroy, and annihilate every Jew, men and women, old and young children. We have eleven months to get ready for that.

As you would imagine, panic breaks out among the Jews all over Persia. All the while, Haman and the insane king are drinking their wine on the deck.

Mordecai the Jew realizes that he has to do something about this. He has to stop this. He sends a message to his god-daughter, the little girl he raised who is now the queen. Mordecai says: You have to go to the king and beg for our lives. I don't care what it costs you.

The queen says: If you go to see the king without an invitation, he will kill you.  
This is a great story.

### **The Choice:**

It is like the Russian cosmonaut story. [*pencil clicking on podium*] He tears apart the panel, using his tools to get inside the control panel. He can't stop the ticking. It is going to drive him crazy. It will be the end of him. But what can he do? He is in space, alone, in a space closest.

What is little queen Esther going to do?

Mordecai makes her choices very clear. You can:

1. Choose to be a coward and you will die with all the other Jews. You will die.
2. You can choose to be a hero and go see the king and he will kill you, at his feet. Or,
3. You can choose to be a hero and go and see the king and maybe, just maybe, he will extend that golden scepter to you and let you live. Then you can tell him our plight.

But she cannot change where she is. She can only change what she does with it.

You and I cannot change the suffering we have endured from other people or just from life. But we can change how it affects us. Who knows that maybe we have not been all alone in the suffering in the first place. Who knows that we are here and now for such a time as this. Who knows, Esther, that you are queen for a purpose.

Esther has a change of soul. Her mind is on fire like Blasé Pascal said when he realized the presence of God in his life. So she barks out her first command and says: *Go, gather, and fast*, three days, night and day, food and drink. I will go see that insane, drunken king. If I perish, I perish. – She does something about it. What else was she going to do? She is alone in the palace in the queen’s chambers.

After three days, she presents herself to the king, after putting on her royal garments. She goes to the throne room and the king looks up and sees her approaching. He does that thing; he extends the golden scepter to her. She walks, I bet, ever so gingerly up to him and she touches the golden scepter and then she lives.

The king says: What is it, Queen Esther? What is your petition that I might grant it? What is your request that I might give you up to half the kingdom?

Esther says: I would like for you and Haman to come to a banquet with me today.

The king says: Absolutely. Get Haman and let’s go.

### **Esther’s First Banquet – Esther 5**

They are drinking wine and it says they do that quite a bit in this story. While they are drinking wine, the king turns to Esther and says: Well, my queen, what is your petition that I might grant it? What is your request that I might give you up to half my kingdom?

While they are drunk on wine, it appears that she is drunk on the Spirit. With all of the Jew supporters fasting and praying for three days, along with her helpers and the eunuchs who serve her, fasting and praying, she looks around and she sees that there is something not right. So she says: King, if you want to know my petition, if you want to hear my request, could you come back tomorrow and have another banquet, you and Haman both.

The king says: Absolutely, my queen.

So they split up and go their way.

### **Haman's Glorious Day**

I want you to understand that this is the most glorious day in Haman's life. He is the second most honored person in all of Persia. He has just dined at a private banquet with the king and the queen and he is coming home to celebrate.

As he walks through the palace and the courtyards, outside the walls everybody is bowing their knees and genuflecting and hiding their face to him. Then Mordecai the Jew is standing ever so proud with his shoulders back, maybe on his tiptoes, looking Haman right in the eyes. No matter how good the morning was, this has crushed all of that joy.

So Haman goes home and resolves that very day – Tonight I will build 75-foot high gallows, an impaling rod to skewer Mordecai on. I want to make a point. So Haman's helpers spend the night hammering and cutting and assembling this gallows. Haman wakes up the next day and look at his To Do List. He is going to go get permission from the king to kill Mordecai the Jew. Finally, he does not have to wait any more months. Then he will have a banquet with the king and queen later on. That is great. He is walking around as proud as a peacock in the spring. We have actually found a carving of Haman going to the king's palace the next morning. Look at that: *[power point of a man with a jaunty gait and self-satisfied look on his face]* Haman is twitterpated.

