

Esther 2:1-18
 Zechariah 9:1-17
 Restoring God-Fearing Community
 ES1703

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 Esther

“The Birth of a Holocaust”

INTRODUCTION: There is much which “lies between the lines” in our historical books of the Bible ...

1. For example: *Xerxes* became king of Persia in 486 B.C. He held a royal banquet (Esther 1) in 483 B.C., when he deposed *Queen Vashti*.
2. Between chapter 1 and 2 of Esther much took place: In 481 Xerxes invaded Greece:
 - a) He conquered it by the end of 481 B.C.
 - b) But then suffered to unlikely defeat in 480 and 479 B.C.
 - c) And returned home frustrated, humble, sad (Esther 2:1)
3. He held a “Royal Beauty Contest” in 479 B.C., in which he met, fell in love with, and married a beautiful young Jewess named *Hadassah*, or *Esther* (in Persian). He made her a queen in early 478 B.C.
4. Then we read this:
 - a) *Now when the virgins were gathered together the second time, Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate. (Esther 2:19)*
 - b) compare that statement to Esther 2:11

And every day Mordecai walked in front of the court of the harem to learn how Esther was and what was happening to her. (Esther 2:11)
 - c) Mordecai has been *promoted* to some royal service within the King’s Palace. He is no longer outside the Palace walls, but inside, and *at the gate*.
 - d) **Anthony Tomasino**: *Esther: EEC*; p. 203

Once the new wives have been settled into the “second house of women,” Mordecai took his post in the city gate. Most likely this means that he was a city official, thus giving him the “connections” that allowed him to uncover the plot of the eunuchs. Business of the state was often conducted within the city gates, as when Absalom offered judgment at the gates of Jerusalem (2 Sam. 15:2). According to Xenophon, all the officials of the Persian king resided within the king’s gate. Though it is grammatically possible, it seems unlikely that Mordecai is being depicted here as only as a “man of leisure,” spending his time where he could keep up on the latest gossip.
 - e) Esther had procured Mordecai a “job” at court!
5. Meanwhile, around this time (circa 478 B.C.) *Zechariah* was entering into his third set of messages from God.
 - a) His two *burdens* (oracles) from God: Zech. 9-11 and 12-14
 - b) He began preaching, as a young man, perhaps in his early 20’s, in 520 B.C.

- c) By the time Esther was queen and Mordecai was at court, Zechariah was in his early 60's.
 - d) *Hence*, when a teenage Jewish girl in Susa became Queen of Persia, an aging Jewish Prophet in Jerusalem was preaching his final messages.
6. Although Esther never *heard* Zechariah preach, it was most likely that Zechariah had learned that a Jewish girl, named *Esther*, had become a royal consort.
7. But certainly *God* saw the events in Jerusalem and in Susa and spoke to them through His old prophet.
8. There is *obviously* a comparison between *seven people* in the Old Testament who served at the court of foreign, pagan kings
- a) *Joseph* in the Court of Pharaoh of Egypt (Genesis)
 - b) *Daniel* and his friends *Shadrach*, *Meshach* and *Abed-nego* in the Court of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar in Babylon and the King Cyrus of Persia.
 - c) And *Mordecai* and *Esther* in the Persian Court of Xerxes.
9. **Anthony Tomasino:** *Esther: EEC; p. 197-198*
- a) *Mordecai and Esther present a striking contrast to two other biblical examples of Jews in similar settings: Joseph and Daniel. Joseph, taken to Egypt against his will, maintains his faithfulness to God and His principles. He refuses the advances of his master's wife, knowing that such a betrayal would be a sin against God (Gen. 39:9). Through his steadfast obedience, he becomes a blessing to the Egyptian nation and saves its people and his own from famine, and he carefully gives God credit for his success. Daniel manages to rescue the wise men and leaders of Babylon (Dan. 1:8). He refuses to compromise his Jewish distinctives, even at the risk of his life. As a result, he serves as a witness to the pagan kings of the sovereignty of Israel's God. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, too, stand firm for their principles, even when they are threatened with a horrible death. Compared to such figures as these, Mordecai and Esther seem hardly worthy of praise or emulation.*
 - b) Mordecai and Esther appear to be *compromised believers* – hardly the stuff legends come from.

