

4. Such a time as this

May 8, 2008

After World War I, Germany was a textbook case of chaos. Its economy was collapsed to the point where many thousands of people were starving and it seems that there was no hope for this country.

Out of this devastated unsettled time, a man appeared and gave promises and hope of "the Rise of the Third Reich". The public took the cue from this man who was full of charisma and his speeches seemed so spell binding.

When Adolph Hitler became the chancellor of Germany in 1933, he gathered all the church leaders in Germany and assured them that there should not be any concern about their own safety and churches. The majority of the pastors at the meeting were happy to hear that and decided that they would be a part of this Third Reich.

One of the pastors who didn't buy Hitler's promises asked, "Herr Chancellor, I am not concerned about the safety of my church or myself, but rather the souls of Germany." With a smile, Hitler answered him, "The souls of Germany is my concern, not yours."

During World War II, Hitler not only destroyed the synagogues, but also protestant and catholic churches.

Those pastors should have gotten on their knees and prayed to the Lord. Some might say, "What could they possibly do with a few desperate prayers against the marching Nazi troops?" The prayers couldn't, but our God could easily. But they chose to sit back and let the evil get the best of it.

Let me put this in our terms:

We have three Presidential candidates running for election:

Barack Hussein Obama, Hillary Clinton and her wife Bill, and John McCain. When I compare their agendas against what the Bible says, none of them even come close to what a biblical leader should be.

In the meanwhile, according to the intelligence from Israeli Transportation Minister Shaul Mofaz, he indicated that Iran is about to have their first nuclear weapon in their arsenal this year.

May 7th, Russian President Vladimir Putin handed over the reigns of the presidency to Dmitry Medvedev, the baby-faced former law professor whom Putin hand-picked and personally anointed to take his place as president. But it seems unlikely that Putin will actually give up much – if any – real political power.

Putin said he plans on ascending to the role of Prime Minister. In the past, that has been a less powerful position, but in Putin's hands, it would become a vastly more powerful role. Putin seems intent on fashioning himself as the new Czar of Russia. He is centralizing power and wealth unto himself. He is silencing political and religious opposition. He is rebuilding the offensive capabilities of the Russian military. And he seems to be itching for a military adventure of some kind, an opportunity to show Russia's new might and reclaim the glory of Mother Russia. Yes, Gog of Magog from Ezekiel 38 and 39 is positioning himself to the right place.

While the political landscape is changing rapidly, while the time we have on this earth is fading away before our eyes, what are we doing here in America? What does God want us to do? Let's learn these from our Lord through Mordecai and Esther tonight.

A. MORDECAI'S MOURNING

Esther 4:1-3 When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city. He cried out with a loud and bitter cry. 2 He went as far as the front of the king's gate, for no one might enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. 3 And in every province where the king's command and decree arrived, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

In the empire, the responses to Haman's decree were varied:

- 1) Haman and the king completely ignored the condition of the Jews and sat down to a royal drunken stupor.
- 2) The people of the capital city were perplexed and didn't know what to do.
- 3) Secluded in the royal palace, Queen Esther knew nothing about the danger that she and her people faced.
- 4) The Jews in the various provinces began to fast and mourn.
- 5) Only one man, Mordecai, was able to do anything about the horror. And he immediately began to act.

We can't be neutral when human lives are at stake. That is why we not only must pray to the Lord, but also we must voice our opinion with petitions and votes regarding abortion and our children's education.

B. MORDECAI'S EXPLANATION

Esther 4:4-9 So Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her, and the queen was deeply distressed. Then she sent garments to clothe Mordecai and take his sackcloth away from him, but he would not accept them. 5 Then Esther called Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs whom he had appointed to attend her, and she gave him a command concerning Mordecai, to learn what and why this was. 6 So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square that was in front of the king's gate. 7 And Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries to destroy the Jews. 8 He also gave him a copy of the written decree for their destruction, which was given at Shushan, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her, and that he might command her to go in to the king to make supplication to him and plead before him for her people. 9 So Hathach returned and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

Mordecai not only knew all the facts about the decree, but he also had a copy of it for Esther to read for herself. He urged her to reveal her true nationality and go to the royal throne and intercede for her people.

C. EXHORTING THE QUEEN

Esther 4:10-14 Then Esther spoke to Hathach, and gave him a command for Mordecai: 11 "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, he has but one law: put all to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days." 12 So they told

Mordecai Esther's words. 13 And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: "Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. 14 For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

It was a common custom to prevent any unauthorized traffic to the king except the ones who are allowed like visiting the President of the United States. The Secret Service may not kill everyone who approaches the Oval Office or the President himself, you certainly have to have a clearance from them to see him.

I don't think that Esther had an attitude of "I-don't-want-to-get-involved," rather trying to explaining to Mordecai about the palace protocol.

Mordecai reminded Esther of three solemn facts:

1) He told her that her being a palace resident was no guarantee that she would be delivered from death.

