

The Return of the King

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[0 : 00] who were in the king's provinces also gathered to defend their life and got released from their enemies and killed 75,000 of those who did it then but laid no hands on the frontiers.

This was on the 13th day of the month of the day of the month, and on the 14th day the rest of the month of the month, and the feasting of the times. But the Jews who were in the susur gathered on the 13th day of the end on the 14th and rest on the 15th day, making that day a feasting of the times.

Therefore, the Jews of the villages lived in their own times, for the 14th day of the month of the day of the month, as the day of the month, the land and the feasting of the holiday of the month, and as the day on which they send gifts of the village around the world.

I want to kind and call to be sent and sent a letter to all the Jews who are here, robbing such a protein, and have to wait us, both me and my God. Father, thank you for your kindness to us.

Thank you for the privilege we have enjoyed just now in not only lifting our voices together and singing together, but also in hearing your word read to us.

[1 : 23] Thank you for the public reading of scripture and the freedom that we enjoy in this country to read your word publicly, to gather in this way publicly without fear.

Would you please continue to give us this wonderful privilege as long as you seek it for your glory and for our good.

Father, as we come to the end of the book of Esther, there's lots of things that I think I want to say, and some things that I think may be important to say to wrap this up, but we really want to hear those things that you have for us.

So, blessed Holy Spirit, would you please come and help us, help me to preach those things that will be beneficial for the building up of your people, for their encouragement, for their instruction, for their faith, for their walk in obedience with you.

And would you please help your people to listen well, to be discerning about the things that they hear, to be mindful of how your word is connecting to other parts of your word.

[2 : 40] Lord, would you please help all of us to see our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, more clearly because we have been together today. We ask all of this for your glory and our good in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

From the beginning of the Old Testament to its end, there is a gradual but noticeable shift.

A gradual but noticeable shift occurs in how God relates to people. Consider the very first pages of Scripture.

In the Garden of Eden, God was intimately accessible to Adam and Eve. He walked and talked with them. And even after they sinned, He came looking for them.

And they had a conversation with one another. In Exodus, God reveals His mighty power in the plagues, rescuing His people from centuries of slavery.

[3 : 53] But from Mount Sinai on, God chooses to speak through prophets rather than directly to His people.

And after the Israelites enter the Promised Land, miracles become more rare as well.

As history continues, God's presence becomes increasingly hidden and He seems more distant.

The prophet Samuel. The prophet Samuel.

Samuel is the last one to whom Scripture says God revealed Himself. King Solomon is the last one, Scripture says, to whom God appeared.

By faith, we glimpse Him in the fiery furnace in the book of Daniel. But only by faith, Daniel doesn't tell us who it was that was standing in the fire with Shadrach, Meshach, and Benjamin.

[4 : 58] Eventually, only the temple remains to remind the people of God's presence. And when the temple is destroyed, Ezekiel notes that the glory departs.

After the exile, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah record no miracles, no angels, no divine manifestations, no divine revelation.

There is no record that God spoke directly to anyone. And by the end of the Old Testament story, which is the book of Esther, God's name isn't even mentioned in the book.

In fact, the author seems to intentionally avoid mentioning God. Do you remember the game Taboo?

The object of the game, right? You get a card. It's not like charades. Like charades, you get a card or a little slip of paper or whatever. And then you have to act out that word and try to get your team to tell you what word it is that you're acting out.

[6 : 13] Taboo is not like that. Taboo, you just have to use your mouth. You have to say other words to try to get your team to give you the word on your card.

The challenge in the game Taboo, of course, is that some words are considered taboo. And if you say one of those words, you can be sure that someone on the other team will...

This is what seems to happen in the book of Esther. It's as though the author intentionally is treating God's name as taboo.

Think about this. Think about this. You could easily write Esther 1, 2, and 3 without mentioning God. It's the story. It's a narrative. But then in chapter 4, when there is weeping and fasting, we are expecting prayer to accompany weeping and fasting.

And yet there is no prayer recorded. It must have been even trickier for the author not to mention God in chapter 6. Though we are not told what?

[7 : 31] Something, perhaps someone, kept the king awake all night. And then Haman arrives at exactly the right time to ask for Mordecai's execution while the king intends to honor Mordecai.

It must have been tricky to not mention God in writing chapter 6. And in chapters 8 and 9, treating God like a taboo word borders on ridiculous.