Esther had not made known her kindred or her people, as Mordecai had commanded her, for Esther obeyed Mordecai just as when she was brought up by him. (Esther 2:20)
 - c) *Perhaps it was not clear-cut, in that time and social setting, whether Esther should marry the foreign king – after all, many biblical heroes, such as Joseph, Moses, and Boaz, had foreign wives. But there could be little question about whether or not Esther should have eaten non-kosher food or observed the Sabbath day. These were not matters of uncertain ethics, but of clear violation of the Mosaic law. Esther's and Mordecai's actions in these instances are not "ambiguous"; they are simply wrong.*
 - d) And this is the *wonder* of this Story of Esther: a Sovereign and Gracious God extends providence to use, even if unfit for the hero-status, two flawed people for His good purposes.
 - e) *The wonder of God is that He can take even a sinful action and redeem it to bring about salvation, as in the crime of Joseph's brothers selling him into slavery, or humanity's ultimate act of wickedness in betraying and crucifying the Son of God.*

f) So ... Joseph was right all along.

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. (Gen. 50:20)

10. As a young lady in Persia learns of a plot to exterminate the Jews, an old man in Judea is preaching that God would *Protect and Restore Israel!* **Amazing!**

I. THE PLOT TO OVERTHROW THE KINGDOM OF PERSIA (Esther 2:19-3:15)

A. The Plot to Overthrow King Xerxes (2:19-23)

1. *Now when the virgins were gathered together the second time, Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate. Esther had not made known her kindred or her people, as Mordecai had commanded her, for Esther obeyed Mordecai just as when she was brought up by him. In those days, as Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, became angry and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. And this came to the knowledge of Mordecai, and he told it to Queen Esther, and Esther told the king in the name of Mordecai. When the affair was investigated and found to be so, the men were both hanged on the gallows. And it was recorded in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king. (Esther 2:19-23)*

2. “Now when the virgins were gathered together a second time ... “

- a) **not** that there was a second beauty contest ...
- b) **or** that the beauty pageant continued after Esther won ...
- c) **rather:** These *concubines*, who'd not been chosen as queen were gathered together for a wedding procession and a great banquet in honor of Queen Esther ...

Then the king gave a great feast for all his officials and servants; it was Esther's feast. He also granted a remission of taxes to the provinces and gave gifts with royal generosity. Now when the virgins were gathered together the second time, Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate. (Esther 2:18-19)

d) **Mervin Breneman:** *Esther: NAC*; p. 321 (Quoting **R. Gordis**)

“In view of the context which describes Esther’s coronation, we suggest that the verse refers to a second procession of the unsuccessful contestants, whose undeniable charms served to set off in more striking relief Esther’s beauty.”

e) **Note:** a very large, public and open venue where it would be easier to *assassinate King Xerxes!*

3. The very thing which was underfoot!

- a) *In those days, as Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, became angry and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. (Esther 2:21)*
- b) **Note:** assassinations were very common in ancient palaces.
- c) In fact, in 336 B.C., a eunuch named *Bagoas* assassinated the Persian King *Artaxerxes III* (Xerxes’ great-great grandson)

4. Why? We are not told. But Xerxes had done things to make many people angry –

- a) He'd lost a huge campaign against Greece.
- b) He'd taken the wives of other men in his own family.
- c) He'd replaced *Queen Vashti*, a very beautiful and popular queen.
- d) **Perhaps** these two Eunuchs, *Bigthan* and *Teresh* were loyal to the deposed queen.
- e) In fact, some 13 years later, when Esther was in her early 30's, *Xerxes would be assassinated ...*
- f) ... by the commander of his own body guard, *Artabanus of Hyrcania*, a **eunuch** named *Aspamitres*, and his son-in-law's son, *Megabyzus*.
- g) **A. T. Olmstead**: *History of the Persian Empire*; pp. 267,289

