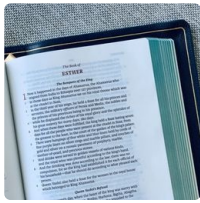


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Esther 7 - 10



Esther - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg continues his discussion of the book of Esther. He describes how Queen Esther bravely approached the king to save her people, even though it was dangerous due to the prime minister's plot against the Jews. The king granted Esther's request, and Haman was hanged instead. Mordecai became increasingly prominent and holidays continue to be established in the Jewish religion to commemorate events such as the Purim festival.

Transcript

Well the story was interrupted by our end of our last session and Haman has been humiliated by having to honor Mordecai publicly and his family has seen this as a bad omen for him and have said if Mordecai before whom you have begun to fall is of Jewish descent you will not prevail against him but will surely fall before him. This is almost like a prophetic word that they gave perhaps not even knowing they were prophesying even as Caiaphas prophesied without knowing it that Jesus must die for the people according to John chapter 11. So also Haman's family seems to be prophesying they're seeing that this is not going to go well for Haman and it certainly is not.

At the end of chapter 6 verse 14 says while they were still talking with him the king's eunuchs came and hastened to bring Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared. Now Haman hadn't gotten much sleep. He'd spent the evening building a gallows, building a torture stake really on which to kill Mordecai and then in the middle of the night he'd gone to approach the king to get permission for that and instead of being able to do that he was forced to honor Mordecai publicly.

That's how he spent his morning and then apparently around noon in all likelihood it came time for this banquet that Esther had invited him to attend him alone with the king. This was something that when he first heard about it Haman thought this was a great privilege a great honor to be alone with the king and the queen you know just showing that he held a unique status below the royalty but this turned out not to be such a great privilege for him as it turns out. He didn't know that the people that he was trying to destroy and the man particularly that he was trying to destroy Mordecai was

related to the queen and this is going to be revealed to him in this chapter.

In chapter 7 so the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther and on the second day at the banquet of wine the king again said to Esther what is your petition Queen Esther it shall be granted to you and what is your request up to half my kingdom it shall be done. Then Queen Esther answered and said if I have found favor in your sight O king and if it pleases the king let my life be given me at my petition and my people at my request for we have been sold my people and I to be destroyed to be killed and to be annihilated. The reference being sold no doubt has to do with the bribe of a 10,000 talents of silver this was the the price that had been paid to have them all killed and so she says we've been sold to be annihilated.

Had we been sold as male and female slaves I would have held my tongue although the enemy could never compensate for the king's loss. Now what she's saying is this is a danger to my life and my people's lives if it was only a matter of us going into slavery I wouldn't disturb you with it but it's something much more severe than that where our lives are in danger. Although if it if we had been sold away into slavery the loss to the king would have been hard to compensate that is we Jews are actually of great value to the kingdom here and if you lost us by having us sold away into slavery somewhere it would have been a great loss to you but I would have not bothered you with it if that were the only danger.

Then King Ahasuerus answered said to Queen Esther who is he and where is he who would dare to presume in his heart to do such a thing and Esther said the adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman. So Haman was terrified before the king and queen as you can imagine it had not been a good day for him already and now this is gonna ruin his whole day and his whole life and he was terrified when he realized that he had been exposed and he didn't know until this moment that Esther was related to Mordecai or to the Jews and that he had even threatened her he had inadvertently plotted to kill the Queen. Then the king arose in his wrath from the banquet of wine and went into the palace garden.

Now he apparently needed to think about this. Normally in ordinary circumstances he probably would have just declared you know kill Haman then if he's if he's threatening my queen but this is a big accusation this is a big thing. I mean Haman was the Prime Minister to have him executed would be to essentially have to replace him with somebody in a trusted post this man after all had been his trusted minister and he's going out to you know to process this information that his Prime Minister has plotted to kill his Queen and the king arose and went out to a palace garden Haman stood before Queen Esther pleading for his life for he saw that evil is determined against him by the king.

