

10572

ESTHER: QUEEN OF DESTINY

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Study #4

Esther before the king

Reading: Esther 5 and 6

My dear brethren and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, b&s, as we left our last study, the moment of truth had arrived for Esther! There was no way around the problem, but to confront it. And her decision, b&s, not obviously an easy one to make, as she pleaded with Mordecai to understand that the king had no favourites as far as his privacy was concerned, and that she faced possible death, in the approach that she was about to make. I believe we're all moved, by the way in which she capitulated to the request of her foster father, and because she knew, b&s, that it was so necessary, if there was at all, to be a breathing space given to her people.

I hope, b&s, that as we go through this story, and we need to repeat this quite often as we speak about these matters, that we all bear in mind that these people, one day, did live upon the earth. These are not just stories; the sad calamities of which we sung of in our opening hymn might all now be history. And time means nothing to those people in the article of death or to God in heaven above, it's all over, but it did happen; and we must, b&s, in order to be moved to the same degree or anywhere near the same degree, be able to transport our selves backward in time, and to realize that these things did happen, and for that delicate, wonderful woman, the moment of truth had come!

What a terrible thing for her! The presence of Ahasuerus, b&s, would have been sufficient itself, to strike terror into the hearts of the strongest man, and this Jewish maiden has to face him, unannounced, and with a possibility that she could be run out of that court and slain in a moment of time. Surely the moment of truth had come for her, and she called for the only thing that she could call for, b&s, and that is that the whole ecclesia of the Jewish people should gather together and prostrate themselves before their Heavenly Father and plead for His grace, in this dreadful matter. Isn't it wonderful to have brethren and sisters in times of crisis? Isn't it wonderful to know that brethren and sisters are praying for us, and we've all got little confidence in our own prayers, haven't we, b&s? We should have a lot but we don't; we seem to have a tremendous amount of confidence however, in the prayers of others whom we regard in the highest esteem in the truth. And Esther was like that, and Mordecai passed over

her; he didn't pass over in the literal sense, he never went anywhere because he dwelt in the king's gate, as of course, those who were occupying that position did; in other words, he released her from the pressure that she was under. She capitulated to his law, he passed over her, he left her in freedom because she had decided to follow God's way. And there was no doubt about it, b&s, the angel of death would pass over her house, but woe unto Haman! who sought to destroy God's people.

It's interesting that Esther called for a three day fast. When you go through the Law of Moses, as with the prophets, b&s, three days or a period of three days is often selected as a test of one's sincerity of purpose! Quite frequently that's found in the scriptures; things happened after the third day, because God wanted to extend that time in order to see, b&s, whether people were really genuinely seeking his support. To say it quickly, three days is not a very long time, but to clothe yourself in sackcloth and prostrate yourself in prayer, and to go without food for 72 hours was sufficient time to impress God, that they were sincere in this business. You turn to the 6th chapter of Hosea, b&s, where we have a classical use of this three day period, or this period of three years, or whatever it might be, this three-fold period. It was a test of sincerity and in the prophecy of Hosea chapter 6, (we all know this one fairly well) and here the prophet says in verse 1, 'Come, and let us return unto Yahweh: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up. After two days will He revive us; in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight'. Now I know, b&s, that period of time was a symbolic period of time; we know there were the periods of a thousand years that passed over Israel, for the words of Hosea, to revive them and give them life again. And we are witnessing the revival of Israel, but you see, the point of the three days was that there was a test of sincerity; Yahweh had torn and smitten and Israel felt that, and they were genuine in their approach to Him in this particular case, and on the third day, b&s, having been sufficiently strengthened by the prayers of her brethren and sisters, she went unto the king.

And she didn't go in, b&s, in any other way, but with the highest degree of dignity and in the highest degree of protocol, understanding exactly what the king was like, knowing exactly what he wanted to see, and she prepared herself for the occasion, and this is the verse, b&s, which above all others in Esther's story, has thrilled me through and through, to read this verse of scripture, because this is what is going to get us into the kingdom. Now you read verse 1 of chapter 5 of this book, absolutely beautiful the way that this is expressed, as if the divine historian deliberately wrote these words for us to understand the point. 'It came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel' (now you'll notice immediately that you've got two words there in italics and you can lift them out of the bible, because it was not royal apparel in that sense that Esther put on) and it certainly was not her royal apparel. Literally, in the Hebrew 'she put on royalty', of course, b&s, that involved apparel, as very much a part of that royalty, but what the historian is trying to tell us, is that she put on royalty; she was going before the presence of the king, she was going there to petition his grace and favour. She knew, b&s, the reason why Vashti was rejected, that Vashti did not reflect the glory of that king; now read verse 1 of chapter 5 and it's an exposition just in reading it, because you can't miss the point.

'Now it came to pass on the third day that Esther put on royalty, and she stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house'. Now you try and tell me that that hasn't been written for our admonishment and learning, the way that's written! and almost a repetition of words, almost meaningless to those who don't understand the bible. B&S, what that woman did was this, she's going before that king, now the bible describes here in very general language what happened, but you know, they've done excavations at Susa or Shushan; they've unearthed quite a bit there, they've been able to reconstruct, with the ruins of Susa against the ruins of Pasofelis to the east of Susa again, where using both those excavation sites, virtually what that hall was like. And they say that the kings sat at the end of this vast hall, half of which was an open hall, an open court almost, with the windows strategically placed so that the sun came in, and sliding through the windows shone upon the polished wood; and then beyond that in the other half of the hall were all these pillars like a forest, and again the sun's rays striking these pillars, would make a wonderful reflection upon the polished timber; and behind those pillars hidden by them, a shadow of the king's throne. And approaching that king's throne, b&s, the stairways leading to his elevated throne where he sat in royal majesty, and I can well and truly understand Esther's frame of mind, knowing what the king was like, she dressed for the occasion, dressed so that all that she put on fitted that scene.