(1) *More and more the character of Xerxes disintegrated. The enlarged but still crowded harem at Persepolis tells its own story. For a time he continued his interest in the completion of the Persepolis buildings. Toward the end of his reign, he was under the influence of the commander of the guard, the Hyrcanian Artabanus, and of the eunuch chamberlain Aspamitres.*

(2) *Near the end of 465, Xerxes was assassinated in his bedchamber. At the head of the conspirators was Artabanus, aided by another favorite, the eunuch chamberlain Aspamitres, and by Megabyzus, son of Zopyrus, the king's son-in-law, who resented the refusal of Xerxes to take action of his charge that his wife Amytis was an adulteress.*

5. But, in the providence of God, *Mordecai* overhears the plans of the assassination!

- a) someone informs *Mordecai* of the plot

And this came to the knowledge of Mordecai, and he told it to Queen Esther, and Esther told the king in the name of Mordecai. When the affair was investigated and found to be so, the men were both hanged on the gallows. And it was recorded in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king. (Esther 2:22-23)

- b) *Mordecai* sends word to **Queen Esther**
- c) Xerxes investigates "*the affair*" and "*hangs*" the two conspirators.
 - (1) *hanged on gallows* is literally "*hanged on wood/ a tree*"
 - (2) It is a reference to **crucifixion!**
- d) The **Persians** invented the act of **crucifixion**.

6. The events were recorded in the **royal archives** kept by all ancient kings –

- a) "*the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.*"
- b) Hence: The Bible Books 1 & 2 Chronicles
- c) a **royal scribe** read to the king daily what he was directed to record in the King's Chronicles.
- d) a record that will soon be used by God to save the Jews!

B. The Plan of God to Overthrow the Nations (Zechariah 9:1-8)

1. Meanwhile, a word came to the prophet Zechariah, 1500 miles away, in Jerusalem ...

*The oracle of the word of the Lord is against the land of Hadrach
and Damascus is its resting place.*

*For the Lord has an eye on mankind
and on all the tribes of Israel, (Zechariah 9:1)*

2. *The oracle is really the Hebrew word “the Burden” ... (massa)*

- a) a weighty message laid on the prophet’s heart
- b) a “burden” he must unload by preaching it!
- c) literally: “the Burden (*massa*) of the oracle (*dabar*) of YHWH”

3. In this *apocalyptic* message God the Lord is portrayed like the Persian King Xerxes:

- a) He is a king leading a large *invasion*, coming from *the North* ...
- b) ... from Persia!
- c) But unlike Xerxes, Jehovah’s campaign is total victory.

4. **Joyce Baldwin:** *Zechariah: TOTC; p. 158*

In the manner characteristic of apocalyptic, Zechariah is using past events to typify a supremely important future event. Just as successive alien armies swept through Syria and Palestine and claimed a right to each territory, so finally the Lord will see every proud city capitulate to Him.

5. God singles out 8 O.T. cities associated with **Three** ancient enemies of Israel –

- a) First: The *Syrians: Hadrach, Damascus, & Hamath.*

(1) *The oracle of the word of the Lord is against the land of Hadrach
and Damascus is its resting place.*

*For the Lord has an eye on mankind
and on all the tribes of Israel,*

and on Hamath also, which borders on it, (Zechariah 9:1-2a)

(2) *The Land of Hadrach* = The land of Syria

(3) The Northern Country to David’s kingdom

- b) Second: The *Phoenicians* in the cities of *Tyre and Sidon*

(1) *Tyre and Sidon, though they are very wise.*

*Tyre has built herself a rampart
and heaped up silver like dust,*

and fine gold like the mud of the streets.

*But behold, the Lord will strip her of her possessions
and strike down her power on the sea,
and she shall be devoured by fire. (Zech. 9:2b-4)*

(2) Two cities to Israel’s N.W. who paid tribute to David and Solomon.

(3) Ancient allies of Israel.

