

8610

ESTHER: QUEEN OF DESTINY

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Study #6

Events Leading to the Feast of Purim

Reading - Esther 8:10-9:16

My beloved brethren and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sorry I didn't warn our chairman, but we're not quite going to get to the joyous feast of Purim because of the time factor this morning, we had to carve out of our exhortation about 50% of it, and add it to this afternoon's talk and push it further on. So we're not going to quite reach to the feast of Purim, b&s, but to those events, of course, that lead up to it, which brought forth that joyous feast of Purim which we hope to consider in our last session together. What we do see this morning, is the righteousness of the king upheld, and we saw him that had the power of death, that is the devil, destroyed through death. Not by averting death, but through death was the power of the devil destroyed as Hebrews 2 verse 14 tells us, 'Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood; He also Himself likewise took part in the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the diabolos. And deliver us who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage'. That, b&s, would constitute the panorama of this morning's consideration of the greatness of Mordecai, the greatness of the king's commandment and the wonderful deliverance that was now offered them.

Now you see this, b&s, as we say as an epitome of what we're going to talk about this afternoon. When king Ahasuerus said, 'look, I'm not against the Jews; I've done two things to prove that I'm for them. I've granted you the house of your enemy and hung your enemy upon the tree, (which God had done for us), therefore, you write for the Jews and seal it with the king's ring'. He was saying to Mordecai and to Esther, b&s, that whilst they couldn't reverse the edict of Haman, yet the irreversible law of the king was now at their command, to do as they would in order that they may fight their way out of that edict. Now the wonderful thing is this, that when they came to that fateful day of the 13th day of Adar, and the king had said to do as you like, they found that they were not able to slay in Shushan the palace, all the enemies of Israel. And Esther and Mordecai, b&s, were grateful that the king's law was irreversible and they got a second day. And they learnt as probably they had never learnt before, how wonderful it was, that the king's law stood, and now they are able to secure a second day, to do what the other day would not have allowed them to do, and would have left the problem in

Shushan the palace. But the problem was gone; and the same applies to us, b&s, if a law of God has consigned the human race to the grave, then we will be terribly thankful, at the judgment seat of Christ, to be put on His right hand side, that another irreversible law of God will make us immortal, and we will be granted eternal life, and never again, will the enemy prevail. And won't we be glad that God's law is irreversible? even though for the moment, we may have to submit to it as a question of principle in our lives.

So it's Mordecai that takes the initiative; and isn't that wonderful that he did? because if the king's power represented the power of God Almighty, and the king's commandment represents the principles of truth which are immutable, b&s, isn't it wonderful that it's Mordecai, the representative of Jesus Christ, who should take the initiative to right the king's commandment and command all men to obey it? And we read in that 8th chapter which was read for us, in the 9th verse, halfway through the verse, 'it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to all the lieutenants etc. who were in the provinces of the king'. And you know, b&s, that when Mordecai issued his decree of defence for the Jews to fight their way out of the edict of Haman, you will notice if you read carefully, that he followed the edict of Haman word by word by word, it was virtually the edict of Haman in the exact reverse. And as we go through these two chapters, it is one principle that stands out that God reverses the fortunes of His people, and in the middle of this talk somewhere, I'm going to take you to a reference which is staggering, to show you that God reverses the fortunes of His people, and that that verse in scripture has been written to impress that lesson upon us; and therefore, when Mordecai wrote, he wrote almost the exact words of Haman, that they were words which were going to reverse what Haman had done!

You see, b&s, both laws were divine. Both laws emanated from the throne, they were therefore, similar in principle and yet one reversed the other. Both laws, the laws of mortality and the law of eternal life have emanated from the throne of heaven; they've both come from the same source and they are diametrically opposed, in their effects that is. In principle they are together, but in their effects they are opposed, and one law reverses the other! Incredible, the way this is written, and so in verse 10, there's a certain urgency in this verse, and we read 'that he wrote in the king Ahasuerus' name', see that b&s? (he upheld the king's honour and dignity), 'he sealed it with the king's ring' (which made it immutable), 'and they sent letters by posts on horseback, riders on mules, camels, and young dromedaries'. You know, b&s, it's rather interesting that in the original Hebrew it's not like that; the RSV trying to give a better rendition of what the original was like renders that verse this way, 'they were riding on swift horses that were used in the king's service, bred in the royal stock', so it wasn't a question of many types of animals, but of one! And the emphasis upon the animal was that it was of royal stock, riding upon swift horses that were used in the king's service bred in the royal stock' is the meaning of the Hebrew. And it's not difficult to see, is it b&s, the principle emanating from this? that when the decree goes forth in the age to come, and imagine it going forth, (it's good to imagine it, b&s, because this is what is going to get us into the kingdom is the vision of glory) Have you got a vision of glory in your mind? can you see what's going to happen? Can you see the Lord Jesus Christ on Zion's hill in His Father's name, sealing it with the authority of His Father, and sending out the message to all