She would walk in and as the record says, 'the king looked up and he saw in a particular place', and I believe that she strategically placed herself in the open courtyard of that hall, where she could see through the pillars, and the king's attention having been distracted by her presence, he looked up, and b&s, she fitted that scene, like your hand would fit into a glove! And he had no option but to offer her half the kingdom. Now if that doesn't speak eloquently of our preparation for the kingdom of God, I don't know what does! Now I want to show you something, which supports what Esther 5 is telling us; it's beautiful. In Psalm 45 again Psalm 45, you have a look at this, it's absolutely beautiful; speaking of the great marriage of the King with his bride, the bride of Christ and the King Himself, we read in verse 13, 'The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold'(and just about everybody that comes to that verse, picks up immediately the point that the king's daughter was all glorious within and they apply that, b&s, to the fact that she was all glorious in her character, and they are wrong, because that is not what that verse is telling us, although it involves her character) The word 'within' has got nothing whatever to do with what's going on inside that woman, because that word, b&s, is never used to describe a person. It is always, without exception used in the bible to describe a building, and furthermore, it is only used to describe the inner court of the tabernacle, Solomon's temple and Ezekiel's temple. That woman is all glorious in her true setting; that's what it's telling us, and that's what Esther did. Now, b&s, we are collectively, be we male or female, the bride of Christ; the day is coming when we're going to have to face divinity, in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord with all that that title imports. We may all of us have some idea of what He will be like, the scriptures are wise in not describing Him in detail as far as His physical appearance is concerned; it's not necessary. The scriptures, however, b&s, are eloquent and

detailed in the description of His character, and He is the temple of the living God. He is the tabernacle made without hands, b&s, He is the temple of the living God in person, and one of these days, all of us are going to be taken to put on our wedding garments and to stand before that King in the awe-inspiring majesty of that occasion; and He'll look up and He'll look upon that vast multitude and there will be people in front of Him, b&s, who will fit into that royal scene, beautifully! and there will be others who will stand out like organ spots, and you know what I mean by that!

Let us all, b&s, put on royalty! It's often been said by myself and others have said it also in other ways, that nobody will be saved for the kingdom except Christ, and that's true! It doesn't mean that there's going to be one person in the kingdom, there will be a multitude of people in the kingdom, but they will all be Christ's, because they will reflect Him, b&s. The only thing worth perpetuating in us, is the image of God reflected in the face of Jesus Christ! That's what Esther did; that's what Vashti didn't do, and in that glorious day,(I've dwelt upon that scene as I thought about this camp, and not only this camp but what this study did for me, and I'm laying back on my bed and I'm seeing that scene, as Esther moved into that court, and moving deliberately into one spot, and standing there in regal splendour). And the king looking up at a majestic figure and she fit it and there was nothing about her that distracted from it; she looked like one of the polished pillars, she reflected the king's glory and everything about her toned into the setting; the woman belonged, and he says, 'half the kingdom is yours'. And she became in type, joint-heirs with Christ! Wonderful, b&s, absolutely wonderful and if we want to be in the kingdom of God, that's the sort of royalty we put on. In the book of Revelation, as the new Jerusalem comes down out of heaven, the new Jerusalem is described as being dressed like a bride, and of course, conversely, if the new Jerusalem is dressed as a bride for her husband, the literal bride of Christ will be dressed like Jerusalem, won't she? If Jerusalem looks like her, she obviously looks like Jerusalem; would we, b&s, fit into the royal scene in Jerusalem? Where's our heart? where do we want to live? Are we Israelites indeed? There are at this bible school, Americans, Canadians, Englishmen and Australians, and everyone of us are Israelites; we're all going to fit into the royal scene at Jerusalem, and Jerusalem being dressed as a bride because we will be dressed like Jerusalem, and that will be the royal setting into which we will fit. I believe that's a majestic verse of scripture, as the king looked up and saw that wonderful person and accepted her.

What a day for her, but you know, b&s, that was only half the problem. So we read in verse 2 as we move on through this chapter, 'And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther, the golden sceptre that was in his hand, so Esther drew near and touched the top of the sceptre'. the top of the sceptre, you know, when he held out that golden sceptre, b&s, actually the word in the Hebrew indicates a staff, but in this case, it wasn't a staff of wood, it was of gold. The sceptre, was of course, a symbol of the royal majesty of the king, and when he held out the golden sceptre unto Esther and the promise was made of half the kingdom, I don't believe for a moment, b&s, that in the primary import of that story, that it really meant that she could have half the kingdom. It was almost a colloquial expression, indicating that whatever she desired, within reason the king would

grant it; nobody's going to give half their kingdom. Herod promised that to the daughter of Herodias; they don't really mean that, but it's an expression to show that they're really in favour. But you know, b&s, in the spiritual sense, we will have half the kingdom, not 50% in that sense, but we'll be joint-heirs with Christ! Do you know what Esther did? she moved forward and she touched the top of that sceptre. The Hebrew word is 'rosh' the head of the sceptre, by which of course, she wasn't indicating that she was going to be the ruler of the kingdom, but by touching the top of that sceptre which was in the hand of the king, she obviously said, 'you are my lord'. Psalm 45 verse 11, 'the king shall greatly desire thy beauty, for he is thy ruler', and she touched the head of the sceptre. Isn't that beautiful? absolutely beautiful in the type that is before us.