Once Haman finds out that Esther is a Jew, he would do anything to have her killed.

2) Mordecai reminded her that her silence wouldn't prevent deliverance from coming from some other source.

The reference here is to the providence of God even though the name of God isn't mentioned. Knowing the Abrahamic Covenant, Mordecai had faith that the people of Israel would be protected from annihilation.

Why would relief and deliverance arise from another place yet Esther might be killed? It is for a punishment for her unwillingness to intercede for the people.

James 4:17 Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.

3) Mordecai emphasized that her being in the palace as the queen was not an accident. Because God arranged the whole event including Esther becoming the queen as a part of His providential will.

Any logical Jewish person can tell God prepared all of these to rescue and preserve the Israelites from extinction.

It reminds me of another incident in the Israel history: Joseph. He was sold as a slave to the Egyptian captain of guard, Mr. Potiphar. Through the chain of events, he became the second-in-command in Egypt. There were seven years of great harvests and seven years of great famine. You all know the story. His brothers who came to Egypt to buy food and bowed their heads in front of Joseph with their hats in their hands. Eventually, Joseph revealed his true identity to them and just about gave heart attacks to all of them. While their jaws were still on the floor and didn't know what to say, Joseph told them this:

Genesis 45:7-8 And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. 8 So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

We can learn more about some basic truth of God's providence from Mordecai's comments that are important for Christians today.

1) God has divine purposes to accomplish in this world.

God's purposes involve the Jews, Gentiles, churches and individuals. His purposes touch the lives of heads of the nations and common people, godly people and wicked people. There is nothing in this world that is outside the influence of the purposes of God.

2) God permits wicked people to do evil things in this world. But He can work in and through unbelievers and His own people to accomplish His purposes.

3) God will accomplish His purposes even if His servants refuse to obey His will.

If Esther rejected the will of God for her life, God could still save His people. But Esther would be the loser. When pastors and missionaries appeal to the church for volunteers for Christian service, they sometimes give the impression that God's work is at the mercy of God's workers. Not in our lifetime.

If you and I refuse to obey God, He can get somebody else to do the job, and we will lose the reward and blessing. Or He can discipline us until we surrender to His will.

Two examples come to mind. Since John Mark left the mission field and returned home in Acts 13, God raised up Timothy to take his place in chapter 16.

When Jonah ran from God, the Lord kept after him until he obeyed, even though he didn't obey from his heart.

When God isn't permitted to rule, He overrules. He always accomplishes His purposes.

Only a sovereign God is great enough to decree freedom of choice for men and women, and only a sovereign God could fulfill His wise and loving purposes in this world and even make evil cooperate in producing good.

Genesis 50:20 But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

The question is not, "Is God in control of this world?" but, "Is God in control of my life?" Are we cooperating with Him so that we are a part of the answer and not a part of the problem?

We don't have to be hardened unbelievers like Haman to be apathetic and unconcerned about the condition of the world's billions of lost souls.

Let's go back to the five responses we came up with at the beginning and put them in our situation. What kind of response would you have?

1) Like Haman and the king who completely ignored the condition of the Jews, would you go on your daily life without doing anything other than for yourself?

2) Like the people of the capital city who were perplexed and didn't know what to do, would you just look at each other and don't know what to do?

3) Though Queen Esther knew nothing about the danger that she and her people faced, none of the born-again believers in America claim that they didn't know what needs to be done for salvation of the people around us and around the world.

4) The Jews in the various provinces began to fast and mourn, would you cry out to the Lord in your prayers and fasting?

5) Like Mordecai who was able to do anything about the horror by trusting God to guide him, would you step out of your comfort zone and get yourself available to the Lord?

On Saturday, May 17th, Pastor Jack is going to lead some of you guys to our sister ministry, New Creation in Nogales, Mexico. Can you be a part of that group to bless and to tell them about Jesus Christ?

D. IF I PERISH, I PERISH

Esther 4:15-17 Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai: 16 "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!" 17 So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded him.

Fasting and prayer are frequently found together in Scripture, because fasting is a preparation for concentrated and humble prayer. Of itself, fasting is no guarantee that God will bless, because fasting must be accompanied by sincere humility and brokenness before the Lord. If fasting is only a formal religious ritual, it accomplishes no spiritual purpose other than empty stomachs and prideful hearts.

I believe that Esther was determined to see the king at all cost including her death. She was simply being obedient to what she was called for. What a lesson we should learn from her!

E. APPLICATIONS

1) We can't be neutral when human lives are at stake. That is why we not only must pray to the Lord, but also we must voice our opinion with petitions and votes regarding abortion and our children's education.

2) If you and I refuse to obey God, He can get somebody else to do the job, and we will lose the reward and blessing. Or He can discipline us until we surrender to His will.

3) When God isn't permitted to rule, He overrules. He always accomplishes His purposes.