nations of the Jews, that they have to fight their way back to the Holy Land? And that's exactly what's going to happen, and the great Elijah, the prophet of the still small voice, back on the earth, b&s, now intelligent in the things of God as he's never been before, and going forth to the tribes of Ephraim scattered abroad. And in order that that message might be impressed upon the nations, who takes it forth?

Well, says Zechariah, 'in that day shall Judah be His goodly horse' and that's what goes forth with the message. The tents of Judah are saved, the city Shushan, Jerusalem, is in the hands of the Jews, completely controlled, and now the goodly horse, bred in the royal stock, b&s, the stock of Abraham, whose feed would be the king of the world. Bred in the royal stock, in the king's service goes forth to all the world to bring home the rest of the tribes. Look at Isaiah 66, and these royal animals in the service of Yahweh, go forth as ambassadors to the nations. The last chapter of Isaiah verses 19 and 20, 'And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard My fame, neither have seen My glory; and they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto Yahweh out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to My holy mountain Jerusalem, saith Yahweh, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of Yahweh'. And when Isaiah said, b&s, that they shall bring all your brethren for an offering, he wasn't talking about Jews; he was talking about Jews who escaped and who were then sent forth as the ambassadors of the King of the Jews to all nations, upon those swift beasts, bred in the royal stock, used in the king's service and they were to bring back to Jerusalem your brethren out of all nations. The Gentiles who would submit or in the book of Esther, many of the people became Jews, as a result of the messages carried forth by the royal stallions of that stock. What a wonderful book it is, b&s! as Yahweh points forward to the future, as He will use them as His goodly horse, in the day of battle, and upon that horse, the royal horse bred in His stock, carried back the sons and the daughters created and made for Him among the nations; now all Jews, Jews in spirit, b&s, members of the commonwealth of Israel. That's the message of these chapters that we're reading together this afternoon.

And so Mordecai sends these letters out, and in verse 11 we're told, 'the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life', he granted the Jews, b&s, to stand for their life. NO HE DIDN'T; you read it carefully, he never granted the Jews to stand for their life; he granted the Jews to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life. And three times in the record that we're going to read, b&s, it states emphatically that the Jews gathered themselves together, and I believe in that, there is a principle of the highest magnitude, and I believe, b&s, that one of the immutable, irreversible laws of our God in heaven above, is that Christadelphians are not granted to stand for their life, on their own. The immutable law is that you have a right to stand with Me, for your life, and I've got the divine right to stand with you for My life. And if we don't stand together, b&s, we will neither get life nor will we keep the immutable law of the King. And three times it is stated that the Jews gathered themselves together, because that's what the king's decree gave them the

right to do; and if there's not a message in that, well, I've never read the bible before in my life, and I believe there's a tremendous lesson in that, b&s. It's a tremendous lesson! We know the strength in unity, we know, of course, the advantage of gathering ourselves together, b&s, but consider it from this angle, that we're commanded to do it! and there in the book of Esther, in type, is that wonderful law, the beautiful law of the king, he granted them to gather themselves together and to stand for their life. Now never let us forget that, we know, b&s, or we ought to know, that numbers mean nothing; numbers mean nothing in the sense that we feel that because we've got a lot of people gathered here, it means that we're relatively safe in numbers, there's no safety in numbers in that sense, b&s, but it's wonderful to know and to feel that there are people who believe the same things. It's marvellous to know that in our struggle for eternal life, that there are others alongside of us, who can assist immensely in that struggle. That in times of weakness we each have someone to lean upon, b&s, and we've got a divine right to gather ourselves together, and to stand for our lives. You ought to underline those words and never forget them, never forget them; gather yourselves together and then, stand for your life! And we'll read it time and again, because that's exactly what they did.