But you know, b&s, as we indicated, there is much more to be done; much more to be done! So the problem is, how are we going to get this decree of Haman's reversed? Now it could never be reversed, but Esther had a plan, it came out later on but it didn't work, but it was a well conceived one, nonetheless, even if it didn't work. Her plan didn't succeed, b&s, in what she suggested, it was Mordecai's plan that succeeded. And it's rather interesting to see how it went, as we'll see, probably tomorrow, how Esther's plan for the king wasn't accepted, but Mordecai's was; but the immediate problem is Haman. Now when you read this story, and my people, of course, ponder it, they can't understand it. It seems so silly, she invites the king to a banquet of wine with Haman; he asked her to put in a request, she says, no, come to another banquet of wine tomorrow. And when he comes on the morrow, and again puts the matter before her the third time, she then puts her request. People can't understand why Esther kept putting it off like that, but I can! See, b&s, when you get your mind sunk into that record, and you take in all those characters and the atmosphere of that time, you think of the problem that she had.

Alright, she's in favour; she can have her request to the half of the kingdom, but then, so could Haman. He was, b&s, next to the king (chapter 3 and verse 1 says that) the very fact that Esther being accepted on that day, did not necessarily mean that she could request something over and above Haman, he still stood in the highest favour in the king's presence. There was a real problem here, and I believe if you read carefully that story, and listen carefully to what Esther said later on, Esther's plan, b&s, was very cleverly thought out, to get Haman and herself before the king for a protracted period, over a banquet of wine where they could break down the barriers and the reserve the king would naturally have, to get the king in an appropriate frame of mind, with the food and the wine. Not to befuddle his thinking, b&s, no way! the king would not be fool enough for that, but in order to get him in a frame of mind where he was in an amicable frame of mind, to put a proposition before him. But more important than that was to bring before him Haman and herself, that the king might see, in a very close tight knit circle, the interplay of character; because Esther knew the character of Haman and she'd known, b&s, the king's favour towards herself, though for 30 days that stood in doubt. But once the king had extended the golden sceptre, she knew that she was in favour but so was he; now let the two of them appear before the king.

And you know what happens, b&s, don't you? You get two people together, and I

believe this is the import of Esther's delay all the time, you get two people like that together, and one person goes away and another person comes and those two people are like that together; but persons C and B who both get on with A will get on with him when they're on their own; but bring the three of them together and see what happens! and it's going to be pretty obvious that there's a difference between C and B, and the king's going to have his mind exercised about his relationship with those two people. And you couldn't get more diverse characters than the proud, inflated, arrogant, hate-ridden Haman, than the gentle, gracious, beautiful Jewess who obeyed implicitly her foster father's commandments. There would not have been, b&s, a more diverse manifestation of character for the king to exercise his mind on. And when Esther finally came out with her request, what she said, proves what I'm saying, because she didn't beat around the bush but stated out emphatically when she saw the way the thing was going, 'it's this wicked Haman!' And immediately he saw the issue, because there had been a tremendous build up to that; 'it's this wicked Haman' and there he was in the spotlight.

And do you know, b&s, not only that, that Esther's words before that king, extracted out of him in Haman's presence, the way in which she was held in the utmost respect and esteem, and Haman saw her growing all the time, in the king's favour, and you watch this come out in this record as we move through this feast, and see the interplay of characters at this banquet of wine which Esther called. And so in verse 4, Esther said, 'If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him'. Now notice her terminology, 'if it seem good unto the king', very brief, but you wait till Haman's there; it's not so brief, it expands out that Haman might see clearly, the growing favour of that queen.

So we move on to the banquet of wine in verse 6 and here we have, 'the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed'. Now before we move on with the story itself, just a word about those two words, 'petition' and 'request'; petition and request, two things, and she placed two matters before the king. Her petition was for her people and her request was for her own life. And you know, b&s, quite frequently in the scriptures there are two words associated with our approach to our Heavenly Father, for example in the book of Zephaniah they're found, not only in Zephaniah but here they're expressed very clearly; in Zephaniah there are two words found in relationship to our approach to our Heavenly Father, you look at these words, Zephaniah 1 verse 6, the prophet says, 'And them that are turned back from Yahweh; and those that have not sought Yahweh, nor inquired for Him' (petition and request) to seek and inquire after Yahweh. You know, b&s, in the Hebrew the word there for 'to seek Yahweh' is a word which means 'to speak of Him in prayer' but the word which is rendered 'inquire' is a word which means 'to tread after'. You know what, b&s, it is a testimony to our sincerity in prayer if we both seek Yahweh and inquire after Him. If we have a petition and a request in that sense, it's no good praying unto Yahweh and saying, 'do this, do this, do this', if we're not prepared, b&s, to try and find out where Yahweh is, to get into His presence, to ask Him to do it. I don't mean by that that we change positions like Balaam did, but that we seek in our life (we want Yahweh's

protection, and we'll walk in the way that Yahweh indicates) (we want Yahweh to bless our children, and we'll do what He says with our children) (we want Yahweh to protect us on our way to this bible school, then don't go doing 150 m.p.h.) We want Yahweh to do a lot of things for us, b&s, we ask Him, 'well, walk after Him'. And Esther did that, she both sought the king's favour and she did all in her power to influence that king towards her; she obligingly brought before him, the banquet of wine and fed him up; she was a wonderful hostess to him, she dressed for him, she tried to reflect his glory and she sought his favour, and she found it, b&s. And so God will bless us if we both seek Him and tread after Him, and those are the two ways that we need to seek out Yahweh.