When the king returned from the palace garden to the place of the banquet of wine

Haman had fallen across the couch where Esther was. Now it's hard to picture this but people didn't sit in chairs in those days they laid it couches at table at the sides of low tables and they ate that way and so Esther was of course reclining on a couch and Haman apparently in petitioning her for his life had you know come over to her couch and draped himself over her couch in such a way that looked somewhat compromising as the king saw it and it says the king said will he also assault and the word assault here means sexually molest sexually assault the Queen while I'm in the house as the word left the king's mouth they covered Haman's face which means he was condemned to die that the servants came up and put a bag over his head. Haman was very ill-advised to go near the Queen I mean he probably was going to die anyway but it really enraged the king because no one's allowed to come near the Queen only the eunuchs who were men who were castrated and could not be you know a danger to the purity of the harem were allowed to go near the the Queen's and the concubines of the king no ordinary man could do so in a sense Haman was somewhat in danger being as near to the Queen as he was just at the banquet because you know a man ordinary man was not allowed to go near the Queen especially a very beautiful Queen who might be thought to to you know be somebody who would be an allurement to another man Haman made the mistake of apparently even touching her you would never touch the Queen and although he was of course not trying to sexually assault her it looked enough like that to the king to you know have the king make this comment and of course when he made the comment there's no question of what they even say was the servants just came up and covered his head like okay I guess this guy's dead you know and so Harbona one of the eunuchs said to the king look the gallows 50 cubits high which Haman made for Mordecai who spoke good on the king's behalf now he adds that little thing about Mordecai who spoke good on the king's behalf obviously the servants were favorable toward Mordecai and not toward Haman and so he kind of rubs it in you know he wanted to kill Mordecai you know Mordecai is the one who who saved your life who's who exposed a plot against your life that that the gallows is standing at the house of Haman then the king said hang him on it and they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai then the king's wrath subsided and it seems like that should be the end of the story but there's still three more chapters of source chapter 10 is only three verses long but you'd think the story would end at this point but there's still some unfinished business namely that there's still a date set when the Jews are to be annihilated and that date cannot be altered because that was a law of the Medes and Persians so that problem has to be resolved yet however the story would end happily at this point and almost like a fairy tale you know the bad guy you know he things went badly for him and then the good guys lived happily ever after and there's a sense in which this part of the story may be seen as a type of Christ Mordecai being like Christ and Haman being like the devil and that the devil sought to destroy Christ by hanging him on a cross and yet it was Satan who was destroyed at the cross the very instrument that he thought would be the death of Jesus and was the death of Jesus was not the destruction of Jesus the destruction of the devil himself through the cross Jesus triumphed over the principalities and powers it

says in Colossians 2 and verse 15 it also says that through death Jesus destroyed him that had the power of death that is the devil that is through Jesus being crucified he destroyed Satan Hebrews 2 14 says so the Bible teaches that by trying to destroy Jesus on the cross Satan himself became destroyed on the cross which might be the reason that we find this rather peculiar thing in the Old Testament when the Israelites were bitten by serpents and dying that God told Moses to make a bronze serpent and hang it on a banner pole a banner pole was a cross-shaped stick a stick upright with a cross beam to hang banners from and in the in Hebrew it was on a banner pole that this bronze serpent was placed and we know that Jesus said in John 3 15 that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so the Son of Man must be lifted up and so the serpent that was lifted up was like an emblem of what happened at the crucifixion of Christ the Son of Man being lifted up on the cross yet a serpent is not a very good emblem of Christ but of the devil and it may well be that the reason for the hanging of the serpent in God's mind was to depict the fact that through the crucifixion of Christ through Christ being lifted up the serpent himself would be destroyed on the cross through the cross and so Haman has prepared this gibbet for Mordecai to be destroyed on instead Haman is destroyed on it you know a poetic kind of a justice now chapter 8 on that day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman as the estate of Haman which was very wealthy as we found earlier in verse chapter 5 verse 11 Haman was talking about his great riches and the multitude of his children in the ways in which the king had promoted him well all of that estate was now given to Mordecai I was given to Esther excuse me Esther was given the house of Haman the enemy of the Jews and Mordecai came before the king for Esther had told how he was related to her so the king took off his signet ring which he had taken from Haman and gave it to Mordecai and Esther appointed Mordecai over the house of Haman so the house of Haman a great estate was given to Esther and she appointed Mordecai over it the king gave Mordecai his signet ring which was of course the authority to issue laws and documents in the name of the king the king's signet pressed into a wax seal was that which made something official and this king had been worn by Haman and now it's given to Mordecai so he's made the prime minister in the place of Haman now Esther spoke again to the king fell down at his feet and implored him with tears to counteract the evil plot of Haman the Agagite and the scheme which he had devised against the Jews and the king held out the golden scepter toward Esther so Esther arose and stood before the king and said if it pleased the king and if I have found favor in his sight and the thing seems right to the king and I am pleasing in his eyes let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman the son of Hamadathah the Agagite which he wrote to annihilate the Jews who are in all the provinces the king's provinces for how can I endure to see the evil that will come on my people or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred then King Ahasuerus said to the Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew indeed I have given Esther the house of Haman and they have hanged him on the gallows because he tried to lay his hand on the Jews you yourselves write a decree for the Jews as you please in the king's name and seal it with the king's signet ring for a letter which is written in the king's name and