And you know, b&s, as Mordecai wrote down this copy of the writing as we have it in verse 13, 'that a copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province', as he wrote it down, as I said to you before, he followed almost verbatim, the edict of Haman because it was to be reversed, but there was a difference. The effect was different in Shushan, for when Haman's edict went out, b&s, the record states that Shushan was perplexed, but when Mordecai's edict went out, it states 'that Shushan rejoiced and was glad'. You see, b&s, in the age to come, long before the world at large settles down to a peaceful existence, the captial will be under Jewish control supremely. And in this chapter we have a division between the Jews in Shushan and what the book calls, the other Jews in the provinces. As remarkable in the topology of this book, that Shushan should quickly become a Jewish stronghold, and it's remarkable, b&s, that they requested two days destruction in the city, that all their enemies should be destroyed, whereas in the provinces it is stated, that they slew all their foes, 70,000; in other words, not all the enemies were destroyed in the empire. And so it will be in the age to come, that in Shushan the palace, Jerusalem the city, b&s, no more the Canaanite in the house of God, but abroad in the world, men and women left everywhere, unconverted to the hope of Israel, blind to the Messiahship as it is in Jesus, ready to be converted by that swift horse of Yahweh's sending, that they might be brought back as His sons and daughters to rejoice before Him. What a marvellous book it is, b&s, in the details that it sets before us, as far as the type is concerned.

And Mordecai, what of him? Well, to all intents and purposes he was dead! He was as good as dead, as Haman woke up that morning early to receive from the king, the authority to kill him. And by the intervention of God, b&s, death was averted for him; and he stands in this record in verse 15, as a typical resurrected man. And we read that 'Mordecai went out from the presence of the king', marvellous language, glowing language; 'he went out before the face of the king' that's the literal Hebrew expression, he went out from before the face of the king'. And the face of any person in the

scriptures, b&s, was emblematic of his character; you read a man in his face, for we saw the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ, by which Paul means the character of Jesus Christ. And here is a man that's come from before the presence of, before the face of, or from the character of the king. What's he telling us? That Mordecai went forth, b&s, in a full blaze of glory, not his own, but the reflection of the king from before whom he came. Here we're learning of the Lord Jesus Christ as He will be sent from the presence of the Father, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the LORD. For says Malachi interpreted by Luke, 'He shall go before the face of the LORD', and He'll go before the face of the LORD to reflect to the world, b&s, in His own glorious face, that face upon which no man can look, the face of the eternal God Himself, the source and origin of all good, without whom there is none that is good. And Mordecai went forth from before the face of the king, in royal apparel.

Ah, b&s, this is no mock royalty; there's no Haman leading the horse. The clothing doesn't belong to the king, it's not borrowed, it's his own, and he goes forth in royal apparel. He's in the colours of the empire, blue, white, gold, purple; we learn about them in chapter 1 verse 6, we won't go through all the symbology of them again; it's elegant though, isn't it? even the very colours themselves, but the thing that's important in this, in verse 15, is that upon his head is a great crown of gold. Now, b&s, one thing we note about that crown of gold, it was not the king's crown. When Haman was asked, what would he do with the man that the king delighteth to honour? and in his ego, believing it was himself, he said let not the royal crown be put upon him, he, b&s, cared nothing for the dignity of the throne; he would have quickly deposed Ahasuerus, and in the sense and the terminology which applies to us, he was a brother who thought nothing of the majesty of God, but thought that God was in his service, and would quickly, if he could, dethrone the Almighty, in order that he might stand alone in the earth as king of the world. That was Haman's view, no such man was Mordecai; when they put upon his head a great crown of gold, the word in the Hebrew for 'crown' is different from the king's crown. He didn't want that crown, b&s, he was happy to represent the king because the king was for the Jews, and that's all that mattered. And Mordecai was more than happy to service Ahasuerus as a symbol of the King of righteousness, whom he didn't want to dethrone and knew that he couldn't. And therefore he went forth with a great crown of gold.