And so, at the banquet of wine, there was the great power of Ahasuerus; there is Esther, the bride, and there is her request. And the king says, 'Alright, Esther, what is it?' and there's a sense of impatience and urgency with the king; do you see the atmosphere that Esther's built up? See the king has made up his mind, b&s, by the sheer delight of Esther's request, he's becoming absorbed with her request; it's the thing that's most paramount in his mind; he knows there's been some cause of the delay, there must be some reason for this, what is the thing this woman wants? And he has avowed that he will do it, now in front of Haman, look how she commits the king! 'Then answered Esther and said, my petition and my request is' (she never had a cold, by the way, and she spoke in a much better voice than that) In verse 8 listen to what she says in front of Haman. Before the king, she had said in verse 4, 'if the thing seemed good unto the king', but now listen to her, 'if I have found favour in the sight of the king; and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request' (do you see what she's doing?) Imagine Haman, he's got no idea who she is, he doesn't know, b&s, the power and the force behind those words; one thing he is learning and learning it very well, that the woman is laying it on thick and heavy and I can imagine her as she spoke to the king, stealing a glance at Haman and catching his eye. If I have found favour before the king, if it please the king, I know that he will perform what I am asking'. The time came, b&s, when the record said for Haman, 'he saw that the king was towards the queen', and Esther was throwing him, b&s, inevitably off his guard. He could see the build-up of this, he was glorying in it and he was part of this trio; he could see the wonder of the love of the king for the queen, and she was making sure that he did, and she expanded those words and she committed the king before Haman, the first man of the kingdom, to his promise. This woman, b&s, delicate and wonderful as she may have been, was no fool!

She was a Jew, a Jew through and through, and she knew what she was about, and those words are very important in the way that they are extended out there; and even then, b&s, she didn't say 'my petition and my request is', as you'll notice in verse 7 the word 'is' is in italics again. As Rotherham puts it 'in relation to my petition and my request' or 'touching my petition and my request', and then as if she's going to come out with it, all she does is commit the king to his promise and to his affection for herself, and then says 'tomorrow!'. And the king would have gone all tingly all over, 'goodness, what does that woman want?' You know, I believe this was deliberately done!

Well, the banquet breaks up, Haman goes forth walking on air, walking on air with a

glad heart. Comes to the gate of the king, you know, b&s, previously it was said that Mordecai neither bowed nor revered Haman. Now it says, he won't even stand up, 'he stood not up' and the Word says, 'nor moved for him', the Hebrew means 'trembled in his presence'. You know, that's what you're suppose to do with fellows like Haman, 'here he comes, here he comes (and shake all over)'; Mordecai, you can imagine him sitting crossed legged looking into the dust and probably spitting at the precise moment he past. Can you see that scene? Look, I think it's tremendous, 3 British cheers for Mordecai! But you know, Haman went out full of joy, but it said b&s, 'he refrained himself' (incredible control you see, because he had in the back of his mind a few months later, he would be revenged) no problems. You know, people are able to refrain themselves when they're on top! If a person who's your enemy had got you where they want you, they can show enormous patience with you for awhile; but you know, that patience wore thin and he couldn't wait!

It was too long to the 12th month; he just couldn't wait, and off he goes, and his heart, b&s, is up here and down there, because of the honour that 'I'm the only one that the king asked to come in with the queen; boy, I must be important to the king! Damn that Mordecai! You know, it went like that but that's the one that prevailed. And it's ever been the case, b&s, when men are filled with hate and ambition, hatred is the thing that prevails. And when hatred prevails above ambition, that's the hallmark of a man who's absolutely eaten out, he is dead! And Mordecai acted as if he was dead in his presence, he never moved an inch. He was all but dead to the presence of Haman, and Haman hated him, hated him for 'ah, well, we'll get our own back; for the moment however, see Red, see Red, come on here boy!' laugh, and call all my friends'. And they all sit down. You know he told them, b&s, about the things of much they all knew, and were thoroughly bored with, because they'd heard it so many times! In the record it says, 'and Haman told them of the glory of his riches', in the Hebrew language, the word 'told' there doesn't really mean what it does in ordinary circumstances, it means he recounted. Can you imagine it; what a bore Haman would have been! He recounted it to people who would have known better than anyone else, his circumstances; his poor wife who would hear that day after day after day and his immediate circle of friends, hoping to be remembered in the will, would put up with that time and time again because someday they may inherit this glory. And they would all sit about with artificial smiles pinned to their ears, and saying, 'Oh, it's marvellous, oh, it's incredible; oh, truly, is that your position, I never realized that! Oh.... and he starts off with the nearest and dearest thing to his heart, not Zeresh, but the glory of his riches.