sealed with the king's signet ring no one can revoke so the king's scribe were called at that time in the third month which is the month of Sivan on the 23rd day and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded to the Jews the satraps the governors and the princes of the provinces from India to Ethiopia 127 provinces in all which would include Judea of course to everyone in his own script to every people in their own language and to the Jews in their own script and language he called in scribes to write in different languages so Mordecai would dictate this law and all the scribes would write in it in in the various languages of the people to whom it would go out this was before the time that the whole Empire spoke one language it was Alexander the Great that conquered this king and actually Xerxes lost some serious and important battles to the Greeks because Alexander's expanding at that time his influence and after this time Alexander the Great conquered the whole realm actually I shouldn't say Alexander this time it was actually Alexander's predecessors the Greeks were expanding this is not quite in the lifetime of Alexander himself but the Greek Empire was was pressing against the Persian Empire and Xerxes fought some unsuccessful wars against the Greeks and lost ground and that gave eventually power to Alexander to come and conquer the region when Alexander did that he actually imposed the Greek language on the entire Empire no king had done that previously that is imposed his own language on all of his conquered territories so that within a generation or so after Alexander the entire Mediterranean world spoke Greek but previous to Alexander's time every place had their own language so when someone like the Babylonians or the Persians or the Assyrians conquered a region they had to have persons who spoke the local language to govern that region and so here also when laws were sent out to all 127 provinces they had to be written in the languages of the local people so they had a lot of scribes would come in Mordecai would dictate a law and these scribes would write it down of course translate it into the various languages it says and he wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus sealed it with the king's signet ring and sent letters by couriers on horseback riding on royal horses bred from swift steeds by these letters the king permitted the Jews who were in every city to gather together and protect their lives to destroy kill and annihilate all the forces of any people or province that would assault them both little children and women and to plunder their possessions on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus on the 13th day of the 12th month which was the month of Adar now that was the date that was set by Haman by the casting of lots that day was the day that the Jews would be prepared I think they were given about eight months advance notice here so they could actually fortify themselves and if I understand correctly and it's not entirely clear to me but I think this is what was arranged that what Haman had arranged was that anybody could rise up and kill Jews on that day and this was by official decree of the king of Persia so that the Jews would not be able to resist if the Jews resisted then all the armies of Persia would you know they'd be fighting against the Jews the Jews be fighting against a decree of the king it's rather it's more like the death sentence had been pronounced on the Jews and just as a criminal cannot defend himself against the electric chair against the police so the Jews would not be permitted without government reprisals of defending