- c) Third: *Philistia* and her famous OT cities of *Ashkelon, Gaza, Ashdod and Ekron*.
- (1) *Ashkelon shall see it, and be afraid;
Gaza too, and shall writhe in anguish;
Ekron also, because its hopes are confounded.
The king shall perish from Gaza;
Ashkelon shall be uninhabited;
a mixed people shall dwell in Ashdod,
and I will cut off the pride of Philistia.
I will take away its blood from its mouth,
and its abominations from between its teeth;
it too shall be a remnant for our God;
it shall be like a clan in Judah,
and Ekron shall be like the Jebusites. (Zech. 9:5-7)*
 - (2) Israel's oldest and most spiteful enemy: the Philistines, to the West and S. W. of David's kingdom
 - (3) A people never fully subdued by Israeli kings.
- d) Finally: *God's invasion reaches His capital city, Jerusalem, where He rests in His palace: the Temple*
- (1) *Then I will encamp at my house as a guard,
so that none shall march to and fro;
no oppressor shall again march over them,
for now I see with my own eyes. (Zech. 9:8)*
 - (2) "Then I will encamp at my house ..."
 - (3) **Anthony R. Petterson:** *Zechariah: AOTC; p. 220*
*After God has swept around the borders of the land to judge the nations,
the end point will be his return to his house to 'encamp' and to 'guard
(against) one passing through and one returning,' a reference to those
from the nations who would aggressively come through the land, probably
on some military exploit.*
6. These nations and cities – *the Land of Hadrach, Damascus, Hamath, Tyre and Sidon, with Ashkelon, Gaza, Ashdod and Ekron* – formed the outer territories of King David's Kingdom, and paid him and his son, Solomon, tribute.
 7. God is promising: *I will return to the kingdom of David and Solomon, and will restore the glory of that kingdom once more!*
 8. But in addition to reducing the power of these warlike states, God in his grace will incorporate them into the Kingdom of God.
 - a) *For the Lord has an eye on mankind and on all the tribes of Israel (v. 1)*
 - b) *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Rom. 1:16)*

- c) *“It too (Ashdod) shall be a remnant for our God; it shall be like a clan in Judah, and Ekron shall be like the Jebusites (the original inhabitants of Jerusalem)*
 - d) meaning: these Gentile enemies shall become the children of God and will be included in God’s Church.
 - e) *And they sang a new song, saying,
“Worthy are you to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation,
and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth.” (Rev. 5:9-10)*
9. This is a comforting message to the Jews, especially in Persia: as the nations war against one another, God will go through the peoples of the earth to save them, subdue them, and include them in the Kingdom of His Son –

I will tell of the decree:

*The Lord said to me, “You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.*

*Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession. (Ps. 2:7-8)*

The Lord says to my Lord:

*“Sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your footstool.”*

*The Lord sends forth from Zion
your mighty scepter.*

Rule in the midst of your enemies! (Ps. 110:1-2)

II. THE PLOT TO EXTERMINATE THE JEWISH PEOPLE (Esther 3:1-15)

A. Haman’s Hatred of Mordecai (3:1-6)

1. *After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, and advanced him and set his throne above all the officials who were with him. And all the king's servants who were at the king's gate bowed down and paid homage to Haman, for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage. Then the king's servants who were at the king's gate said to Mordecai, “Why do you transgress the king's command?” And when they spoke to him day after day and he would not listen to them, they told Haman, in order to see whether Mordecai's words would stand, for he had told them that he was a Jew. And when Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage to him, Haman was filled with fury. But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone. So, as they had made known to him the people of Mordecai, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus. (Esther 3:1-6)*
2. **Haman the Agagite** was a high-ranking Persian official, favored by Xerxes, who absolutely hated the Jews.
 - a) Why? Because he was an *Agagite*; a descendant of the OT king Agag of the *Amalekites*.

- b) Balaam had prophesied that Israel would rule over the people of Agag.