Oh, yes, the glory of his riches, you know he was an obnoxious character, and here he is, and he speaks about it, but notice the details, just notice the details. He told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children (he had ten), he's even three better than me; and of all the things which the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and the servants of the king. The word 'advance' by the way, means 'to be lifted up'; he got a 75 foot lift later on, b&s, a high promotion! You know, it's funny but it's tragic; but you know the thing, here's flesh for what it is, here's flesh if you ever want to know flesh, here it is! When men of flesh glory in their riches, they always finish up on one note; you learn this lesson together, I know because I

listen to myself sometimes as my voice echos off other people's ears, and it's horrified me, because I realize I'm a lot like Haman, and so are you! Because flesh is like this, b&s, and when it talks about the glory of riches, the multitude of children and the promotions he has in the world, it always ends up with one factor, other men don't have that sort of advantage in life. It always sees it in the negative at the last, always negative, and Haman said 'yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in but me!' See the point? Now a greater man would not do that, you see, if you were invited into the presence of the king and queen, and if you were in high society, well, the natural thing to do is to come out and say, 'well, who did you have lunch with today, dear?' Oh, 'the duke of Norfolk', oh, a duke! oh I see! 'I was in with the king!' you see the point, I am greater than you', (always negative). They didn't let any man come in, but me, and tomorrow also I'm going to be there again' (nobody else!) You know, b&s, there was never a thought in that man's mind, never a thought of gratitude towards that kingly invitation or the queen. Never a thought of humility that such a man as him could be elevated to a position where he could eat with characters like that! Never a sense of insufficiency in life or the fact that he couldn't match the scene, and coming away deeply humbled by the experience. No way in the world, 'I'm better than my fellows' and always it finishes like that, with men of his nature. No doubt about that at all; and you know, he recounted these things and you can imagine the glowing picture (no one else came into the king but me!) but that Mordecai, oh, what's the good of all this to me while he breathes! What an incredible man he is; what prevailed in his mind at the last? all the glory and the pomp and the circumstances, the riches and his children? The thing that prevailed at the last was his hatred of that man! And that is ever the end of those who are filled with themselves, you know, b&s, we are human beings. You live a life to yourself and I'll tell you your end; bitterness and frustration! You spend your life gaining the riches of this world, elevating yourself above your brethren; let me fall into the temptations to believe in folly that I'm the greatest fellow that ever lived! or that, no one could do this job better than me! And God, b&s, will split my tongue. Never let us fall into that trap, because that's the end of all flesh and the ambition of flesh, b&s, always, always ends on the negative. Always!

You know, Zeresh said to him, 'you plan the death of Mordecai and go in merrily with the king', well, I'm going to tell you something, he went away merrily to go in with the king, but you know, that was an impossibility, because when Mordecai was dead, the thing that would have eaten him out, was the fact that Ahasuerus was still one better than him! And there's no way that Haman could have been satisfied until he sat upon that throne. And then, b&s, when he got upon the throne and sat in regal splendour and they bowed and scraped before him, his mind would reach out to other nations who didn't give him obedience, and he'd go to war against them! And he'd conquer one after another until the whole world was in his grasp; he'd look at the moon and say, 'dare you shine upon me like that?' and start building spaceships. A man like that, b&s, is insatiable; he never will end and be happy, he can't have happiness, it will escape and allude him. Try it, you buy a motor car, it's brand spanking new, a day later it's got a scratch on it, it irks you and worries you, and you know it's second hand, and you've got to get another one, and then it rusts; you get it cut out and you buy another one, and it hasn't got radial tires and you go on and on and on; and always in the back of your mind

is, 'he hasn't got an old one like me!' You know, b&s, that's flesh, this record is written for our admonish and our learning! Give up ambition, b&s, give it away, don't think twice about it; provide for your own, look after your households, have that which is sufficient for your needs, and seek for glory and honour and immortality, and let God grace us, b&s, with His kingdom. And I'll tell you something, when you're standing in Zion, you'll be happy! and there's no where else to go, and you'll look to the heavens above, and you'll see the King upon His throne, and you won't want His position; you'll fall on bended knees and thank your Heavenly Father that you've got life. That's the only think left for us, there is nothing else, b&s, and Haman is a lesson in that record, of a insatiable desire that can never, ever be satisfied, like the horse leach which sucks blood, and sucks and sucks and is never satisfied; like the grave which eats up its bodies one after another and yearns for others; like the barren womb that screams for children and more children, as Solomon says, b&s, 'that's Haman, give it away; it's folly, it's not worth it', and set your affection on things above where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt; and wait, b&s, and that was Mordecai's faith, don't worry about it! But this fellow did! he worried himself into his grave.

And Zeresh, entering into the spirit of her husband, in verse 14, and his friends suggest a plan and a scheme whereby he may be rid of his enemy, to build a gallows 50 cubits high; 50 cubits high, 75 feet approximately. Why? to set Mordecai the Jew, and there's the title of contempt, high above the people, a ignominious death. What did they do to the Lord Jesus Christ? The greatest man that ever lived, b&s, starving was too good for Him, to cut His throat would have been a sacrilege to their pride, to put Him out of the way quietly, unthinkable; what could they do to a man that they hated so much? What could they do to Him? but kill Him, but killing was too good, we must show everybody, everybody's got to see Him, naked and bruised and battered and bleeding and dying, on a tree 'lift Him up' let them have a look at Him, 'there He is, a criminal', a fake, an imposter! No, b&s, pride knows no end, and Paul told the Galatians 'Oh, foolish Galatians, before whose very eyes, Jesus Christ hath been (and he uses a word 'prographo') placarded before you', placarded before you, that's what they wanted. They wanted everyone to see it, wasn't good enough to just kill Him; and that's what they wanted for Mordecai. There's a type here, b&s, a tremendous type, and placarding him they must.