themselves so that's what changed they were now given permission to defend themselves now who was it that was supposed to be doing the killing of the Jews this is not as clear to me as I wish it was but I think what that money was about was that Haman had offered to pay anybody who kills Jews and so it would be kind of on a voluntary basis for various people in the Persian Empire to rise up and kill their Jewish neighbors and they'd be there's like a price on the Jews head it'd be like they'd get paid for killing Jews and so every citizen was had the opportunity being a hitman and to be paid to kill his Jewish neighbors however the Jews were now given and the Jews would not be allowed to resist but now a decree was made that the Jews could resist and obviously nobody had to kill Jews it's it was a voluntary thing people who wanted to rise and get paid you know for killing off the Jews could collect a fee but now of course they're gonna be fighting against armed resistance that have permission from the government to resist them and of course they're fighting against the very people who are now ruling the country Mordecai and Queen Esther who are Jews and so it now is not going to be such a the people are not to be quite so eager to rise up against the Jews knowing that they but some did and there was fighting but I think that probably this decree and the fact that Mordecai and Esther were now known to be Jews in high government positions in Persian no doubt changed a lot of people's minds who might otherwise have been willing to get involved in this slaughter I think a lot of people decide to bow out because of this we'll find that to be so anyway it says a copy of the document verse 13 was to be issued as a decree in every province and published for all people so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies then the couriers who rode on royal horses went out hastened and pressed on by the king's command and the decree was issued in Shushan the Citadel now Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white with a great crown of gold and garment of fine linen and purple and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad now notice the difference between the citizens reaction to Haman's decree which was back in chapter 3 when when it was announced publicly that all the Jews were to be exterminated on a certain day the very last line in chapter 3 said that the city of Shushan was perplexed it's like the city was not really favorable toward this decree and it was weird they're confused why are we going to kill these decent Jewish folks but now that this decree has gone out with equal publicity that the Jews can defend themselves the city is happy about that the Shushan rejoiced and was glad and the Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor and in every province and city wherever the king command the king's command and decree came the Jews had joy and gladness a feast and a holiday then many of the people of the land became Jews because fear of the Jews fell upon them that is they they had fear of Mordecai who is the prime minister and a Jew the Queen Esther who is a Jew and the king who is quite favorable toward the Jews obviously if his queen was Jewish and his prime minister was Jewish and so he was favorable toward the Jews so if you rise up to kill the Jews you're obviously taking sides against the king and the Queen and the prime minister some still did it because it was legal for them to do that they could make some money at it but a lot of people were

decided I don't know I don't think so and some of them even converted to Judaism it says many of the people of the land became Jews it reminds me of when Constantine the Emperor of Rome became a Christian many people in Rome became Christians because the Emperor is Christian it's politically safer to be of the same religious convictions as the king and so although the king here is not said to have converted to Judaism there was sufficient Jewish authority in the palace that some people thought it would be to their advantage to become Jews also so they became proselytes I guess a chapter 9 now in the 12th month that is the month of Adar on the 13th day the time came for the king's command in his decree to be executed so this was the fateful day would anyone rise up against the Jews in the present changed circumstances well some did on the day that the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them the opposite occurred and that the Jews themselves overpowered those who hated them the Jews gathered together in the cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm and no one could withstand them because fear of them fell upon all the people and all the officials of the provinces the satraps the governor's and all those doing the king's work helped the Jews because the fear of Mordecai fell on them so all the local officials throughout all the 127 provinces they helped the Jews and there is this like civil war going on and the local officials are supporting the Jews because they feared the Prime Minister Mordecai for Mordecai was great in the king's palace and his fame spread throughout all the provinces for this man Mordecai became increasingly prominent thus the Jews defeated all their enemies with the stroke of the sword with slaughter and destruction and did what they pleased with them who hated them and in Shushan the Citadel the Jews killed and destroyed 500 men also it gives the names of the ten sons of Haman who are Parshan Datha Dalthan Azpatha Porathah Adalia Aradatha Parmashah Arisai Eredi and the Jezathah these were the ten sons of Haman the son of Hamadathah the enemy of the Jews they killed those sons but they did not lay a hand on the plunder so the Jews didn't plunder but they did avenge themselves physically in warfare on the day the number of on that day the number of those who were killed in Shushan the Citadel was brought to the king and the king said to Queen Esther the Jews have killed and destroyed 500 men in Shushan the Citadel and the ten sons of Haman what have they done in the rest of the king's provinces now what is your petition it shall be granted to you or what is your further request it shall be done then Esther said if it pleases the king let it be granted to the Jews who are in Shushan to do again tomorrow according to today's decree and let Haman's ten sons be hanged on the gallows so the king commanded this to be done the decree was issued in Shushan and they hanged Haman's ten sons now that doesn't seem very nice but in those days the danger of reprisals from the from the offspring of political leaders that had been killed was very great we see it in the stories of the books of Kings and so forth that whenever a son is left alive of the of the previous administration of the previous dynasty there's the danger that he may find supporters and rise up and try to overthrow the existing dynasty it was just common practice it was just political practice that you purge the entire family of those who were the previous people in power so that those their offspring don't rise