*How lovely are your tents, O Jacob,
your encampments, O Israel!
Like palm groves that stretch afar,
like gardens beside a river,
like aloes that the Lord has planted,
like cedar trees beside the waters.
Water shall flow from his buckets,
and his seed shall be in many waters;
his king shall be higher than Agag,
and his kingdom shall be exalted. (Num. 24:5-7)*

- c) The Amalekites opposed Moses and Israel as they passed through the wilderness:

Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose for us men, and go out and fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword. (Ex. 17:8, 9, 13)

- d) Later still God told Saul to wipe out the Amalekites.

(1) *And Samuel said to Saul, "The Lord sent me to anoint you king over his people Israel; now therefore listen to the words of the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'I have noted what Amalek did to Israel in opposing them on the way when they came up out of Egypt. Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.'" (1 Sam. 15:1-3)*

(2) Saul failed to do so

(3) *But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fattened calves and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them. All that was despised and worthless they devoted to destruction. (1 Sam. 15:9)*

- e) So God sent Samuel to destroy Agag and his people –

Then Samuel said, "Bring here to me Agag the king of the Amalekites." And Agag came to him cheerfully. Agag said, "Surely the bitterness of death is past." And Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." And Samuel hacked Agag to pieces before the Lord in Gilgal. (1 Sam. 15:32-33)

- f) **Haman carried an anti-Semitic hatred, passed down over 500 years!**

3. Mordecai refused to bow to Haman, because he was a Jew:

- a) who hated Amalekites, and who refused in pride to bow to the "Agagite"
 b) *And when they spoke to him day after day and he would not listen to them, they told Haman, in order to see whether Mordecai's words would stand, for he had told them that he was a Jew. (Esther 3:4)*

- c) Incidentally: Jews *did* bow to kings and other officials.
- d) Mordecai's refusal was rooted in prejudice not spirituality.

4. Haman's hatred leads to a decision: *A holocaust against all Jews!*

But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone. So, as they had made known to him the people of Mordecai, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus. (Esther 3:6)

B. Haman's Plan to Wipe Out the Jews (3:7-11)

1. *In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that is, they cast lots) before Haman day after day; and they cast it month after month till the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar. Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom. Their laws are different from those of every other people, and they do not keep the king's laws, so that it is not to the king's profit to tolerate them. If it please the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed, and I will pay 10,000 talents of silver into the hands of those who have charge of the king's business, that they may put it into the king's treasuries." So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. And the king said to Haman, "The money is given to you, the people also, to do with them as it seems good to you." (Esther 3:7-11)*
2. Incidentally: *Purim* is the plural of *pur*; the Hebrew word for "lot"
3. In March-April, 474 B.C., five years after Esther had been made queen (in 479 B.C.)
4. Haman's advisors and co-conspirators cast lots over several days until the Lots randomly chose the 12th month, the Jewish month of *Adar*.
 - a) They began to cast lots in the 1st month: *Nisan* (the OT month of *Abib*)
 - b) first choosing a day – the 13th (mid-month)
 - c) then choosing a month – the 12th (Feb-March)
 - d) Setting the 13th of *Adar* (*see v. 13*)

Letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with instruction to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods. (Esther 3:13)

5. **Lewis Bayles Paton:** *Book of Esther: ICC; p. 202*

Haman was trying to find a lucky day for going to the King, we must suppose that he cast lots on each successive day to see whether this were favourable for his plans. Thirteen is an unlucky number in the Book of Esther as it was also among the ancient Babylonians.

6. Haman goes to King Xerxes on the 13th of *Nisan*, to ask for the extermination of the Jews 11 months later, to the day.
7. He gives the King three silly reasons for this holocaust –

- a) Their *laws* (customs) were different from Persia – but so were the people of the other 127 provinces of Persian’s vast empire! *Babylonians, Greeks, Assyrians, Asians, etc.*
 - b) They do not keep the King’s laws. A false statement. (Although Mordecai repeatedly broke Xerxes’ law commanding all citizens to honor Haman!)
 - c) It is not profitable to tolerate the Jews anymore. A stupid statement since they paid many taxes to Xerxes.
8. Xerxes, in an *incredible decision of poor rule* grants Haman’s request –
- a) without asking who these people are (“*a certain people*”),
 - b) without asking how many they are,
 - c) without consulting any other of his advisors!
 - d) **note:** the sum Haman offers Xerxes was over ½ the Empire’s total annual tax revenue! Is that suspicious?
9. Xerxes grants Haman *carte blanche*: full authority to issue a royal decree and proceed with the massacre – of his own subjects!