Here's what I mean. Look at Esther chapter 8 and verse number 17. It'll be on the screen. This is Esther chapter 8 and verse number 17. And this is the end of the verse.

And many from the peoples of the country declared themselves Jews for fear of the Jews had fallen on them.

Are we really supposed to believe that the Persians, the citizens of the most powerful empire in the world, are afraid of one of their conquered people groups?

[8 : 44] Surely the author means the fear of the God of Israel, the God of the Jews, had fallen on them. Right?

Or how about in verse number 3 of chapter 9? All the officials of the provinces and the satraps and the governors, all the royal agents, also helped the Jews.

For the fear of Mordecai had fallen on them. The Persian politicians and power players are apparently petrified of this man who narrowly avoided being impaled on a pole.

A man so inconspicuous that the assassins didn't notice that he was eavesdropping on them earlier in the story. And yet now they are afraid of Mordecai?

Surely the author means the fear of the God of Mordecai had fallen on them.

[9 : 55] The author of Esther treats God as a taboo word in order to challenge our thinking. See, when we can't see him, and when we don't understand what he is doing, we assume that God is either absent or inactive, but we are wrong.

We are wrong to think that way. And worse than wrong, we are faithless. The author intentionally doesn't mention God, and yet makes it unmistakably clear that these events could only happen by his power.

And as a result, we are invited to grow in recognizing and celebrating God's providence over every moment of our lives. So that, so that, we think, and see, and act like those who walk by faith.

When the enemies of the Jews hoped to gain mastery over them, the reverse occurred. The tables were turned, and the Jews defeated those who hated them.

And then to document, document, and celebrate this momentous occasion, Mordecai sends letters throughout the empire directing the Jews to celebrate the 14th and the 15th of the month of Adar every single year.

[11 : 27] Now this is interesting. Now this is interesting. We should note this. Unlike D-Day, unlike Bastille Day, which commemorate the days of violence, Mordecai commemorates the days after the violence.

The people outside the city celebrate on the 14th. Why? Why? Well, because the fighting was over. But remember, in Suicide, they got an extra day.

And so they have to celebrate one day later. So you end up with a two-day holiday. And so they have to celebrate the days after the violence. And so they have to celebrate the days after the violence.

This would be like us remembering September 12th rather than 9-11. Purim doesn't celebrate the battle.

It celebrates survival. Not the triumph of the war, but the relief and the rest when the fighting is finally over. Look in your Bible.

[12 : 34] Esther chapter 9. And let's pick up the story at verse number 20. Mordecai recorded these things and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far, obliging them to keep the 14th day of the month Adar and also the 15th day of the same year by year as the days on which the Jews got relief from their enemies.

And as the month that had been turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday. That they should make them days of feasting and gladness.

Days for sending gifts of food to one another and gifts to the poor. Do you see those things there in your Bible? Note them. Relief from their enemies. Mourning into...

Sorry. Sorrow into gladness. And mourning into a holiday. And how are we going to practice this? By sending gifts of food to one another.

We were about to lose everything. We were going to be killed, destroyed, annihilated, and plundered. We were going to lose it all. And so what are we going to do to celebrate?

[13 : 53] We're going to give what we have to others. There's an interesting tradition that has developed amongst the Jews.

The Jews read the book of Esther during their Purim celebrations every year. And there's an interesting tradition, I think, that has been developed. And it's been done for hundreds of years. So I think it's okay for us to practice it just this once. Here's the tradition. As they are reading the book of Esther together, when the name Haman is mentioned, everybody in the congregation stomps their feet or hisses or boos so that you can't hear the name Haman.

Should we try that? Now you can't do it after I say his name. So you're going to have to pay attention. You do it right when I am saying the name Haman.

You stomp and you boo and you hiss. And then you be quiet again and we'll continue to read. Verse number 23. So the Jews accepted what they had started to do.

[15 : 09] And what Mordecai had written to them. It seems as though this was some kind of a spontaneous celebration. They were already celebrating these days.

And yet now, Mordecai writing it down in this letter and sending it across the empire makes it clear. This is official. This is the policy of the empire that we celebrate this day.

They had started to do. They had started to do. And what Mordecai had written to them for Haman, the Agagite, the son of Anadopha, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them.

And then cast purr, that is cast lots. Or we might think of dice. To crush and to destroy them. But when it came before the king, he gave orders in writing that his evil plan that he had devised against the Jews should return on his own head.

