

THRU THE BIBLE SYNTHESIS
"Part XXXIII: Esther - Obeying God In Lean And Lonely Times"

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) Sometimes Christian parents wonder if it's really worthwhile maintaining a stand for a decent home these days. Consider these facts:

- (a) By the time American children are in Junior High, they have seen 8,000 TV murders.
- (b) One out of every 8 American parents abuses alcohol.
- (c) One-third of all teens in the United States have had sex by the time they reach the 8th grade.

USA Weekend, April 26-28, 1996, p. 4. **With so many other children being raised incorrectly, why try SO HARD to raise our own kids right?! WHY?!**

Used evolutionary processes) and if it had a doctrinal statement. He replied that they presented all three models of origins, Creationism, Theistic Evolutionism **and** Evolutionism, but that they did **not** promote any **one** model **OVER** the **other**! The hope was to let the kids **choose** their model on their own! The headmaster claimed he did not lead a **Church** school needing a doctrinal statement, but a **Christian** school **without** a doctrinal statement so that doctrinal distinctions would not block evangelism! Well, no matter what, I **have** to take a stand public against evolution in all its forms to defend the doctrine of the **believer's resurrection**! Theistic Evolution assumes the presence of death **before** Adam to incorporate Darwin's *survival of the fittest* process to explain origins, a grave error according to 1 Cor. 15:20-22: if death does not **begin** with **Adam's sin**, but **before**, then Christ's rising as the "**Second ADAM**" offers **no eternal resurrection** for Christians! Following my questions, the headmaster irately cut the meeting short, and I left, driving home in a daze!

Is it really worth trying to do what is right **when so many others fudge on the truth, and going God's way is rough?!**

(We turn to the sermon's "Need" section . . .)

Need: "I know what I SHOULD do, and I TRY to do it, but the way is 'lean and lonely': I face big obstacles with limited resources, only a few join me in the effort so I'm not getting much encouragement along the way! Should I quit or keep plodding along, and WHY?!"

- I. **After God's people failed in their world mission and were judged by captivity, God ordered them to return to Palestine and rebuild.**
 - A. Though God created the world and set man up as His deputy, sin deposed him, and Satan became ruler on earth, Gn. 1-5; 2 Cor. 4:4.
 - B. The Lord renewed history through the Noahic flood, Gen. 6:1-9:7.
 - C. Yet, Noah's descendant, Nimrod, began an apostasy opposing God's rule on earth, Gen. 10:8-10; 11:1-9; Rev. 12:1-3.
 - D. God thus chose Abraham to start a nation to check his sin, Gn. 12:1-3.
 - E. Yet, after many challenges en route, that nation failed to curb Nimrod's error, and God had to send it into captivity, Gen. 12:4-Daniel.
 - F. After Israel's 70-year predicted captivity (Jer. 25:12), **God** moved King Cyrus to decree the return of Israel to Palestine, Ezra 1:1-4.
- II. **Yet, only a few came back, and the godly who did faced "lean and lonely" times in trying to do God's will of rebuilding the temple:**
 - A. Though 60,000 obeyed God's call to return, several **million** were so comfortable they **stayed** in Persia, McGee, Thru The Bible, v. 2, 544.
 - B. Many who **did** return were **materialistic** and poured their earnings into homes instead of the temple's reconstruction. What work **was** accomplished was **criticized** for its modest workmanship, Haggai!
- III. **God thus providentially worked to encourage the upright Hebrews in Israel and correct the wayward Hebrews in Persia!**
 - A. God sent the prophet, Zechariah to encourage the Jews under Zerubbabel and Joshua in their efforts to rebuild the temple, Zechariah.
 - B. The book of Esther shows God's work to "wake up" Persia's Jews to return to Palestine and to encourage the returned exiles in Palestine:
 - 1. Esther is the only book in the Bible that does not mention God or prayer to Him by His people, revealing a lack of fellowship with God by this group of God's people, Bib. Know. Com., O.T., p. 699.