up against you later on and the Jews who were in Shushan gathered together again on the 14th day of the month of Adar and killed 300 men at Shushan but they did not lay hand on the plunder the remainder of the Jews in the king's provinces gathered together and protected their lives they had rest from their enemies and killed 75,000 of their enemies I guess throughout the Empire but they did not lay hand on the plunder this was the 13th day of the month of Adar and on the 14th day of the month they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness now again like I said I'm not entirely clear on how this was carried out because it's not really to my mind made very clear I may be wrong in saying that it was voluntary of people to rise up it's possible that Haman had already distributed the money to people who had taken the money in agreement to be hitmen basically these people had said okay I'll take the money I'll kill the Jews in my neighborhood and if so those might be the ones who were described as those who hated the Jews because it sounds as if the Jews kind of took the initiative and attacking those who hated them and killing them although I'm not sure that that's what happened here it the way it's worded kind of sounds that way to me that the Jews knew who they were they knew who the ones were who were contracted to kill them and they attacked them and killed them preemptively perhaps I'm not really sure how this was carried out but when it was all over no one was resisting the Jews in the Persian Empire anymore and there were more Jews than ever before because many Persians themselves became Jews by the way the fact that Persians could become Jews should be instructive to us that throughout history there have been many people who don't have Jewish blood who've become Jews the Persians had no Jewish blood in them except a few that may have intermarried with Jews but by converting to Judaism they became part of the Jewish community and of course intermarried with the Jews and how many times this kind of thing has happened throughout history nobody knows except it's happened a great deal so that there's been a tremendous admixture of Jewish blood with Gentile blood over the years and it's very difficult to determine whether there's pure Jewish blood anymore in any family and or even what we would consider to be pure Jewish blood if a person's half Jewish I mean they have a Jewish mother and a Gentile father they're considered Jewish but they're really only half Jewish their daughters are considered Jewish if they get married to Gentiles their children be called Jewish too but they're only a quarter Jewish by blood and likewise the more generations you go down people will still be called Jewish if they have a Jewish mother but the Jewish mother might be only one quarter or one eighth or one sixteenth Jewish by blood but there's been a tremendous dilution according to scripture and history of the Jewish race by this kind of thing people converting to Judaism or marrying Jews but the Jews who were at Shushan assembled together on the 13th day as well as on the 14th day and on the 15th day of the month they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness therefore the Jews of the villages who dwelt in the unwall'd town celebrated the 14th day of the month of Adar as a day of gladness and feasting as a holiday and for sending presents to one another now you might say how could they be so happy about having just had this bloody conflict but you have to remember that they were for about 10 or 11 months under the shadow of an edict that

said they're all going to be exterminated what could they do they couldn't go anywhere the whole empire was the whole the whole world that was accessible to them was under the Persian rule and there's nowhere to go it was just they were looking they're counting the days till they and their children and their wives and their families and the parents are just be wiped out so this fact that they ended up fighting and killing a lot of people apparently none of the people they killed were innocent ugly as that must have been must have been a tremendous relief to the Jews to have lived for many months under the shadow of a death warrant for no reason other than that they were Jewish they had done no crimes I mean we try to picture the situation in our own time if anybody who had been born to Christian parents even someone who wasn't choosing to be Christian now but if they've been born to Christian parents there was a an edict that 12 months from now everyone has got to go turn themselves in to be you know killed because their head Christian parents and that'd be what a weird mentality everyone would be living under who had that particular thing hanging over their head and if that changed then of course it'd be a great day of celebration and Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus both near and far to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly the 14th and 15 days of the month of Adar as the days on which the Jews had rest from their enemies as the month which was turned from sorrow to joy for them as from morning to a holiday that they should make them days of feasting and joy of sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor this feast came to be called Purim it's a two-day feast that the Jews still celebrate and this book is there to tell us how and why so the Jews accepted the custom which they'd begun as Mordecai had written to them because Haman the son of Hamadathah the Agagite the enemy of all the Jews had plotted against the Jews to annihilate them and had cast Pur that is lots to consume them and destroy them now Purim Purim the name of the feast is simply plural for Pur lot is Pur and in a Hebrew language you add in at the end to make it plural so lots so Purim means lots because that day had been selected by casting lots but when Esther came before the king and he commanded by letter that this wicked plot be which Haman had devised against the Jews should return on his own head and that he and his son should be hanged on the gallows so they called these days Purim after the name Pur therefore because of all the words of this letter what they had seen concerning this matter and what had happened to them the Jews established and imposed it upon themselves and their descendants and all who should join them that without fail they should celebrate these two days every year according to the written instructions and according to the prescribed time that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation every family every province and every city that these days of Purim should not fail to be observed among the Jews and that the memory of them should not perish among their descendants then Queen Esther the daughter of Abahel with Mordecai the Jew wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim and Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews to the 127 provinces of the kingdoms of Ahasuerus with words of peace and truth to confirm these days of Purim at their appointed time as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had