C. Haman’s Decree to Kill all the Jews (3:12-15)

1. *Then the king's scribes were summoned on the thirteenth day of the first month, and an edict, according to all that Haman commanded, was written to the king's satraps and to the governors over all the provinces and to the officials of all the peoples, to every province in its own script and every people in its own language. It was written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king's signet ring. Letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with instruction to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods. A copy of the document was to be issued as a decree in every province by proclamation to all the peoples to be ready for that day. The couriers went out hurriedly by order of the king, and the decree was issued in Susa the citadel. And the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Susa was thrown into confusion. (Esther 3:12-15)*
2. Date ... time ... events to unfold ...bribe to take the Jew’s wealth – all with stroke of a pen and a *wax seal*.
3. The author paints a vivid picture of the effect of that decree –
 - a) *The couriers went out hurriedly by order of the king, and the decree was issued in Susa the citadel. And the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Susa was thrown into confusion. (Esther 3:15)*
 - b) Messages racing to the ends of the Empire.
 - c) Provincial Satraps and Governors in dismay
 - d) The Jews in horror and dread
 - e) The people of the Empire greatly unsettled.
 - f) Haman and Xerxes having a beer together in fun.

4. ... and **Esther**, somewhere doing her nails and picking out dresses, totally (as yet) oblivious as to a single, foolish act by her husband that will change her life, Persia's destiny, and the future Kingdom of God!

D. The Promise of Salvation from God (Zechariah 9:9-17)

1. As the Empire dissolves into greed, confusion, panic and dread, the old prophet speaks of a King and a Kingdom yet to come!

2. First: A **King** who will come as a *Peacemaker* (9:9-12)

a) *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
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.
I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
and the war horse from Jerusalem;
and the battle bow shall be cut off,
and he shall speak peace to the nations;
his rule shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.
As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you,
I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.
Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope;
today I declare that I will restore to you double.* (Zech. 9:9-12)

- b) Rather than a King of War on a great steed, this king will come mounted humbly and graciously on a *donkey* to set free the prisoners and bring peace to His people.

(1) Obviously a reference to *Palm Sunday* and *Jesus Christ*

(2) *This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,
"Say to the daughter of Zion,
'Behold, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'*"

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee." (Matt. 21:4-11)

(3) *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,*

*because the Lord has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
to grant to those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.
They shall build up the ancient ruins;
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations. (Isa. 61:1-4)*

3. Second: A **King** who will cut off the enemies of God's people, *the Church*.

- a) *For I have bent Judah as my bow;
I have made Ephraim its arrow.
I will stir up your sons, O Zion,
against your sons, O Greece,
and wield you like a warrior's sword.
Then the Lord will appear over them,
and his arrow will go forth like lightning;
the Lord God will sound the trumpet
and will march forth in the whirlwinds of the south.
The Lord of hosts will protect them,
and they shall devour, and tread down the sling stones,
and they shall drink and roar as if drunk with wine, and be full like a bowl,
drenched like the corners of the altar. (Zech. 9:13-15)*
- b) The King who would fight to *protect* and *preserve* His people ...
- c) not sell them into death to a political crony!

4. Third: A **King** who would *rescue* His people and *restore* them to *Blessing*.

- a) *On that day the Lord their God will save them,
as the flock of his people;
for like the jewels of a crown
they shall shine on his land.
For how great is his goodness, and how great his beauty!
Grain shall make the young men flourish,
and new wine the young women. (Zechariah 9: 16-17)*

- b) This King from God will save in total the Kingdom of God
- c) in spite of all the evil surrounding His people in the world.