Have a look at Psalm 21, b&s, what sort of man does God crown with a crown of gold, and why does He crown him so? Psalm 21, this is the sort of man, God crowns with a crown of gold, reading verses 1 to 4, 'The king shall joy in thy strength, O Yahweh, and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. (Consider that!) For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head'. What sort of crown was it? It was a crown, b&s, in which he rejoiced in and what did he rejoice in? thy strength, thy salvation, and the crown upon his head, b&s, first of all being a kingly thing, a crown, indicating the majesty of God, and of it being of pure gold indicating the morality of that God, and the faith he had in that God, b&s, was all of God. It came of God and therefore, the crown that he wore was a crown which gave glory to God; that's what God crowned him with, and the reason he crowned him with it, is from verse 7

onwards, 'for the king trusted in Yahweh, and through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved. Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: Yahweh shall swallow them up in His wrath, and the fire shall devour them. Their fruit shall Thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men. For they intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform'. Those words could have been on the caption of the crown of Mordecai, for they did destroy their offspring from the earth, and hung them all on the gallows, and they were not able to perform their mischievous device, and the crown of gold, b&s, sitting upon Mordecai's head spoke eloquently of the victory of God, not Mordecai. That's what Psalm 21 is all about, and that's the principle of that crown resting upon the head of Mordecai.

And, of course, Shushan was glad, we read at the end of verse 15. Jewish influence is high there, and 'the Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour'. We can go through everyone of those words, b&s, all of importance, but of course, that's an exercise that is time consuming. So we read as a result of Jewish citizenship becoming so notoriously good, it was wonderful to be a Jew, and we read at the end of chapter 8, 'and many of the people of the land became Jews'; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them'. Hah, look, anyone, a Sunday School scholar could bring the type out of that! Many of the people of the land became Jews, 'for at the time when we were Gentiles we were without Christ' weren't we, b&s? 'Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world'; but we are no longer aliens from the commonwealth of Israel but because the fear of God has fallen upon us, many of the peoples of the land of Australia here today have become Jews. And in the age to come when the Lord Jesus Christ calls to His fold, the great flock of all nations, no one will get into that fold who can lay claim to anything else than being a Jew, for says Jesus, to the ecclesias to whom He wrote, there are those among you who say they are Jews, and are not. By which of course, He means that the criteria of the kingdom of God is that we must become Jews.

And many of the people of the land became Jews, you know what, b&s, the very fact that the contraction of the word Judah being used there, a term of contempt, shows what was involved in that; people because of the fear of the Jews and because Jewish citizenship was so honoured, that they would be prepared voluntarily to take upon themselves, the depised name of 'Jew'; it was a humiliating thing. You know, we've had people say to us, why would God chose the Jews? We give our reasons, because of the fathers! mainly because of that, b&s, but that's not the only reason; that's the prime reason no doubt but there are other things involved. You imagine what God will be able to do with Israel, that He could do with no other nation! You imagine the process of humiliation that will go on in the kingdom of God; when you were baptised we probably don't see it, b&s, in the light that we should, because it's such a joyous occasion, but you know, if we were to be baptised before the public gaze who didn't understand their principles, they would laugh at us as absolute lunatics. And yet to go down in that water, in an act when looked at from that viewpoint, is just an act of lunacy, is to humiliate ourselves before our God, and to admit, b&s, that in submission to such a trifling act as

that, yet in that act we see power and glory and the power and glory consists of our own abasement and humiliation. Well, if we can't see that in baptism now, which we ought to, you wait till the age to come, when the march of all the nations is brought up before the King of all the earth. When the mighty nation of Australia, mighty b&s, not in the sense of being a world power, but mighty in its own estimation, mighty in the fact that it lives in a land carefree and careless, mighty in the fact that it can drink beer, smoke cigarettes, back race through it, and go to the football matches. Mighty in the sense that it can demand more and more and more for less and less and less, having to sit down and bow down to the feet of a Jew! Wait for that! Wait till you see England come up, b&s, the land of hope and glory, Brittainia shall never be slaves! won't they? Wait till you see them come up with all their accents, titles, aristocracy, history stained with all the glory of kings and dukes, earls and monarchs, coming there, b&s, and laying their faces at the feet of a Jew! Wait till you see the Americans come, who rules the world with his dollar, to whom the world owes a great deal of gratitude because he's an American, wait till you see him there, b&s, and come before these people and be glad to call himself a Jew. Then we'll see what it's all about! We'll see the glory of God like we've never seen it, b&s, and we'll understand what it meant for the Persians of that day, to become Jews! And we'll know what it means to cross from one side to the other, a Hebrew, and to change your nationality. Thanks be to God that we've already done it! and we don't own any nationality except that of Israel and we've buried our national pride, b&s, buried it deep in the earth, and no longer do we regard ourselves as anything else but equals, members of the commonwealth of the same nation, because the fear of the Jews has fallen upon us too!