### **King Xerxes' Sleepless Night**

Here is the thing though – while Haman was sleeping and his workers were building those gallows, the king could not sleep that night. There was something bugging him, pestering him. It was like someone was poking him. So Xerxes had one of his servants come in and read to him from the chronicles of Persia, read to him from his history.

Coincidentally, they came across a passage that read that Mordecai the Jew had actually saved the king's life earlier. So the king asks: What has been done for Mordecai that he was honored because he saved my life?

The scribe says: Nothing was done for Mordecai. No honor was paid to him. He was never rewarded for that.

So the king says: We have to reward him. I need someone to give me advice.

## **Picture Haman's Turn of Events – Esther 6**

Here comes Haman strolling in, this proud peacock. The king says: Haman, great, you are my chief advisor. What do we do for a man the king delights to honor?

Haman is thinking what Haman thinks – who could possibly be getting honor other than me. I am extremely rich and you don't need to give me more money. I have ten sons. I am the second most honored person in all of Persia.

Here is what you should do for me – uh, I mean for this person whom the king delights to honor. [Esther 6:7-9] You should use one of your robes and have him robed with that. You should put him on one of your horses that you have actually ridden on, the horse with the crest that goes on the head of the horse. Then you would have one of the princes put that man whom the king delights to honor on a horse and have the prince lead him through all of Susa shouting at the top of his lungs: This is what happens to the man whom the king delights to honor. That is what you do.

The king says: You know what? That is a fantastic idea. [and I will quote this next part]

Esther 6:10 “Go at once,” the king commanded Haman. “Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Do not neglect anything *you* have recommended.”

Haman is thinking: Wait --- what!

The bigger they are, the harder they fall. Haman was big and he fell hard. So Haman is robing Mordecai the Jew. Haman is putting Mordecai up on that horse. Haman is going through all of Susa shouting until he is hoarse, dragging the horse, saying: This is what happens to the man whom the king wants to honor.

It has been a long day for Haman but it has just begun.

Mordecai goes back to the city gates. Haman goes back home and he is home long enough to tell his wife and friends of his terrible nightmarish experience. He is there just long enough to hear a very troubling prediction of his fate.

## **Esther's Second Banquet – Esther 7**

There is a knock on the door and the eunuchs have come to get Haman for the second banquet of Queen Esther. Then the king and Haman have had their meal and they are drinking again. The king finally turns to the queen and says: What is your petition that I might grant it? What is your request that I might give you up to half of my kingdom?

The queen senses that things are right now. So she says: This is my petition. Grant me my life. This is my request. Save all my people.

The king says: Who would do that? Where is he?

She says: Him – There. This vile Haman has produced this decree that has sent my people to their death.

Well, the king is so enraged that he has been betrayed by his chief advisor that he gets up – and leaves his wine – that is how traumatized the king is – and he goes out to the palace gardens. Meanwhile, Haman realizes that he is a dead man. His only hope is to fall down and beg for the queen’s mercy.

Now picture this, would you? Haman, the Agagite, is on his knees before a Jewish princess, a female Jew, begging for his life. That was his dream that Mordecai the Jew would be bowing down and kneeling and begging for his life. Now Haman is playing the part of the schmuck. I wonder how his great, great, great grandfather, Agag, might think right now. The whole 1000 years of descendants of the Amalekites have come down to this – Haman, the Agagite, on his knees before a Jewish queen saying: Please let me live.

Just then, the king walks in and says: What? Are you going to molest the queen too?

At that, somebody puts a hood over Haman’s head and says: King, I don’t know if you know this but late last night – it was probably the thing keeping you up, ironically – Haman was building a gallows to hang Mordecai the Jew, the one who saved your life.

The king says: Hang Haman on that. Impale him on that 75-foot tower. I will make a point.

And they do.

That is where we have been for the last four weeks.

## ***Esther 8***

Now we are in Chapter 8 where Mordecai gets Haman’s house, Haman’s job, and Haman’s ring, the signet ring of the king. Now Mordecai has to figure out how they are going to save the lives of the Jews.

The king says: [Esther 8:8] We can’t undo my first decree because whatever I write and seal with that signet ring cannot be wrong. But here is what you can do. I suggest you write another decree that says that all the Jews on that day can defend themselves, that they can kill, destroy, and annihilate any person who comes near them. You can plunder those people as well. Take all of the spoils for yourself.