And that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. Therefore, they called these days purr. After the term purr.

[16 : 22] Therefore, because of all that was written in this letter, and of what they had faced in this matter, and of what had happened to them, the Jews firmly obligated themselves and their offspring and all who joined them.

That without fail, they would keep these two days according to what was written, and at the time appointed notice, every year. And that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, in every clan, province, and city.

And that these days of Purim should never fall into disuse among the Jews, nor should the commemoration of these days cease among their descendants.

After Vashti was dismissed in chapter 1, the king sent a letter to the entire empire. Do you remember this letter?

Do you remember this letter? The intent was to limit the power of women. To make sure that women were kept under control in the empire. I want you to notice how this is also reversed.

[17 : 38] Esther writes her own letter. And she adds royal authority to Mordecai's letter by writing this letter of her own.

And she writes with words of peace and truth. Verse 29. Then, Queen Esther, the daughter of Abahel.

Now, a single identity. Who is she? She is Queen Esther of Persia. She is the daughter of Abahel, a Jew.

And Mordecai, the Jew, gave full written authority confirming this second letter about Purim. Letters were sent to all of the Jews, to the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, in words of peace and truth.

And that these days of Purim should be observed at their appointed seasons, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther obligated them, and as they had obligated themselves and their offspring, with regard to their feasts and their lamenting, the command...

[18 : 58] Sorry, with regard to their fasts and their lamenting, the command of Queen Esther confirmed these practices of Purim.

And it was recorded in writing. I think this is worth noting. In verse number 32, the author uses the same word for Esther's command as he uses for the king's command in chapter 1 and verse 15, and as Mordecai's command to Esther to keep her identity secret in chapter 2 and verse 20.

What is happening here? The author is elevating the power and authority of Queen Esther in the eyes of the Jews. No other woman in all of scripture wrote a document to endorse and establish and confirm a religious practice that is still observed today.

That's remarkable. Esther, Sarah, and Hannah, and Ruth, they are honored in scripture as mothers. But Esther's honor is not in motherhood. Esther's honor is in authority. She is the queen who risks her life to save the lives of her people.

[20 : 26] Esther's honor is in authority. She is the agent through which God keeps his promises. By Esther's courage and wisdom and tenacity, she participates in preserving the lineage of the Messiah.

And as the author concludes the book of Esther, royalty is very much on his mind. Look at chapter 10 in verse 1. Look at chapter 10 in verse 1. King Ahasuerus imposed tax on the land, on the coastlands of the sea.

You might say, the more things change, the more they stay the same. Kings are going to tax, aren't they? But notice how quickly the author turns the attention off of King Ahasuerus and puts it on Mordecai.

He wants us to realize the greatest thing that King Ahasuerus ever did was honoring and elevating and exulting Mordecai.

Look at verse 2. The author says, The author of the book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Nephi and Persia.

[21 : 53] For Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Ahasuerus. And he was great among the Jews and popular with the multitude of his brothers.

For he sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all his people. Notice the rhetorical question in verse 2.

Notice the rhetorical question in verse 2. It begins with these words. Are they not written? Now if you've read through the books of Kings and Chronicles, and you probably haven't just yet if you're reading through the Bible in a year, but if you've read through the books of Kings and Chronicles, then you will probably recognize this phrase.

Are they not written? 34 times this phrase is used about the kings of Israel and Judah.

But here, these words normally reserved for the king are applied to who? To Mordecai. What is happening here?

[23 : 09] This is elevating him as a leader of God's people in exile. Informally. Though effective. Making Mordecai the king of the Jews.

And this seems right, doesn't it? When we last saw Mordecai in chapter 8, he is wearing royal robes of fine linen and pearl.

He is adorned with a great golden crown. He is second in rank only to the king of Persia. He is well known, famous among the Jews.

And like a godly leader, he seeks their wealth here. And like Queen Esther, Mordecai speaks peace.

He speaks shalom to his people. Notice this. The very last word.

[24 : 18] This word translated people. Do you see it there in your Bible? This isn't just people, generically. And this is not even the idea of the Jews.

The Christian standard Bible, I think it's closest with the word descendants. This is the word offspring. Or seed.

And this final word in Esther is an unmistakable link out of the book of Esther and into the larger story.

The story of redemption in the Old Testament. This is like one of those flashing links on a website that you probably shouldn't click because you're going to get some bad viruses.