5. **Joyce Baldwin:** *Zechariah: TOTC; p. 162*

- a) *The first section of this second part of the book establishes from the start two important facts: the Lord's victory is certain and he intends to bring back to Himself peoples long alienated from Him. These truths underlie all that follows and culminate in the universal worship of the King, the Lord of hosts, in 14:16-19.*
- b) The Victory of the Son of God
- c) The Restoration of mankind to God
- d) *All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. (2 Cor. 5:18-6:2)*

Conclusion: We know how this story ends. Mordecai and Esther did not ...

- 1. We can see how the *warfare* of the Son of God and the *redemption* of Jesus Christ fit together in ...
 - a) Zechariah's prophecy,
 - b) Esther's danger,
 - c) and the distressing events of our times.

2. **Bryan R. Gregory:** *Longing for God in an Age of Discouragement; pp. 171-172*

Fittingly, the Passion Week not only begins with Jesus acting out Zechariah's humble king coming to Jerusalem, it ends with him resolving the tension of the text itself. In his crucifixion and resurrection, he profoundly embodies both the humility of the king and the success of the Lord's conquest. On the cross, Jesus wore a crown, but it was a crown of thorns, and he hung below the humiliating mockery of a sign inscribed with the words, "The King of the Jews." But in the resurrection, he was vindicated and exalted as the righteous victor over all the earth. He dethroned all principalities and powers and is lifted up as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The tension ingrained in Zechariah 9:1-11:3 is finally resolved in Jesus. He is peaceful, yet he conquers the world. He is gentle, yet he overcomes. He is meek, yet he is vindicated. He is humble, yet he turns the world upside down. This has a profound implication for the church.

- 3. How we live in this world is "*upside down*" (**Gregory**) to how our neighbors live, how Washington D.C. thinks and how the nations rule.
- 4. The *Kingdom of God* comes when we follow the Prince of Peace with the sword of the Spirit and the message of the Gospel: *Jesus is mighty to save!*

5. Because it takes *greater power* to save than to destroy ...
- ... to bless instead of curse ...
 - ... to restore instead of revenge ...
 - ... to give than to gain ...
 - ... to love than to hate ...
 - ... to die for others than to life for self.
6. This is the beauty of the *Story of Esther* – without prophet nearby, or synagogue to attend, or Bible to read, Mordecai and Esther learn to walk by faith until the *invisible hand of Providence* gives them a deliverance!
7. We know more, we understand better, we see much more clearly, the Hand of God in our lives –
- Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. (Romans 13:11)*
8. **“... for salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed.”**
- a) closer than 474 B.C. when Old Zechariah preached,
 - b) closer than those days of Esther, when Israel fought to survive,
 - c) closer than 30 A.D., when Jesus rode on that donkey into Jerusalem, and took up his cross 6 days later,
 - d) closer than when I was converted on August 14, 1976, almost 41 years ago,
 - e) *“nearer to us than when we first believed.”*
9. *On that day the Lord their God will save them,
as the flock of his people;
for like the jewels of a crown
they shall shine on his land.
For how great is his goodness, and how great his beauty!
Grain shall make the young men flourish,
and new wine the young women. (Zechariah 9:16-17)*
10. As Haman and Xerxes “*sat down to drink*” Jesus was mixing his *new wine* for the nations that Zechariah wrote about:
- 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 our God
the Almighty reigns.
Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready;
it was granted her to clothe herself*

with fine linen, bright and pure”—

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. (Rev. 19:6-8)

11. King Jesus is right on schedule. His *plan* overrides the *plots* of every evil person and the unjust *proclamations* of every decadent ruler.

12. *The plans of the heart belong to man,
but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.*

*All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes,
but the Lord weighs the spirit.*

*Commit your work to the Lord,
and your plans will be established.*

*The Lord has made everything for its purpose,
even the wicked for the day of trouble.*

*The heart of man plans his way,
but the Lord establishes his steps. (Prov. 16:1-4, 9)*

*Many are the plans in the mind of a man,
but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand. (Prov. 19:21)*

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will. (Prov. 21:1)