



Yesterday at Magdalen Road we looked at the penultimate chunk of Esther, chapters 7-8 and saw things beginning to be resolved.

We noted that the chapters are made up for 2 cycles with Esther twice petitioning and pleading before Xerxes, twice there being bureaucratic issues and twice (partial) resolutions.

The initial cycle is found in chapter 7.

Here, as Esther promised at party #2, she reveals her identity as a Jew, wisely arouses the anger of Xerxes against her plight, and then directs it upon Haman. As Xerxes has left the room (perhaps to seek to grasp how to untangle this bureaucratic mess) Haman falls upon Esther to plead for his life at which point Xerxes returns and sees Haman 'molesting' his wife. He is not only subsequently impaled upon the pole that he had built for Mordecai, but also then his estate is given to Mordecai. We noted again the interplay in the book between the sovereignty and control of God, along with the value and worth of people and their actions and interactions, within the overall plan of God.

The second cycle (chapter 8v3-end) again sees Esther pleading with Xerxes this time (not for herself, but rather her people). Mordecai and Esther then, with the kings stamp of approval send an alternative edict (on fast horses!) that parallels the initial one but gives any Jewish people license to protect themselves against any Persians who carry out the initial edict.

The theme of reversals is seen again with Mordecai feasting and wearing royal attire, as opposed to fasting in sackcloth in ashes (Esther 4). Also rather than Susa wailing and mourning there is joy and gladness (cf end of Esther 3). And finally rather than the people of God being decimated in numbers, as Haman's initial edict had planned for, they actually (like with the Exodus), grow in number.

What have been the key challenges / new ideas / things to ponder, so far from Esther?

Note Esther's 2 petitions and pleadings in these chapters. What does she ask for? How does she ask?

What are the barriers to the king giving her what she asks for? Why do you think Xerxes heads outside in the palace?

How are the problems resolved?

What kind of reversals do you see here? Why do you think the writer concentrates on these?

What do you make of Haman being impaled on a pole and The Jews being allowed to retaliate against their oppressors? How does this make you feel as a Christian? What do they show us about the nature of God?

What 1 thing has struck you from these verses?