75 feet high, that all the kingdom may know the contempt with which they held him. But God on high, b&s, doesn't tolerate things like that; He did with His only begotten Son! Have you ever thought about that as He saved Mordecai on the eve of his execution? He didn't save His own Son, have you ever thought about the traumatic experience, if we can use that term, in relation to our Heavenly Father. He was sorely grieved, He who made the ear can hear, He who made the nose can smell, He who made the eye can see, and He who made the heart can bleed, in anger and in sorrow to see His lovely Son, His beloved Son killed by murderers of that sort. B&S, that was a price paid not by the Son only but a higher price by the Father. And He didn't release His Son from that death, though He may have released Mordecai. And God's providence, however, released Mordecai; God's power released the Lord Jesus Christ for ever and a day from the hands of His enemies. There's a wonderful type here, no doubt about that, and as Haman plots the scheme of Mordecai's death, and as the gallows are made, b&s, we

believe the word is a 'tree', the Septuagint version uses the word 'tree' exactly the same Greek word as is used for the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the New Testament. 'They made him a tree' to impale him on; and as Haman planned that, 'on that night, could not the king sleep'.

You know, b&s, it is said in the psalms, 'He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps'; the time was to keep Israel, so He woke up the king. And the king woke up; you talk about providence? Providence in the story of Esther? The king wakes up, he can't sleep on the very eve of execution; ah, that's wonderful! Is it? You listen to what went on! So he calls for the book of the chronicles to be read before him; the record of the chronicles he called for, b&s, if you were to go, and we won't go to this now, to Daniel 6 and verse 18, it was the custom of the Persian kings who couldn't sleep to call for musicians. I'd rather go to sleep with Beethoven's pastoral than Roland's history, any time! and it was the custom of the Persian kings to call for musicians, says Daniel 6 and verse 18, what made that king call for the book? But wait, b&s, what book did he call for? The record of the chronicles, in the Hebrew, the word means 'the memorial deeds'; the king woke up in a heroic mood. He woke up dreaming perhaps about heros, he was in a heroic mood, not an unnatural thing for the king to be, and he wants to hear about heros. And they bring the record of the heros, and the angel of God turned the page. Five years back, five years back and found the place concerning Mordecai. Ah, b&s, under the shadow of the Almighty was Mordecai, and the sad calamity was about to pass over.

The page turned and they found that it was written, 'that Mordecai had told about this matter, of the two chamberlains who planned to assassinate the king. What's been done for him? what honour and dignity has been done for him? Well, nothing! What? nothing... and as the king would listen to the chilling record that right outside his bedroom door, two men who kept the private chamber of the king, planned his assassination; I believe the king's flesh would crawl, to realize that 5 years earlier he was close to assassination. Now you just ponder for a moment, what we've said about Persian kings on the basis of that record, of their privacy. And the way in which they would feel, b&s, relatively impregnable in their private room, that you couldn't even approach the king unless you were under the pain of death. And to realize that two of them had got close enough to be outside his door! The king's flesh would crawl, he'd suddenly realize that he'd escaped death by the skin of his teeth. What's been done for that man? NOTHING, nothing! What honour and dignity? NOTHING! You know, b&s, the sun was coming up. When they plotted the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, Luke records that 'they came very early in the morning before the sun was up', because they knew they had to secure that man's death before the multitude thronged Jerusalem and popular opinion may be swayed in His favour. There was another man, b&s, who had plotted the type of Christ's death, the death of Mordecai, and he had hurried to the court as the sun was coming up, and run into the court of Ahasuerus, walking up and down, looking at his watch (Seiko automatic) looking at his watch for the king to wake up, waiting for that sun to come up, to give this decree.

God's providence brought him there! The king says, 'who's in the court? Haman, he'll

do! Marvellous, isn't it, b&s? Do you think God's providence stopped there? You just listen to this! Verse 5, 'And the king's servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in. So Haman came in'. Now b&s, pause there. You imagine as I've tried to imagine this story and make it a reality in my mind, and see the interplay of characters here again, and the reason for which the things were said, why they were said, what could have been said, and what wasn't said, and what was said. As God controlled not only the record of the book, the king spoke with the very men involved. Now imagine, if Haman had have come in, and if the king had greeted him and before he put before Haman his proposition, had asked him concerning his welfare and as to whether there was anything on his mind, as to why he was standing in the court? Bearing in mind, b&s, that the deed of Mordecai was written in the book of the record, memorial book of the records as a hero; Haman was far, far in excess in favour with the king than Mordecai was. Here is his prime minister, now can you imagine if the king had let Haman speak first, and Haman had put to him the proposition of Mordecai; the king would have hesitated to weigh up the pros and cons of the issues; but he let go straight away.

And as Haman came near, the king said, 'What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour?' before Haman could say a word. But then again, b&s, what if Ahasuerus had said, 'what can we do to honour Mordecai?' couldn't Haman have turned around and said, 'do you see a need? Yes, for this reason! Yes, but that was 5 years ago. Look, I've got other matters to put before the king!' But Ahasuerus didn't name Mordecai; isn't that remarkable? And the king knew nothing about the issue, he didn't name him, so Haman is taken completely off guard, for he thought to himself, $2 + 2 = 4$. I'm the only bloke in the world, that ate with the king and queen, and as for the other scurvy mob, well, who else would the king delight to honour? but me! I'm #1, sure, I'm #1. You know, b&s, you go and ask an ambitious man what he wants for his birthday; you ask my wife what I want for my birthday, I always know. She doesn't but I do! I always know! You ask an ambitious man what he wants and he won't even take a deep breath, because he knows what he wants, he dreamt it all up. It's also here in his mind, he knows exactly what he wants.