I had intended to turn up several references, I'm going to refer to one of them; you know, in the days of Jacob he had 12 sons and they came back from Padan-aram, and they came to a place called Shechem and there they got mixed up (or Dinah did, his daughter) with one of the inhabitants. And Simeon and Levi went down, didn't they, b&s, when the men had been circumcised and unable to defend themselves, and slew the males of that city, and Jacob was fearful of the consequences, and he fled for his life with his sons, and the fear of God fell upon the land, it says, and they persued not after the sons of Jacob'. Malachi, just picks it out of the record and says, 'I am Yahweh, I don't change, therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed', because the fear of God had fallen upon those people. And the fear of God will fall upon the people and they will see the Jew, b&s, as they've never seen him before. You know, it's one of the greatest things I reckon of the kingdom of God, to see the transformation of the Jewish people, because for all their stubbornness, b&s, for all that, and the way we've cursed them in our exhortations over the years, in order that we may better ourselves in our service to our King, you know, the Jew has this to commend him, that we're told in the scriptures, when the Lord Jesus Christ is revealed to him he will change. And that's what a lot of the Gentiles will never do and it will be a wonderful thing to see that done!

And so they were prepared for the great day in chapter 9, and the preparations for that great day drew nigh, b&s, the 13th of Adar. And Mordecai's decree went out and there were still the enemies of the Jews who hoped to have power over them, in verse 1. You see, I believe, b&s, the decree of defence that was given by Mordecai, was not that the

Jews should have opportunity to kill their enemies, that was not the purpose of it. The purpose of it was that they should stand together to defend themselves, they were not to take the initiative; in other words, the enemies of the Jews were to reveal themselves, and when they revealed themselves they were to be put down with the sword. The Jews were not to take the offensive, they had a decree to defend and not to kill. Kill only when they were attacked! And attacked they were, and I believe the purpose of the decree, was to neutralize Haman's edict rather than give the Jews the right to kill people. That wasn't the purpose of it at all and when Mordecai wrote in the words of Haman's edict, what he wanted to do, b&s, was impress upon everyone, that it's wisdom not to act on Haman's edict. Obviously he wanted them to read it that way, and when he got the government to back him, for the fear of Mordecai fell upon the government, as the fear of the Jews fell upon the people. If the Jews affected the people, then Mordecai terrified the government, and when Mordecai had the government behind him, he hoped that the people of the kingdom would see that the government would back his decree, that they would not act upon the decree of Haman.

But, some wanted to! some still wanted to, and we read that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them; that's a bit foolish, if they only looked, b&s, at the name the Jews ought to have been called, they would never have thought to have power over them, because the true name of the Jews was 'Israel', which means that they 'had power with God'. Very foolish to take on a man who has God on his side, b&s, they never considered it though, but it says, 'they hoped to have power over them, but it says, 'it was turned to the contrary'. Now to that reference I was talking about, Zechariah 12; now you imagine God impressing us with the way that the fortunes of the Jewish people will be reversed. Now every human being born normally has got two hands, and so with your other hand I want you to turn up Deuteronomy 28, and with your right hand to Zechariah 12 and this is how it was turned contrary to what the enemies expected. Zechariah 12 and Deuteronomy 28, it was turned contrary, in the 12th chapter of Zechariah we read from verses 4 to 6, 'In that day, saith Yahweh, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness. And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in Yahweh of Armies their God. In that day will I make the governors of Judah like a hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem'. They're not difficult to understand words, b&s, and I'm not going to tell you anything different than what's in those except I want to underline them, because those words indicate a vast reversal in fortunes. That whereas Israel had always been the chopping block of the nations, they are now Yahweh's battleaxe in reverse, and you know, b&s, this is the way that the Creator of heaven and earth wrote this book to impress that upon us, and I hope by the time I finish this little point you will be duly impressed that this book is God's.