But they want you to click it. It's flashing. And it's big. It's big. That's what this word people or offspring or seed is.

[25 : 20] Here's what I mean. After the fall, in the Garden of Eden, God promised a descendant, an offspring, a seed who would crush the serpent's head.

Same word as here in Esther chapter 10 in verse 3. And when God called Abraham, who would just a little later become Abraham, God said, your offspring, your seed will have the promises.

Same word. Same word. And in Naomi's story. And in Naomi's story. Through Ruth's loyal love. And through the steadfast kindness of Boaz.

God preserves the ancestral line that will lead to the offspring. The seed of King David.

Same word as here in Esther chapter 10 in verse 3. The Apostle Paul connects these dots for us in Galatians chapter 3. He writes this.

[26 : 31] Now, the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. And Paul wants us to read scripture carefully. And he says, don't miss this.

It's not plural. It's singular. It does not say, and to offsprings, referring to many, but referring to one and to your offspring, who is Christ.

Christ. This word, this last word at the end of Esther connects us out, it links us out of Esther into this grand story of redemption that God is writing.

The offspring. The seed. The book of Esther matters because we learn in it how God preserves his people.

How he preserves the seed of Eve. The offspring of Abraham. The line of David. The line from which Jesus will come.

[27 : 45] So, like Mordecai speaks peace to his people. His seed. His Jews. The Jews. So, the promised one speaks peace.

But not just to his own people. No, the promised Messiah speaks peace to all people.

Zechariah chapter 9. Behold. Your king is coming to you. Righteous. And having salvation is he.

Humble. And mounted on a donkey. On a colt. The foal of a donkey. And he shall speak peace. To whom? To the nations.

To everyone. The book of Esther. The book of Esther. Is a gospel story. It's the story of how God preserves the line of the Messiah.

[28 : 49] So that the Messiah can speak peace to the nations. Which include you and me. Jesus speaks peace to you, my friend.

Though your sins have irreparably broken your relationship with God. At least from your perspective. And though you can't fix that relationship on your own.

Jesus comes to you with salvation. Speaking peace. Though your sins make you God's enemy.

You may have peace today.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the seed of Eve.

The true and better Adam. The sprout from Jesse's root. The eternal king of David's dynasty. And through his death and resurrection.

[29 : 55] Jesus crushed the serpent's head. By grace. Through faith. Your sins can be forgiven today.

Why don't you come to Jesus. And receive peace with God. The authors of the New Testament.

Never quote from the book of Esther. Although there is one possible allusion to it. In the book of 2nd Thessalonians.

And since we were in this book. Not all that long ago. I thought it might be worth connecting this dot. 2nd Thessalonians chapter 1.

And verse number 6. Since indeed. I realize I'm breaking into the sentence just a little bit here.

Since indeed. God considers it just.

[30 : 52] To repay with affliction. Those who afflict you. And then notice this. And to grant relief.

To you who are afflicted. Do you remember hearing that word? In Mordecai's letter. You're supposed to enjoy the relief. The rest. To grant relief to you who are afflicted.

As well as to us. When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven. With his mighty angels. In flaming fire. Inflicting vengeance.

On those who do not know God. And on those who do not obey the gospel. Of our Lord Jesus Christ. With his heavenly■■■. With his heavenly■■■.

With his heavenly■■■. With his heavenly■■■. With his heavenly■■■. With his heavenly■■■. With his heavenly■■■. With his heavenly■■■. With his heavenly■■■. With his heavenly■■■. With his heavenly■■■.

[31 : 52] With his heavenly■■■. and experience hardship and persecution and injustice and shame, one day you will have relief, and your adversaries will receive the affliction that they deserve.

The turning of your tables may not happen in this lifetime, but one day your king will return.

And in the book of Revelation, John colors in what this picture, the picture of what this day will look like. What will it look like on the day when Jesus returns?

We'll read about this in Revelation chapter 19 and verse number 6. Revelation 19 and verse 6.

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters, and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, Hallelujah!

For the Lord God, the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory.

[33 : 14] For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready. And it was granted to her to clothe herself with fine linen, pure and white, bright and pure.

For the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, write this, Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of God.

After evil is banished from God's kingdom, after persecutors are punished, after justice is served, we will sit down for a feast, a banquet, a banquet more celebratory than the Jews during Purim, and more extravagant than the Persians in Esther chapter 1.