They do that. They write the decree out and have it in several languages, this time also in Hebrew. They put the king's seal on it and they use the king's fastest horses to go to every extent of the 127 provinces of Persia and send the word out.

Great feasts and joy are breaking out because it is coming to that time. It is a good thing. We can fight back now. We can kill, destroy, and annihilate those who were out to kill, destroy, and annihilate we Jews. On that day, the Jews were able to overturn their fate. The tables were turned. That is where we get that expression – the tables were turned, from this passage. They were able to defeat those enemies who were out to get them for the last several months. – Esther 9

### ***Generational Loss***

But listen, this goes back to the other story – the Russian Cosmonaut story. He could not stop the ticking but he could change what the ticking meant. He could change what the ticking was doing to him. When he did, he did not hear the ticking; he heard music and was able to fly through space in total bliss and in peace.

The reason I tell you that it was about changing perspective is because the bigger context of this story we looked at briefly on a previous Sunday. The reason the Jews are in this threat of genocide is because 500 years earlier, an ancestor of Haman was Agag, and an ancestor from the tribe of Mordecai and Esther was King Saul. King Saul was told that he was to go to the Amalekites and destroy them. It was a holy war and there are two rules in holy wars. (1) You finish the job. (2) You never take the plunder. Saul violated both of those rules. He did not finish the job and he stole from the plunder. Saul took the good stuff because it was good. Because Saul did not do what he was supposed to do, generations continued to the point where here we are now in Persia, 500 years later, and the threat to all the Jews' lives in all of Persia or because of somebody else's compromise and what it means to obey God. See, here is the thing. Esther could not change her lineage but she could change what she did with it. She could not change her ancestry but she could change from this point forward what she could do about it. When the king comes to her on the 12<sup>th</sup> month, the 13<sup>th</sup> day and says: Esther, how are things? How are your people?

She says: It has been very good.

King: Well, what is your petition that I might grant it? What is your request that I might give you something?

Esther says: We will need another day.

This is not the little girl in the beginning of the story. We will need another day; there is more killing. And I want the ten sons of Haman the Agagite to swing with their father on the gallows because that is what happened to Saul and his descendants. It should happen to Haman and his.

So the king said: Fine. Take the ten sons and put them on these impaling poles and give the Jews another day to defend themselves.

Here is the other thing that Esther did. No plunder was taken. In Chapter 9, it says this three times. Why would they say it three times? Because they want us to know that she gets it. This is the end of the old ways and the beginning of the new ways. Esther cannot change where she has been and what she comes from but she can change where she is going and what her family will leave behind. Her family will leave behind obedience. They will finish this and they will not touch the plunder. Three times: And they did not touch the plunder. They defeated the enemies and they did it right.

Then they are flying through space in total bliss and in peace.

### **Concluding Comments**

There are two concluding comments to the story. One is personal and one is about the Jews.

Here is the personal one about Mordecai. The king took off his signet ring that he had reclaimed from Haman and he presented it to Mordecai. Esther appointed him over Haman's estate. Listen to this because this is the guy who had been in burlap and ashes just a few days before.

Esther 8:15-17 Mordecai left the king's presence wearing royal garments of blue and white, a large crown of gold and a purple robe of fine linen. And the city of Susa held a joyous celebration. For the Jews it was a time of happiness and joy, gladness and honor. In every province and in every city, wherever the edict of the king went, there was joy and gladness among the Jews, with feasting and celebrating. And many people of other nationalities became Jews because fear of the Jews had seized them.

Yeah, I want to be Jewish. What God do you serve? You have Haman on a pole. You have got the king eating out of your hand. Who is in charge? God is. Can I serve that God?

Here is why the Jews still celebrate Purim today, called the Feast of Purim. Purim means lot, lottery, luck and they are making fun of that whole thing.

In Chapter 9 it says: Esther 9:23-25

So the Jews agreed to continue the celebration they had begun, doing what Mordecai had written to them. For Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them and had cast the pur (that is, the lot) for their

ruin and destruction. But when the plot came to the king's attention, he issued written orders that the evil scheme Haman had devised against the Jews should come back onto his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.