There are three words in verse 4, they are the words 'astonishment, madness and blindness', and you look them up in a concordance, b&s, you will learn that

astonishment, madness and blindness of the world's translators, but if you go further in a concordance (and you can't imagine, this is absolutely incredible), but if you go further in a concordance you'll find the cognate of those words is used copious times in the scriptures; that particular Hebrew form of those three words only appears one other time in the whole of the bible and all in one verse, the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy and verse 28. And in Deuteronomy 28 and verse 28 speaking about punishment of God upon His people, 'Yahweh shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart'. And what's the context? verse 25, 'Yahweh shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shalt be removed in all the kingdoms of the earth', and then He took those three words, b&s, hundreds of years before Zechariah, He took them out of the vocabulary of the world, and locked them into the vault of heaven, and when Zechariah came upon the scene hundreds of years later to prophesy of the great reversal, when the enemies of Judah would be driven before them, He brought the three words out and put them all into the one verse in Zechariah. You say that's interesting? you sit back in an armchair sometime and think about it, as to the way that was done; the three words were removed from the vocabulary of the nation until that verse of scripture was written that God might impress upon us, that there's going to be a great reversal of fortunes as far as the Jews and their enemies are concerned. And so people there were people who thought they were going to have power over the Jews, and it was turned contrary to them! And it wasn't turned b&s, 90 degrees, 180 degrees but 360 degrees right around, that's what those two references put together are telling us. Incredible isn't it?

And coming back to our story in Esther, as that decree went forward, and the fateful day was coming, b&s, what did the Jews do? Verse 2, well, they knew the law of the king was immutable and they knew they had to obey it to the letter, so they did the only thing possible to do, 'the Jews gathered themselves together'. Now there's the first time it appears, and two other times it appears also; so they did exactly what the decree said.

Can you imagine, b&s, what would have happened if some cared for, if all the Jews carelessly read the very carefully worded edict of the king (like we do in our readings sometimes!) and we don't know what we're reading, you know, b&s, that Word deserves our utmost attention. You know, it really grieves me, even in a meeting, it really grieves me to see young brethren come up here and read that slovenly. It's being done! Do you know what that book is? our readers I think sometimes, need to be taken outside on a day like this, and be caused to look up into heaven and realize Who wrote that book, before they ever read it; don't read it standing like that, you read it as it should be read, b&s, with reverence and dignity, with due reverence to what is there. Imagine on that day, taking the edict of Ahasuerus and saying, 'We can stand for our rights' and all going home and getting our own little family on our own, without any consideration for anybody else, and saying, 'we've got the right to defend ourselves, and finding, b&s, the enemies of the Jews coming and killing our wife and child and going before God and saying, 'you were wrong, you didn't keep your promise!' But God said, I did; the edict was that you had the right to gather yourselves together, and to stand for your lives. And that's what they did! **THEY HAD NO RIGHT TO STAND FOR THEIR LIFE ON**

THEIR OWN, it was not the edict of the king; and they gathered themselves together, and make no mistake about it, b&s, we would improvise with no lesser principle; that is an eternal principle that the sons of God Almighty, gather themselves together in all aspects of life. And so they did!

And then as we read on at the end of verse 2, 'that the fear of them fell upon all people', and verse 3, 'And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews; but you know the word doesn't mean that at all, it means 'to extol' the Jews. The rulers of the nation extolled the Jews, you see, what happened was that the fear of Mordecai had fell upon them, upon who? The government, but the government couldn't help Jews, they had no right to throw their help in behind the Jews, b&s, but one thing the government could do is issue proclamations 'extolling the Jews'. Have you ever heard of a government edict coming forth and saying, 'the Jews are wonderful people; whose edict are you going to obey Haman's or Mordecai's. If you are an astute Persian who wished to get on in this world in the government, you'd stay with Mordecai, because the government's behind him and the government extolled the Jews!

Zephaniah 3, won't this happen in the age to come? Zephaniah 3 verses 19 and 20, 'Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame. At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith Yahweh'. I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame, and isn't that exactly what happened, b&s? Do you know what we're reading? I believe if we look at the story of Esther, like the way we've seen it this weekend, what we're reading here this weekend, in effect, isn't it?, b&s, is a little dramatic story where there's an interplay of characters, and one small epoch of history. We are reading in this drama, what the rest of the bible speaks about as far as Israel is concerned; so that it's all condensed and epitomized as it were, in a dramatic little story involving these characters, so the government extolled the people of the Jews. Well, says Zephaniah, so they will do so in the age to come, 'I will get them praise and fame of all people'. And so God will!