I wonder, will you be there? But until that day, while we wait for the return of the King, like the Jews in Persia, we are exiles.

We are foreigners living in a foreign land. And these are chaotic times. The world is not as it should be. We should expect hardship and pain and suffering.

[34 : 47] And so, Purim continues to be relevant to us today. How so? Well, first, because Purim self-commemorates God's providence.

Purim commemorates God's providence. Do you have a Haman in your life? Purim? Someone who seems out to get you?

Maybe someone has already abused you, or damaged your reputation. Maybe they have stolen something precious from you. Precious relationships.

Perhaps they have blocked your career. Providence means that God is always working for His glory and the good of His people.

This means your God will use for good even the actions that are intended to hinder and harm and silence or shame you.

[35 : 54] Now, I don't know how this is true in my life. And I don't know how this is true in your life. But on the authority of God's word, we must believe that this is true.

Purim is relevant to us today. Purim is relevant to us today.

Purim is relevant to us today. Because it commemorates God's providence. And second, Purim is relevant for us today because hope helps us cope.

Jesus Christ has come. He has come. And His death dealt a decisive death blow to our adversaries.

Sin and death and the devil himself. So while we do not minimize the effects of sin and while we do not trivialize the reality of suffering, we can live with the joy of Jesus' table-turning resurrection and eternity.

[37 : 26] Since you know how the story ends, since the Holy Spirit has reserved your seat at the marriage supper of the Lamb, you don't have to live in fear.

You don't have to live in anxiety. You don't have to live in insecurity. You don't have to live in shame. Friends, we will feast.

And weep no more. And because that's true, your life can be characterized by light-hearted playfulness.

Remember, you're going to have relief from your enemies. Your sorrow will turn to gladness. And you're mourning into an eternal holiday.

And so you can rejoice as James teaches, even in your suffering. Let the good news of this glorious gospel keep you from taking yourself too seriously.

[38 : 34] If our God reigns, and he does, and if Jesus is coming back, and I promise you the King will return, then you can relax your grip on your life, your relationships, your kids, your job, your rights, your privileges, your finances, your enemies, and even your emotions.

The pyramid is relevant for us today because hope helps us cope. If, as the book of Esther has shown us, God is in control even when he is hidden, and even when his name seems taboo.

If our God is in control even then, then you and I can be a little more easygoing, can't we? A little less uptight.

We can live so mindful, so aware, so conscious of God's providential care that the ups and downs of our life that tend to swing us around begin to level out.

So that rather than freaking out, when it feels like our world is spiraling out of control, we live like those who think and speak and act by faith.

[40 : 23] And even when it seems like the deck is stacked against us, when it seems like the die is cast, when it seems like the whole world is against us, followers of Jesus, we refuse to give up.

It is not because we are so great. No, we refuse to give up because we are focused on what is unseen rather than what is seen.

And though he is hidden now, Jesus will be living. So through every twist and turn of life, let's anticipate the return of the king.

Let's look forward to the inauguration of his kingdom of perfect peace and perfect rest and perfect joy. Don't lose heart.

Don't give up. Jesus will return. Hope helps us cope. Let's pray.

[41 : 37] Good father, we are grateful and humbled to receive your word. Please stir up inside of us fresh faith so that we look off into the future and grab hold of your promises to us.

Drag those promises right here into the present and live as though they are true. We ask that you do this so that we are those who think and speak and live by the Lord.

Help us help us to have this kind of hope. Celebratory hope. Even a playful easy going kind of hope because we are so convinced that our king will be perfect.

Help us have that kind of hope so that our neighbors and our co-workers and the people that we serve at restaurants and coffee shops and hospitals and garages and offices and conference rooms so that these people are compelled to ask us what is this hope that you have?

How can you be so hopeful, so lighthearted amidst all of the chaos of this world? Father, would you give us courage in those moments to speak the name of Jesus and to testify of the peace that we have through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[43 : 30] Make us like Esther and like Mordecai, speakers of truth and peace. Give us courage.

Father, would you please stir up faith in someone who didn't come here this morning accepting to be confronted with the gospel and yet here they are and suddenly your word is sinking into their heart and the Holy Spirit is making these things clean.

Would you please, in your kindness, grant life and faith so that some Sarah responds by repenting and believing this gospel?

Father, we ask this for your glory and for your glory and ours as well. In Jesus' name, amen.