Now you look at Haman's request; he didn't hesitate and say, 'what can we do?' He said, 'get the king's clothes (that he had put away) the king's crown (make sure it's your crown) and a horse, not any horse, a royal horse, no, your horse; and then we'll get a man, not any man, we'll get the first man in the kingdom, #1. Now, b&s, that was his method; you know, that's the incredible part about this story, and in verse 8, 'Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head: and let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes', and in the Hebrew language, the word used there which means 'one of the king's or the first of the king's princes. The very first, b&s, that is Haman! Ah, he could have bit his tongue out, when later on the king says, 'there shall not one detail fail'. Oh, can you imagine! just pause for a moment; the king had no idea or did he? what was in Haman's mind? Remember the banquet of wine, b&s? had it seeped through to the king what sort of man he was?

Nobody will ever know, but I'll tell you what, if I'd been there, I'm a bit of a dill but I'm not dill enough to know this, that when you're talking to people in an interplay of characters, it's not difficult, b&s, sometimes, and we don't do this deliberately, but it's not difficult sometimes to see the weakness in people as they display those weaknesses against the background of people much better than themselves! You know that's true, and if we'd been in that man's presence with Esther the queen and saw him displayed against the glory of that character, we'd have read him a bit, I believe.

And when this came pouring out of him, what is he telling that king? B&S, the king's apparel belonged to the king, the royal crown belonged to the king, and do you know what they did when they got a king to succeed another one? What did David do when he wanted Solomon to become king? He ordered them to take the royal mule and put Solomon thereon, and proclaim him king. What did the Pharaoh do to Joseph to declare him prime minister? he got Joseph to ride in his chariot; you see, b&s, this was the custom of succession to the throne, Haman's ambition is transparent! He wants that throne, and he won't be ever merry with the king until he's on that throne and the king is dead. (and he can't be merry with him) he'll never be happy until he's there, b&s. And this man's ego is enormous, absolutely enormous; and he wants them to go before him and proclaim him 'king', and the first man in the kingdom, you know, he suggests that it would even be beyond the dignity or below the dignity of such a man, to dress himself; I suggest to you, you dress him'. What an ego, what an incredible ego! You know, b&s, your mind goes forward hundreds of years, when they dressed such a man in mockery, to make him a 'mock king', and arrayed him in purple, and hit him on the head with a lump of wood (which is what the ring was). You know you can see this so vividly portrayed, and all of these things having poured out of Haman like water, so crystal clear in his mind, the details, the words of the king, 'then, says the king to Haman, make haste (can you imagine Haman's excitement building up?) Hurry up, (no need to tell me that) he'd be ready like a rocket ready to do this job. 'Make haste; take the apparel, get the horse as thou hast said, and do even to Mordecai' (whoooo!) Mordecai, the Jew.'

You know, b&s, you can't begin to imagine what that meant; nobody can imagine; it was the most crushing blow, the very fact that the king mentioned his title, 'Mordecai the Jew, and proclaim before him', and there he comes down the streets of the city of Shushan, into the open square before the palace. Ah, b&s, let's luxuriate in the scene. Imagine Mordecai, no smiles, no form of pleasure on his face, nothing changed for him. The record says when it was all over, he went straight back and sat in the king's gate, by which the historian told us, he was absolutely unmoved by the experience. That's what that means, he went back and sat in the king's gate, unmoved by that experience, and the unsmiling Jew with sadness lining his face, b&s, and tears probably appearing there for the weeping and fasting for the death of his people that was impending. A sad and lonely figure, and this miserable Haman, hardly able to use his voice to proclaim the glory and honour and dignity of Mordecai the Jew, with everybody looking on and shame flooding over his body, filling him with nausea as he proclaimed this man; and went home, b&s, and covered his head in absolute shame of that day. You know, there was another scene like that, almost exactly like that; 'behold, your King cometh unto

thee, says the prophet, 'riding upon a foal the colt of an ass'. Can you see that scene, b&s? Over the brow of Olivett, led in the procession by a multitude that went before and a multitude that went behind, strewing his path with palm branches and the little children, in whose mouth Yahweh had perfected praise above their elders, praising Him 'Hosanna, oh, save us, son of David, king of Israel', and the miserable Hamans filled with envy, hating every second of that, saying to the Lord of all the earth, 'stop these kids, stop these kids', as if it was some religious objection and all the time, b&s, the very voice of the children was cutting their hearts in two, that such a man, such a despicable character should ever receive praise! And the carpenter's face bathed in tears; not moved, b&s, by the pomp of the circumstances which were hollow and false, but looking down over the vale of Kidron to the eastern precincts of the southeast and corner of the temple, as it lay immediately under His feet. 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that stonest the prophets and them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, but you would not. If only you knew the peace which belonged unto thee, but it's hid from your eyes. Behold, you shall not see Me until you shall say, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the LORD'. You see, b&s, when Jesus came into Jerusalem, in the name of men, He cried; when He rides into Jerusalem again, in the name of the LORD, He'll be happy! Happy is he, who comes into this city in the name of the LORD; this is a sad day for Me'. Can't you see that? can't we see, b&s, the glory and the majesty of God's Word as those two men rode in mock glory into that city, and they both went and sat in the gate, unmoved by that experience, except to be moved to tears at the falsity of it all. There is no badge of honour in this age, b&s! All the honours and glory that are heaped upon us, for whatever we do in God's service, fall upon us with little feeling; there is nothing to be treasured, b&s, except those words, 'enter thou into the joy of thy Lord', there is nothing else! And the Lord Jesus knew that and Mordecai knew that; and men like Haman, b&s, though they may have gone home and covered their head in shame, those men remain completely unmoved by that experience.