What about Mordecai? and verse 4. 'For Mordecai was great in the king's house', now that's interesting, b&s, of what does greatness consist? We can all be great, b&s, but to be great in the king's house is all that really matters. I mentioned this before, and I'll mention this again, when Luke talked about John the Baptist and gave a list of greats, in the 3rd chapter of Luke in the reign of Tiberius Caesar and all the other great men who had the great titles over the great territories; he went back to describe John, b&s, 'that he was great in the sight of the LORD'. And if you saw John walking down the main street of Rome with Tiberius Caesar, I wonder who you'd think would be great in your sight? The imperial majesty b&s, with the refinements of culture which were hereditary to the throne, head held high, wide brow indicating intelligence, piercing gaze, majestic and regal appearance, or a man clothed in a camel's skin! born and bred in the desert, great in the sight of the LORD! great in the king's house. And because he was great in the king's house, b&s, his fame went throughout all the provinces; and this man shall be

great, says Micah, the babe born in Bethlehem, 'O Bethlehem-Ephratah though thou be little among the thousands of villages in Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that shall be ruler in Israel and He shall feed in the strength and majesty of Yahweh, and He shall be great unto the ends of the earth'. Yes, little Bethlehem produced Him, b&s, an obscure village down the road, but He'll be great in the eyes of all people and the people of Israel will be elevated in the day that He will be great, and they'll be great in the sight of the LORD; and Mordecai waxed greater and greater.

And you know, that which was used of his greatness is a word which really means 'older and older' not in the sense of age, b&s, but in the sense of wisdom and surety and dignity and honour. Mordecai was seen by all to be a very wise and mature man, whom the experiences of life had enriched with the wisdom, b&s, that can be taught by nothing else, b&s, but by the furnace of affliction and experience, and therefore, men gave deference to him and he became their mentor and their king and their ruler. 'He waxed more and more powerful', says the RSV.

'And the Jews smote their enemies with the stroke of the sword'. That's interesting, you know, we're even told how the Jews killed them; you notice that they smote their enemies and their enemies became identified by the enemies' action against them, they defended themselves by killing their enemies. There was no bestiality, b&s, about the destruction that was wrought, there were no gallows 75 feet high, no one was roasted in ovens, stretched on racks, burnt with redhot irons or drawn and quartered or thrown to the dogs, they were killed simply with the sword. And there's something about that, b&s, we know that the Word of God is the sword of the spirit and we know also that Jesus Christ will go forth and He'll put into the hands of the saints a two-edged sword. Death, b&s, will come to those who defy God; there will be nothing vindictive, nothing cruel about it, and the very mode of the Jews using the sword was indicative of the fact, that these people brought death upon themselves, and the sword itself spoke clearly of the principles by which they died, the king's commandment. And the Lord Jesus Christ goes forth with a sword on his side, King of kings, and Lord of lords, who will not smite to Him, will perish with the sword. Rather wonderful that the Jews took that weapon in their hands to destroy their enemies; imagine, b&s, try to imagine what Haman would have used! all the bestiality which the Haman's of this world have ever used, Adolph Hilter being preeminently the example in this 20th century, the greatest Haman that we've ever seen to this point, only to be superseded by the Gog that's to come into the Land. We know what they use, b&s, and we know the spirit that dominates them; Jews never did that, furthermore, later on we will see that the Jews never laid their hands upon the spoil, though the word of the king, the irreversible and immutable law of the king said they could, but they didn't, and they obeyed that word, b&s, not only implicitly but in the spirit of it and they never took of the spoil, indicating a lesser motive for the killing that would have dominated people like Haman and his gang. Ah, no, b&s, these are wonderful principles that we are learning about here.

But nonetheless, though they smote the Jews' enemies with the sword, there was one family, b&s, that died differently. In verse 10, 'they slew the ten sons of Haman' (they killed them with the sword, I believe). Haman had ten sons, and biblical numbers have a