prescribed for them and as they had decreed for themselves and their descendants concerning matters of their fasting and lamenting so the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim and it was written in the book and thus we have the foundation of that Jewish feast now it's interesting about that Jewish feast that the Jews of course celebrated it's not one of the feasts that Moses prescribed the feast of tabernacles and the feast of Passover and the feast of Pentecost are all feasts that were ordained by God through God's Prophet Moses the lawgiver it was a law given by God that they should keep those festivals Purim however was established simply on human authority that of Mordecai now Mordecai was a Jew at least and a pious one he was a Jewish leader but it was established on the authority of the king of Persia with his signet ring on the document it's rather interesting and the Jews still celebrate that although it's a holiday that had nothing to do with God's law in other words if the Jews did not keep Purim they would be violating only the Persian Kings decree not God likewise the Jews today celebrate Hanukkah which celebrates another event much later in history after the Maccabean War which happened you know hundreds of years after this so the Jews have in addition to the laws that Moses gave in the festivals that he had on their counter other festivals by which they commemorate other events now one thing good about having a holiday that's been kept from earliest times without a break is that in a sense it confirms the historicity of what they're celebrating because why else would they be celebrating it where did Purim come from why would it be called that what did it mean if not this I mean Purim has been celebrated by the Jews from that time until this and although there may be things about this story that seem like how likely is that you know how likely is that that a Jew would become the queen of Persia and through her intercession the Jews be saved from an evil man like Haman I mean it sounds like a fairy story but but one of the things that confirms that it's historically true is that the Jews have celebrated this very story from the time that it happened until now and if the story didn't happen what would be the occasion for starting the celebration you know it's it's like the continuous practice the celebration is a historical confirmation of the events that they're celebrating same thing with Passover same thing with any of these feasts that commemorate some great deliverance including Hanukkah these things why would these feasts be practiced why would these holidays still be observed and why would they have been deserved all observed all the time if the events that they're celebrating had never happened what then would originate them anyway the last chapter has only three verses it says and King Ahasuerus imposed tribute on the land and on the islands of the sea now all the acts of his power and his might and the account of the greatness of Mordecai to which the king advanced him are they not written the book of the chronicles of the kings of media and Persia for Mordecai the Jew was second to King Ahasuerus and was great among the Jews and well received by the multitude of his brethren seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his kindred it's interesting it says that the position of Mordecai and all the great position authority that was given is recorded in the chronicles of the kings of media and Persia now the writer of this book lived at a time when those records were apparently available perhaps they were maybe yet found