Ah, you know, the reflections which go to the Lord Jesus are so great in this book, aren't they? They can't be missed! And so the day is over, and Mordecai in verse 12, 'came again to the king's gate'. He came again to the king's gate, b&s, but Haman, it says, 'Haman hasted to his house mourning, and having his head covered'. You know, Paul makes the point, doesn't he? that for a man to cover his head is a shame to him, because he is the image and glory of God. For a woman not to cover her head is a shame for her, for she's the image and glory of the man. And there, b&s, with his head covered, Haman was nothing like God! There was no resemblance whatever between him and the characteristics of heaven. His head, b&s, could never reflect in his face the glory of God that shone in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. That face could reflect nothing, because the mirror was on the wrong side of the nose; it reflected all back inside and all the glory that ever reflected from Haman lit the internal ego of his own body and filled everyone else with boredom. That was Haman, b&s, it is best that a man like that go around with a bag on his head for the rest of his life, for there's nothing to be seen in that man's face other than self, self, self. And home he went.

'And he told Zeresh his wife and all his friends', and do you know something? the same

Hebrew word 'he recounted unto them' but this time, b&s, the recounting was of the misery of that day, the misery of that day. And then we have a very, very telling statement; 'then said his wise men'. They were never called that before, they were merely his friends; all of a sudden, Haman's friends have turned, as if by a magic wand of the fairy godmother, into wise men. What was wise about them? because they had come to know, b&s, long before this incident, by the incidents of history, that you can't touch the Jews and get away with it! Friends suddenly become wise men and they tested him. Mordecai's of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, and thou shalt not prevail against him'. You know, b&s, the world will soon come to see that wisdom; have a look at Isaiah 61, here it is, the seed of the Jews, whom God has blessed. The whole world will come to Haman's conclusion and that day is not far distant, and in verse 9 concerning Israel of the spirit, of course, as far as the promises are concerned both natural and spiritual, 'And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people; all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which Yahweh hath blessed', and that's exactly what they did, they acknowledged that they are the seed that Yahweh hath blessed. And they said that 'this Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall', now b&s, I know that we've been speaking for a long time but I don't want to cut this too short, just a couple of more minutes, just bear with me because this is important.

Before whom thou hast begun to fall, you see the drama of the scene that is before us. We haven't got the decision from the king yet, but just imagine the disadvantage that Haman's at now; he's already been to a banquet of wine with the king and queen. They've seen a display of his characteristics there, he's seen, b&s, the favour that the queen has with the king, he does not know as yet her position, b&s, but nonetheless he's been visibly impressed with the fact that the king deeply loves the queen and is committed to his word. The shock of that will come later; but now b&s, having gone to the court to secure Mordecai's death, he's had to parade him through the streets in glory and honour. What chance has Haman got now of going back to the king, and telling the king that for years Mordecai's been a traitor, because he now is in dire peril of being killed himself, because the king will say, 'you've been a hypocrite because you've just taken him through the streets knowing that'. Haman knew, b&s, the flag was coming down, that doom was over his head, there was an awful sense of foreboding; he knew that his scheme was gone, it was finished, he couldn't go back to the king. There was no way that he can get Mordecai hung, because he knows now that it's positively dangerous, it's beyond him. And his wife read that situation and his wife knew that when she advised those gallows to be built, b&s. And there are people in this world, doubtless, there are people in this world, who will join with the Russian horde in the last days, because of envy! and of hatred of God's people, and will join that horde to come down to the Land, and knowing that over the years of time, Israel have been blessed. And they will do that against their better judgment; Zeresh, b&s, deserved everything she got because she knew better, and so did his friends that suddenly turned into wise men.

You know, wise men from the east came hundreds of years later, to acknowledge that Jesus was the King of the Jews, they still knew! And the fools, the fools flew in the face

of divine providence; it is a foolish thing to do that, and there they are and the whole lot of them caught, caught at the very last, and they said, 'if you've begun to fall against the seed of the Jews, you're a goner!' He was an Agagite, Numbers 24 and verse 7, the prophecy of Balaam again; Mordecai was of the seed of the Jews and Haman was an Agagite. And Balaam said years earlier, 'He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted'. You know what happens, b&s, when you get a bucket of water and you put a whole lot of seed in there, and you tip it in the Murray (a river)? noxious weeds are a terrible problem in that river because the seed gets carried by the water, and they have one heck of a job controlling that. Israel's seed, b&s, is in the bucket and it's thrown into the waters of the nations, and God will sow the world with Israel's seed, and Israel will blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit. But as for Agag, his latter end shall be that he will be obliterated, and that's the message of Zeresh his wife and his friends through Balaam, 'if you've gone against the seed of the Jews, you've only begun to fall; you've had it!'

And he knew that, b&s, and he had hardly hear those words out of the mouth of his wife, when there was a knock on the door, 'Haman, quick, the banquet of wine is ready'. B&S, what a tremendous atmosphere God built up for that final banquet of wine. As the three of them sat down again, what an enormous atmosphere had been built up and when the words of Esther came, 'it's this wicked Haman', it was God's providence, b&s, that immediately sealed the doom of that man, and the Jews were delivered from the hand of their enemy!