meaning and I believe that's a fair comment, I don't think there's a doubt whatever of what 10 means, b&s, it's an aggregate number, that is, if you want to think of the total, the aggregate total you use the number 10. Want some examples? Well, Laban changed Jacob's wages 10 times, that is, he went on changing it; in Leviticus 26 and verse 26, we read, 'because of the extremity of the seige, ten women shall bake bread in one oven, in other words the whole nation would be under seige. We know in Daniel 1 and verse 20, we know that 'Daniel's wisdom was 10 times better than all the wisdom of the Chaldeans' by which it means that his wisdom was totally the best; in the parable of the virgins, we have 10 virgins because the whole ecclesia good and bad is included. And so we could go on and on and on on the number 10, and when they killed the 10 sons of Haman, there's the end of all nations, and God told Israel, 'although I make a full end of all nations, I will not make a full end of thee', but 10 of the nations is slain, b&s, and when God says He'll make a full end of all nations, this is how He does it. He destroys those who won't become Jews, converts those who will, and there's nobody left but the Jews. It's as simple as that, He destroys those who won't become Jews, converts those you will, so all Israel will be saved, there's another sense in which that word can be used, and the whole world will be filled as Israel shall blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit. 'Although I make a full end of all nations' (10 sons of Haman) rather significant, b&s, that the One who suffered the most appalling death, in the book of Revelation, who hurdles into the abyss, yelling and blaspheming to be heaped into the abyss and cut off for ever from the sight of men, is the horror of Rome who rides upon a beast with 10 horns, the powers of Gentilism. And it is also of the heights of significance, that when all the powers of Gentilism have been destroyed, and the rest are converted, it will be 10 men out of all the languages of the nations, that will come and say to the Jew, 'we will go with you for we have heard that God is with you'. And so God will make a full end of all nations. 10 was the guarantee of that!

And of course, Ahasuerus became somewhat alarmed, b&s, as he learnt in verse 11, 'on that day the number of those that were slain in Shushan the palace was brought before the king'. And we're told in verse 12 that they'd slain 500 men, and he was frightened and said, 'Look, what have they done? what have they done in the rest of the provinces if there had been 500 slain in the city, goodness knows how many killed in the provinces and the king was alarmed. But alarmed as he was, b&s, he knew the spirit of the edict which he'd given and he went to Esther and he says, 'what is your request?', in other words, I believe the king was saying, 'Look, Esther, I'm committed, I'm committed to this cause, I will not go back upon my word'. Now speaking for the king we could say for him, 'please, Esther, let's call a halt !' But you see, b&s, he was committed to that cause, and now Esther and Mordecai seize the opportunity, the law is immutable, we will make the most of it! And they demanded a second day and they got that second day and 300 more were slain, b&s, and then Esther made this request in verse 13. 'Then said Esther, if it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan to do tomorrow also according unto this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows', and that's the grisly note with which I want to finish this session, b&s.

You know, they were to be hanged on the gallows; now we know the gallows was a tree, a tall tree 75 feet high, and it was the tree which Haman hanged upon, and you

know, Jewish tradition has it, b&s, so strongly, that Haman's sons were all crucified vertically on that tree, that every single Jewish manuscript which lists the names of Haman's sons, write them vertically one under another. 10 of them, all vertically one under another, in every manuscript which the Jews have of that story, because they understood that they were all crucified on the one tree, and 75 feet divided by 10, would leave just enough room! And there they were, 11 with their father held up for all men to see what happens to people who curse God's people. Do you know why they did that? Esther, b&s, wasn't a sadist, we've learnt enough about her character to know that, but the law of God states 'cursed is he that hangeth upon a tree'. When Joshua came into the Land of Canaan and they caught the 5 kings of Canaan in the cave there, the Megido, he brought them out, caused Israel's leaders to put their feet on their neck and then told them the strength of God which was with them, would kill them before their sons, that their sons might come to understand, that God is with all those that put their trust in Him, and that the king of unrighteousness will never prevail upon those who follow God's commandments, and then Joshua hung them up before the sun. 'Cursed is he that hangeth upon a tree'. And b&s, to deliver us from death, and from the curse of mortality, and from the immutable law of our Creator, Jesus Christ our Lord, the most illustrious man that ever lived, the most lovely character that you could ever wish to meet, hung accursed of God on that tree; not cursed for anything that He did wrong, no curse of God resting upon Him, morally, mentally or emotionally, b&s, but for our sakes, that we might come to understand that in the flesh dwells no good thing, and if flesh were to have its own way, it would take us away from God, and curse Israel because Israel speaks of humiliation; elevate ourselves in the sight of ourselves, and we would go out of the kingdom, b&s. And that man hung there, to tell us that same principle which the grisly scene of Haman's 10 sons stood for, for all Shushan and the whole provinces to see, 'cursed is he that hangeth upon a tree'.

And so the Jews, b&s, were delivered and warfare being over, the next time we come together, we will keep the feast of Purim.