2. King Ahasuerus in Esther is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek name Xerxes who ruled in B.C. 486-465, Ryr. St. Bib., KJV, Intro. to Esther, p. 743. This king ruled between Ezra chapters 6 and 7 after the first group of Hebrews had finished the temple, Ibid.
3. Thus, Esther is God's upsetting call to Persian Jews to return to the land and an encouragement to Israel that God would bless her!
 - a. In His providence, God let Esther, a Jewess become queen in Vashti's place, and let Mordecai, Esther's uncle rescue the King from assassination and have his deed officially recorded, chs. 1-2
 - b. Then, to gain revenge against Mordecai for not bowing down to him, a man named Haman arranged an edict to kill Mordecai via annihilating him with the rest of Persia's Jews, Esther 3:1-15.
 - c. Mordecai appealed to Esther to risk her life and make an uninvited appearance to the king to plead for the deliverance of the Jews, 4:1-17. He stated his belief that deliverance **HAD** to arise **either** through Esther **or** through **another** party, 4:14.
 - d. As Esther **began** to win the king's favor to appeal for her people, **GOD "greased the slide"**: He kept the king awake one night until a courtier read to him of Mordecai's past deliverance for him. The king innocently ordered **Haman** to **reward Mordecai**, encouraging Esther to make her request and setting Haman up to be fearfully immoderate when she did so, 5:1-6:14!
 - e. The king was moved by Esther's request, and "read" Haman's falling on Esther to plead for his life as an assault so as to order him hanged & the Jews to kill their enemies, Esther 7:1-9:19.
 - f. This initiated the feast of Purim still kept by the Jews, 9:20-10:3.
 - g. In the end, Jerusalem's returned exiles were encouraged by God's protection of Persian Jews, and Ezra led others from Persia to return to help in Israel, Ezra 7, B.K.C., O.T., p. 700!

IV. The "thread of redemption" in Esther is its powerful example of God's DEEP resolve to keep His UNCONDITIONAL Abrahamic Covenant by RESTORING and REBUILDING Israel, Gen. 12:1-3!

***Application:** If hampered or humanly unsupported in trying to do God's will, (1) believe on Christ for salvation and (2) fellowship with God via (a) confession of sin (1 Jn. 1:9) and (b) depend on His Spirit (Gal. 5:16ff) for the power to (c) obey Him, 1 Jn. 2:1-6. (3) Then, (a) recalling the settings of Esther and Zechariah, (b) keep obeying God in those "lean & lonely" times and (c) He will encourage & supply en route (Zechariah's words to Zerubbabel) (d) and we'll thus avoid His painful wake up moves for us get with His will (Esther)!*

***Lesson:** God ALWAYS PROCEEDS with His eternal plans no matter how seriously man takes Him. Thus, DO God's will regardless if others don't do it, if human support to do it is meager or if resources are low, for then we will be blessed en route and not face God's painful wake up calls!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the lesson . . .)

(1) On Tuesday, I went through my initial preparations of weekly messages and started to write up the 28th Psalm for today's Adult Class. I had trouble doing so, fearing that my application of the lament psalms was too negative for the class, for, like Zerubbabel, I had faced criticism for "unedifying" lessons dealing with such subjects in the past!

Just then, the Tuesday afternoon storm came up, so I turned off the computer having completed just the title to Psalm 28, and that to avoid electrical problems with the computer, and drove off in the rain.

Psalms studies had meant to him with a steep challenge he faced **Tuesday**, the day I wondered about the **reception** of my lament psalm lessons by the class! It was a clear **encouragement** that God was watching over my **lament psalm** preparations to **bless**!

Other views were "legalistic" and that's why he as a divorced and remarried man served as a deacon! I remember remaining quiet out of respect for the celebration, but wincing inside!!

Now seeing that he is going to face the **Lord** soon, it made me realize that my position on this issue has nothing to do with human opinion or church politics! It has to do with **answering to GOD**! In its own way, this news was a sharp prod from God to **hold** to my theological guns on such stands as only what **God SAYS** really matters in the end, and we will all have to answer to **HIM** for those stands!

I came away this week having had to apply this lesson deeply. In the short term, obeying God may seem at TIMES to be a "lean and lonely" road. But in time, God encourages us if we obey Him, and lowers the boom if we don't. So, which route in life do YOU think is easier? Which will YOU choose?!