
Day 277 - October 4

Period of Restoration (535-425 BCE)

Esther and the Feast of Purim

Readings: *Esther 5:1-9:17*

Reflections:

- Again the second half of the story needs little additional commentary on the story itself.
- One interesting point is the irony of Haman building gallows only to die on them. Here we see a picture of how God brings about judgment. His enemies actually participate in their own destruction. This displays the supreme wisdom of God. This we see most clearly in 1 Corinthians 2:7-8: "No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." The spiritual enemies of God actually participated in their own destruction by choosing to crucify the Christ. In the same way the story of Haman served as a warning to anyone who would set himself or herself up against God and his purposes.
- The edict that enabled the Jews to kill all of their enemies was celebrated in that day and is still celebrated to this day. Yet, again we see the incredible contrast with the coming of Jesus. We don't see in this story God command his people to do this act of vengeance but within the unfolding story of "what doesn't work" this is in line with the story of Israel. For those of us looking back on the delight Israel took in killing their enemies, seventy five thousand of them, we see how attractive the teaching of Jesus' is. Although they killed out of principle (note: they didn't take any plunder), it was still at terrible genocide. It makes us say again, "praise God for Jesus!"
- In the celebration of Purim, as outlined in Esther and as has been maintained over the centuries, the Jewish people read the story of Esther and party together. They give gifts to each other and to the poor (see Esther 9:22). We see that within Israel as within other faiths, giving to the poor means giving to their own poor. It was a way of caring for their community. With the coming of Christ, a huge change was his calling for his followers to give to the poor outside their community. The Jews were actually celebrating their own survival and freedom to kill all their enemies. Jesus' message was the complete opposite. Lay your life down as you seek to love your enemies. We see

again the contrasts between the old covenant and the new covenant, the story of “what doesn’t work” with the story of “what does work.”