



Where's God on Monday?

Barge Weekend Away

20-22 March 2015

Name.....

St Peter's Barge
London's Floating Church

Esther Chapters 1 & 2: Selection of Esther as Queen

MEN BEHAVING BADLY

Introduction

- The name of God is never mentioned
- This is the greatest book in the Bible for teaching on providence
- It is a fabulous story that is brilliantly told and it needs to be read in one sitting

1. Parties sometimes bring out the worst in people!

- Historical background 583 BC
- The life behind the splendour...irony

2. Right behaviours don't give us hangovers and regrets!

- Anger, a dangerous motive
- Over reaction of kings and advisers

3. Miss Persia and showbiz can go to your head!

- Was Esther a heroine or not?
- More than just a pretty face
- Humility, the taking of advice and respect for her parents

Was She Right Not To Reveal Her Faith?

4. Mordecai takes responsibility and is loyal

- Hears information that will be crucial in God's providence later
- God at work, ahead of a problem!

Esther Chapters 3 & 4: The plot to destroy the Jews

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

Introduction

- Haman introduced and the plot of genocide

1. There is no limit to the evil imagination of a heart governed by pride, jealousy, revenge and malice

- The historical situation, 1 Sam 15; Deut. 25:18 'did not fear God'; Exodus 17:16 'the Lord will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation.'
- Mordecai's reaction – stubborn or godly?
- Haman's appeal to the king – truth, half truth and lies – the 'profit' of the King

2. The moment of truth for Esther

- Will Esther's courage and faith see her through?
- The choice – selfish interest or the well being of God's people

3. 'For such a time as this' key verses, Ch 4:13-16

- God's perfect timing
- In a position of influence
- Sovereign providence and responsibility

4. Go with the flow of God's plan or get bypassed

- Relief and deliverance is God's agenda

"Taking the side of the right (specifically standing up for God's people) will involve ultimate personal risk" G. McConville

**** Will we rise to the challenge (and blessing) like Esther?**

Esther Chapters 5, 6, & 7: Reversal of 'fortune' begins

SLEEPLESS IN SUSA

1. Responsibility in Action

- Went to the king after prayer 5:1
- Access granted; she can still wow the king!
- Planned a feast (she knows her husband!) x 2. Wine and dine!

*Pride comes before a fall – Haman's boastings and flattery
vs11,12

**Responsibility demands courage *and* wisdom

2. The "Coincidences" of Providence

- Sleepless in Susa. Chronicles to help you sleep!
- What shall I do to honour a man who truly pleases me? 6:6
- A loyal deed remembered at the right time (in the nick of time). God's perfect last minute, faith provoking timing!

3. Reversals I

* Mordecai honoured

- Haman has warning from his wife; God prevents evil plans being successful
- Haman defeated and humiliated

4. Reversals II

- Esther reveals her request 7:3
- Who would do such a thing? Haman! v6
- Haman's plot fully exposed v9

*Haman is hoisted by his own petard! – hung on the 75ft gallows meant for Mordecai

**God loves to rule and over-rule the inevitable!

***God's people should never despair or be pessimistic, but trusting & dependent!

Esther Chapters 8 & 9: Deliverance for the Jews

SPEAKING UP IN GOD'S GOOD TIME

1. Fortright in a good cause

- Brave and selfless 8:3,4. 'How can I bear to see the calamity that is coming to my people' v 6
- She spoke up but no saint! 9:13
- Compare with pattern in the New Testament – mercy and love (your enemies) Esther a person of her own day

Will I do what is right and trust God, or do what seems best for me?

2. Favour granted – Reversals III

- 'the Jews had light and gladness and joy and honour' 8:16
- The king's clever way out – 'you may write as you chose'
- Defence and attack 8:11,12
- 'the reversal occurred' 9:1
- 'fear of the Jews had fallen on them' 8:17; 9:2
- 'fear of Mordecai had fallen on them' 9:3

***Reversal in 'fortune' of the church of the day.
How much do we care today?***

3. Feast established

- Play on word Pur 9:24f. Not blind forces but God in control
- God's deliverance 9:20-22, Mordecai *and* the Queen now powerful 9:32
- Reminder needed
- Celebration enjoined – 'feasting and gladness' 9:22

***New Testament feasting and joy!
We need reminders too!***

Esther Chapter 10: Epilogue

OUR GOD REIGNS

Introduction

- Tax and more tax 10:1
- Historical verification
- Wonderful epithet “He sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all”

1. The key question

- Re: the return from Exile
- Is God still with us in a pagan environment?
- Is God still with us when we are in the office?

2. Will we trust God’s Providence?

- When nothing seems to be happening (lots is!)
- When it is contrary to self interest
- Will we believe that God is ruling and over-ruling for our good (in *our* lives!) c.f. Roman 8:28, Ephesians 1:22-23
- That God’s agenda is always the ‘relief and deliverance of his people’ 4:14

3. Some key quotes:

“Events are not governed by chance. Rather they are guided by God who has delivered His people from hostile empires in the past and will do so again.”

“The lot of the faithful is, in the end, not to be destroyed, but to have life.”

“It is His reliability in the cause of His faithful people that constitutes the real point of the narrative.” Gordon McConville – The Daily Study Bible

****Jesus didn't avoid suffering but submitted to it. His resurrection is the great turning point of history ****