That is the story of Purim. A great story can change a life. A great story has that power. A great story that talks about the greatness of God and how He works in our lives today.

### **God works in our lives today. Brenda's story**

I don't know if you know this story, the story of Brenda who is an old friend of mine. [*pencil tapping on podium*] She was sweet and loving and one of her greatest desires of her life was to be a mother of a child. But she couldn't. She just wasn't made that way. They tried a lot of things but it just made it worse, more frustrating. I guess just the lot she was given, the cards she was dealt. One of those cards, infertility, was consuming her. It was going to make her crazy. It would fill her with sorrow and resentment. Every announcement among all her friends getting pregnant made it worse. Every stroller was like salt on the wounds. She was slipping. What is she going to do? She is all alone.

Her husband says: Look, why don't you come to church with me tonight. They are telling a fun story and I want you to be part of it. It is the story of Esther. She said: Fine, what could happen?

They came and sat and heard about Esther and the power of God in everyday life and what you can change and what you can't change. She got in the car and closed her eyes and she turned to her husband and said: Bob, I am going to put this down. We are not going to talk about things we can't change. We are going to start talking about things we can change. I can't do anything about this but I can do something about what it is doing to me. I can't change how I got here and why I am broken but I can change about how we become a family. -- They drove home that night filled with bliss and in total peace.

That is the power of a great story, the power of the stories that God writes. The Bible is His story and Esther is supposed to be our story. It is how God works today. If we just choose to accept the things we cannot change and to change the things that we can. You cannot do anything about how you got here but you can change how it affects you. You can't change your ancestry and your background and your upbringing and your predispositions. But you can change what it does if you want. This whole series started with – How much is your sin going to cost me? That is the context of Esther. How much is everyone else's sin – her ancestors' sins, King Saul, King Xerxes the crazy, drunken king, Haman the

Agagite – but she chose to change what she could and she made it music for God to enjoy. It was a worship song to Him when she chose to be courageous.

Do you want to know how you can overcome How Much is Your Sin Going to Cost Me? You do this. You get out a sheet of paper and write at the top “You Owe Me”, whoever this person is [who negatively affected you] and all that they stole from you and the wickedness that you suffered. You go into every single detail and ask God’s Spirit to help you with the little things and fill it out. It is a bill for someone to cash. You fill that out so that you can have in ink what that person owes you and how much their sin cost you. Got that? Now turn the paper over and write from Romans 12:19 “Vengeance is mine says the Lord. I will repay.” Let Him be the collector. Give God the marker. Let Him deal with it. And put it down. Stop the ticking. Make it music. See that there was something bigger all along that it is part of you becoming maybe who you were meant to become. Then take that sheet of paper to someplace memorable, a fireplace, a trash can in the kitchen, trash can by the street, and put it down. Let it go. Drop it. Every time it comes back, later on in your life, in the morning and at night, before you go to bed you can stand over the fireplace and say: Somebody else is collecting this bill; I am moving forward.

That is how you stop the ticking. That is how you trust in the power of God’s justice and the reconciliation He will have with every man. Then you get to be free. You get to live and float through the sky, through space on this giant blue rock in total bliss and in peace. That is how it happens. You see that God has never left us. He has never gone. He is always supporting us all along. It is all part of this big story. That is my hope and desire for this story, the story called Esther. I hope that Esther’s story becomes your story in your life.

Let’s pray to that end. If you need help, you want to help pray you through this transition of stopping this ticking, there will be people up front here after the service. Come on up and let them hold your hands and let them take an inventory of that list so that you can deal with it. Tell them what you need to do. We will make that available.

Dear heavenly Father,

We are so grateful for the power of the story, the power of Esther is the power of the Resurrection. You take what is evil and you are able to make it good. You take problems and make them blessings. You take these injuries and turn them into sweet smelling, joy filled, blissful state of experience of You in a whole different way. You make us so unique in our scars. Lord, would You help us see that Your love is stronger than death and injury and sorrow, that You would give us understanding and insight into that, that we might bring You joy in choosing to do what we can choose. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen