

Slide # 1

Theme: God’s providential Care For His People

Outline:

Chapter 1 – Queen Vashti Deposed

Chapter 2 – Esther Becomes Queen

Chapter 3 – Haman’s Plot Against the Jews

Chapters 4-7 Esther’s Courage – Haman’s Plot Backfires

Chapter 8 The Jews Avenged

Chapter 9 The Feast of Purim Instituted

Chapter 10 Epilogue – Mordecai Exalted

The story of Esther is above all a story about God’s providential faithfulness to His people – really in spite of themselves. It is a story about individuals, but beyond that really about whole people groups.

Many of the Jews after the time of the Babylonian Captivity remained in Persia instead of going back home to the Promised Land. In that context we find that the focus on two Jews – Mordecai and his beautiful cousin Esther. Mordecai found himself serving in the gate of the king and Esther became queen.

In the story there was a man by the name of Haman who by heritage was an Agagite. This probably denotes him as being of the line of king Agag who was king over the Amalekites who were the perennial enemies of the Jews and cursed by God (cf. Ex. 17; 1 Sam. 15).

Haman, was made second in command in the kingdom and the king ordered everyone to bow before him. However, Mordecai refused to do so because he was a Jew and this inflamed Haman. Consequently Haman plotted how he might wipe out all the Jews in the kingdom and got it signed into law by the king.

Mordecai then pressed Esther to go in and see the king and make a petition on behalf of her people the Jews. As she went into see the king he said he would grant her petition up to the half of his kingdom. But instead of telling him what her petition was she invited him and Haman to a banquet that day.

At the banquet she invited both Haman and the king to yet another banquet the next day. Haman was really flying high thinking he was the special favored one to join the king with the queen at yet another banquet.

Between the first and the second banquet he calls his wife and friends together and brags on himself. However, he expressed that the one thing that bothered him was Mordecai the Jew. His wife and friends suggested that he have a gallows built 75 feet high then go in and request of the king that Mordecai be hanged on it – and then go merrily to the second banquet. They had no doubt that the king would approve!

And that brings us to chapter 6. Humanly speaking everything seemed to be going Haman's way and things looked dire for the Jews – especially and imminently for Mordecai.

The writer does not spell out why (humanly speaking) Esther asked for a delay in the form of requesting another banquet. But whatever the reason we see the providence of God behind it as brought out in chapter 6.

Chapter 6 denotes the major turning point in the book.

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...the wonderful interweaving of circumstances which we get in this history. There is plot and underplot, "wheels within wheels," circumstances hanging upon circumstances, all formed together to work out the wonderful plans of God. – **J.G. Bellett**

Commonly we call God's orchestrating these circumstances at just the right time in just the right way – PROVIDENCE.

Chapter 6 is the night between the banquets. A lot can happen in a night. The whole course of history can be changed – just like that.

Esther 6:1–14 (NKJV)

1 That night the king could not sleep. So one was commanded to bring the book of the records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king.

Here we have a case of "providential insomnia" which altered the entire course of history for the Jewish nation. In Psalm 127:2 we read that God gives "His beloved sleep" but He who gives sleep can also keep people awake. Such was the case here.

God accomplishes some of His deepest work in the hearts of men as they lay awake upon their beds at night (cf. Job 4:12-16; Ps. 4:4; Acts 18:9; 23:11). – **John Whitcomb**

The Persian kings chronicled everything. We might compare these chronicles to the Congressional Record in our government which would seemingly put anyone to sleep after about 10 minutes.

I do not mean to be unlovely, but to me the most boring thing is the world is to listen to minutes. Have you ever heard any minutes that were interesting? I never have. ... On the nights that the king could not sleep, he would say, "Bring in the minutes...".

– **J. Vernon McGee**

2 And it was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, the doorkeepers who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.

We read about these two eunuchs back in chapter 2 and how Mordecai had exposed them and consequently they were hung (cf. Est. 2:21-23). This event happened about 5 years previous (cf. cf. 3:7 with 2:16).

Of all the texts that could have been read going back through the years in the providence of God the one that contained the account of Mordecai saving the king's life was selected. What amazing timing! Just a lucky coinkydink? I don't think so! This has God's sovereign fingerprints all over it.

3 Then the king said, "What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" And the king's servants who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him."

Normally the king was very quick to honor those who performed heroics on his behalf but for some reason this got overlooked at the time. And now we know the reason – God was saving it "for such a time as this".

Instead of Mordecai being honored 5 years earlier when this happened, right after that in 3:1 we read of Haman's promotion above all his peers. Again and again throughout this story we see unusual circumstances coming together that serve to preserve God's people the Jews.

4 So the king said, “Who is in the court?” Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king’s palace to suggest that the king hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.

I often say “providence” has a lot to do with timing. The king had just been reminded of Mordecai’s heroic deed and is looking first thing in the morning to reward him; on the other hand first thing in the morning here comes Haman to see the king about hanging Mordecai.

If you don’t think God has a sense of humor you might want to reconsider after reading this text.

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There is certainly intentional humor in recounting that just as the king was planning to reward Mordecai, Haman was plotting to have him hanged. There is more humor when Haman discovers his mistake in assuming that he was the one to be honored (vv. 6, 10), and then he must be the one to honor Mordecai (v. 11).

– ***The Believer’s Study Bible***

The drama intensified as Haman arrived at just the wrong time and for just the wrong reason. – ***John MacArthur***

5 The king’s servants said to him, “Haman is there, standing in the court.” And the king said, “Let him come in.”

6 So Haman came in, and the king asked him, “What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?” Now Haman thought in his heart, “Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?”

When a man is full of himself all he thinks about is himself. That was Haman. He had been on a roll with all kinds of prosperity and promotions going his way as he recounted the day with his wife and friends (cf. 5:11-12). His pride is really having its way with him at this point – and that never ends well.

Haman is a clear illustration of Proverbs 16:18 (cf. Prov. 11:2; 18:12)

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Proverbs 16:18 (NKJV)

18 Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.

**7 And Haman answered the king, “For the man whom the king delights to honor,
 8 let a royal robe be brought which the king has worn, and a horse on which the king has ridden, which has a royal crest placed on its head.
 9 Then let this robe and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king’s most noble princes, that he may array the man whom the king delights to honor. Then parade him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him: ‘Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!’ ”**

Haman thought he was describing the honor that would be bestowed upon him and so he really laid it on thick sparing no extravagance (cf. Gen. 41:39-45). Note he didn’t have to think long and hard – he evidently was ready to answer as though he had already thought this through before.

To wear royal robes that the king had worn and ride on a horse that the king had ridden on was a little taste of royalty. It was like he was being treated as the king for a day.

Some have questioned the idea of a royal crest (or crown) being placed on the head of the horse, but Persian sculptures depict this very thing as being practiced back at this time in this culture by indicating this was a horse of royalty.

10 Then the king said to Haman, “Hurry, take the robe and the horse, as you have suggested, and do so for Mordecai the Jew who sits within the king’s gate! Leave nothing undone of all that you have spoken.”

Can you imagine that shock that shivered through Haman’s body at this moment? I am pretty sure he had somewhat of a heart attack or at the least a mini stroke! This was the absolute LAST thing he anticipated!

When you manipulate things it comes back on you. The king was ignorant of the hostility between Haman and Mordecai and ignorant of the people group (namely the Jews) that Haman’s earlier decree was directed against which of course included Mordecai.

Apparently through the reading of the official records in the night the king had discovered Mordecai to be a Jew and therefore highlighted this point.

This is the first of 5 times that Mordecai is called a “Jew” evidently to highlight the point that although Haman had singled them out for destruction it was totally backfiring (cf. 6:10; 8:7; 9:29, 31; 10:3).

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Background of the term “Jew”.

The term *Jew* is a shortened form of the word *Judah*, which was the name of one of the tribes of Israel, the tribe of David and of Jesus ([Matthew 1:1](#)). *Judah* was also the name of the southern half of the kingdom of Israel when it split into two parts ([1 Kings 12](#)), because it was dominated by the large [tribe of Judah](#). The first time the word *Jew* is used in the Bible is during the exile ([2 Kings 25:25](#)), and may have been a term coined by the Babylonians or Persians to refer to the people in their midst who had come from the kingdom of Judah. By New Testament times, *Jew* was a common term, and it has remained in usage unto this day.

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Technically, no one was called a “Jew” before the exile; however, the people who became known as Jews were a distinct ethnic group by the time of [Exodus 1](#). They were a distinct clan by the time of Jacob and his sons. Abraham was a Gentile, that is, a member of one of the many nations that had developed by his time. The Jews came from Abraham because he was chosen by God from among the nations to be the origin of a new nation. The Jews of Jesus’ day looked to Abraham (not Jacob/Israel) as the head of their race (see [Matthew 3:9](#); [Luke 3:8](#); [John 8:39](#); [Acts 13:26](#); [Galatians 3:7](#)). If one is thinking in these terms, it would not be wrong to think of Abraham as “the first Jew,” although that’s not technically correct. – **Gotquestions.org**

Basically, the Jews are the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and then Jacob. However, this designation didn’t really take effect until the time of the Babylonian Exile. And the Gentiles have often used the term “Jew” in a derogatory manner. For example: A “jew nail” is a crooked nail. “To jew” or “jew down” means to cheat or beat someone out of what something is worth. But Esther highlights the term to emphasize that they are in fact God’s chosen people and His preservation of them proves it. It proves His covenant promises are true and His providence insures that they will yet be fulfilled.

11 So Haman took the robe and the horse, arrayed Mordecai and led him on horseback through the city square, and proclaimed before him, “Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!”

What a turn of events; what irony for Haman! Mordecai, whom he hated, had to be honored by Haman. He who wanted respect *from* Mordecai had to give respect *to* Mordecai. Haman had to carry out the king’s order even though it embarrassed and angered him greatly.

– *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*

You talk about carrying out a job with no heart for it! Again, the irony here is rich! Here is Haman having to announce publicly before all in the capital city that Mordecai is the honored one by the king. Can you imagine the fellow peers of Haman and the muffled laughs they were having.

12 Afterward Mordecai went back to the king’s gate. But Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered.

This is an interesting little note as if to highlight the difference between Mordecai and Haman. After being honored and exalted like he was you might think Mordecai would bask in it for a while. He might be tempted to gloat a little bit. But there is no mention of this. He went right back to work in the king’s gate.

I sense in this whole narrative that God was not only at work on behalf of His people the Jews in general, but I think He was also at work personally in the heart of life of both Mordecai and Esther. Earlier Mordecai was very careful to conceal his heritage. But once he came out (for whatever reason) we see movement in a different direction.

As things progressed Mordecai seemed to recognize the gravity of being in a position to help the people of God and that God would sovereignly preserve them no matter what (Est. 4:14). As things got dire, we see him fasting and being in sackcloth over his concern for his people as well as the well-being of Esther. Now we see him just quietly going back to his position at the king’s gate. There is no airs of self-promotion like was so obvious in Haman. A contrast is being drawn.

Mordecai resumed his position at the king’s gate, while Haman hurried home in tears with his head buried in shame (cf. 2 Sam. 15:30, 19:4; Jer. 14:3-4; Ezek. 24:17).

Do you think as the horse was led back to the stable and they were parting that Mordecai with a twinkle in his eye said, ***“It’s been fun – see you after the party.”*** There is no record of this, but I wonder how that went. Realize Haman had been parading him around the city and as some point they went their separate ways. That had to be strange and awkward – especially for Haman.

Note that Mordecai had publicly grieved over the fate of his people after the decree was signed that called for the extermination of the Jews (4:1). Now Haman privately grieves over his own humiliation. The Bible speaks of “worldly sorrow” in contrast to “godly sorrow” related to true repentance.

Godly sorrow is broken over my own sinfulness and how offensive it is to God. It is God-oriented. Worldly sorrow is all about self. It is broken, but not because personal sinfulness, but rather because it feels sorry for self and the terrible circumstances that have happened to self. It is self-oriented. Worldly sorrow is all about “poor pitiful me – its’ all about me”.

Haman was all about worldly sorrow!

13 When Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him, his wise men and his wife Zeresh said to him, “If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish descent, you will not prevail against him but will surely fall before him.”

What an amazing statement from the wife and friends of Haman. It is almost like it was prophetic. This culture tended to be very much into omens and mysticism and evidently they saw this turn of events as a bad omen.

But it is most interesting that they connected it with the Jewish heritage of Mordecai saying it was because of this that Haman would fall before him. It’s almost like they were Bible students who know the truth of Genesis 12:3.

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Genesis 12:3 (NKJV)

3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

You just can't get away with curing the Jews and it seems like this providential turn of event was so obvious that even the close family and friends of Haman realized this at this point.

We are not sure exactly what they meant or what their reasoning was but on the face of it – it plainly seems to indicate the Jewishness of Mordecai will be the downfall of Haman. That is what they plainly said.

Haman's entourage seemed to have some knowledge of biblical history. – ***John MacArthur***

I think we get a feel of this all along. This was not merely about Haman and Mordecai but about a BIGGER picture involving the two people groups they represent in history. I think Haman knew it (as evidenced by his wife and friends here) and I think Mordecai knew it as seen in his reaction towards Haman earlier in the narrative.

Recall that there is a lot of Bible prophecy regarding the ultimate fall of the Amalekite people of which Haman was representative.

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Exodus 17:16 (NKJV)

16 for he said, "Because the LORD has sworn: the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

Numbers 24:20 (NKJV) [Balaam]

20 Then he looked on Amalek, and he took up his oracle and said: "Amalek was first among the nations, But shall be last until he perishes."

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Deuteronomy 25:17–19 (NKJV)

17 "Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt,

18 how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary; and he did not fear God.

19 Therefore it shall be, when the LORD your God has given you rest from your enemies all around, in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, that you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget.

Slide # 10**1 Samuel 15:1–3 (NKJV)**

1 Samuel also said to Saul, “The LORD sent me to anoint you king over His people, over Israel. Now therefore, heed the voice of the words of the LORD.

2 Thus says the LORD of hosts: **‘I will punish Amalek** for what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up from Egypt.

3 Now go and attack Amalek, and **utterly destroy all** that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.’ ”

Saul failed miserably in this mission and because of it the kingdom was stripped from him (cf. 1 Sam. 15). All this to say there is a lot of background history regarding Haman’s people the Amalekites and the Jews. This was BIGGER than just these two men.

14 While they were still talking with him, the king’s eunuchs came, and hastened to bring Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared.

Just that quick it was time for the SECOND banquet. Haman didn’t even have time to process it all. The plot thickens – the pace quickens.

This is the third time in this chapter when things started to go SOUTH for Haman that we have mention of him being rushed or hurried along (cf. vv. 10, 12, 14). “Previously he was in charge; now he was caught up in the rapid events of the moment.” (HCSB)

It’s like Haman is caught in the cogs of God’s mighty auger of judgment and he is being pulled irresistibly to the place of execution and there is no escape. That is a terrible place to be.

This is one of the great chapters in the Bible on the providence of God. In the end God always has His sovereign way. No one can beat God. And woe be to the person who dares to mess with God’s chosen people. Many have played this role of folly and inevitably it has ended up just like Haman with personal disaster.

“There’s not a square inch **in the whole domain of human existence over which Christ**, who is Lord over all, does not exclaim, ‘Mine!’” – *William Kuyper*

Truth forever on the scaffold,
Wrong forever on the throne,—
Yet that scaffold sways the future,
and, behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow,
keeping watch above his own.

- **James Russell Lowell** (1819–1891) -From *The Present Crisis*

This is the providential care of God: *Standeth God within the shadow,*
keeping watch above His own.