although not likely because unless they were copied as assiduously as the Bible was the documents to be so thoroughly dilapidated by now that you know they certainly wouldn't exist anymore the only way ancient documents like this ever survived is by people having some motivation to copy them and copy them over hundreds of years because the copies become old and this all happened 500 years before Christ or more and that being so I mean even even documents are written at the time of Christ like the Dead Sea Scrolls have barely survived and in very poor condition so you know the reason we have the Bible is because although it was written back that long ago there was someone motivated to keep copies reproduced up until more modern times but what motive would anyone have for recopying the chronicles of the kings of media and Persia through the centuries especially after Persia fell it was no longer an important Empire why would the Greeks keep you know copying these chronicles of the Medes and Persian you know it's these chronicles are not likely ever to be found but they certainly existed at one time and the author knew of them and knew that if people of a slightly later time wish to check out the details of this story you could find it in the Chronicles of the Medes and the Persians now Mordecai here is made out to be the big hero it's actually Esther who put her life on the line although Mordecai was very important in the story too and encouraged her to do it but this story is a little bit like the story of Joseph in a way both Esther and Joseph were ordinary Jews without any political rank in a foreign country Joseph in Egypt and Esther in Persia both of them through the providence of God were raised to positions of very high authority high influence in the pagan world and both of them were used by God to save their people Joseph saved his people from a famine and Esther from extermination so there's there's actually a number of details in the story that some people feel are intended to be seen as similar to to that you know for example Mordecai got his name written down though he wasn't immediately remembered by exposing a plot by two servants of the king who wanted to kill him Joseph encountered two servants of King Pharaoh in prison one of them apparently had made a plot to kill the king and but it was through Joseph's encounter with them that he was later remembered and brought to authority so in a sense both Mordecai and Joseph through you know contact with a couple of the king's officials were later did things that were later remembered and had a lot to do with the with their elevation to influence anyway one thing I like to say about this also before we're done and we are essentially done is that in later centuries some Jewish writer added a prologue and an epilogue to the book of Esther this prologue and this epilogue are actually attached to the documents now many ancient documents of Esther have these on them they are what we call apocryphal editions just like certain whole books are apocryphal books like the books of Maccabees or Tobit which the actually the Roman Catholic Bible includes them as scripture but Protestants don't recognize them as they're called apocryphal books so there's portions of Esther that exist in the Roman Catholic Bible that are not included in the Protestant Bible because they're apocryphal and the reason they're called apocryphal is they weren't written at the same time they're not originally part of the book the book was apparently written in the 5th century BC but it was probably in the 2nd century BC that

the apocryphal prologue and epilogue of Esther were written and attached to it so that it's now part of the documents but it's written by a different hand and what's interesting about it is it's written in what we call apocalyptic style now apocalyptic style is that style that the book of Revelation and the book of Daniel and the book of Zechariah are written in apocalyptic style was actually a very popular style of writing among the Jews in the first and second centuries BC and when the book of Revelation was written in the first century AD it was following a style that was very common and popular among the Jews called apocalyptic and the apocalyptic writings usually involved dreams and or visions where there were angels and monsters and beasts and dragons and things like that which were playing out a drama that had symbolic meaning now there is value in noticing these apocalyptic writings from the time before Christ because we have a tremendous difficulty in interpreting one of our books of the Bible the book of Revelation which is written in that style and as Westerners we tend to take writings more or less literally and so Western Christians have tended to take Revelation relatively I say relatively really there's tremendous compromise even in this but somewhat literally because we do not recognize the style but one thing about the apocalyptic apocryphal additions to Esther that is helpful is that we know what the story really was but we also have the apocalyptic telling of the story in these apocryphal additions to it I want to read them to you because the prologue that is attached to Esther by this later hand is written in an apocalyptic style and it professes to be Mordecai writing it it's another thing about the apocryphal books they often claim to be written by somebody who didn't write them but because the writer attached this as an introduction to the book of Esther he pretended to be Mordecai and he said at the beginning that he had a dream now in this prologue we have him relating the dream that he had and it sounds like something directly out of the book of Revelation because it's a typical apocalyptic style of dream but then at the end of the book of Esther he adds up an epilogue at the end just a paragraph where he explains the connection of the dream to the story itself and how this is an advantage to us is that we see exactly how these apocalyptic writers would use imagery to depict ordinary historical events let me read this to you this is how the the apocryphal prologue to Esther reads it's it's that Mordecai giving a dream that he's that he said he had it's not really Mordecai it's a later writer claiming to be him he says quote behold noise and confusion thunders and earthquake tumult upon the earth or tumult and behold two great dragons came forward both ready to fight and they roared terribly and at the roaring every nation prepared for war to fight against the nation of the righteous and behold a day of darkness and gloom tribulation and distress affliction and great tumult upon the earth and the whole righteous nation was troubled they feared the evils that threatened them and were ready to perish then they cried to God and from their cry as though from a tiny spring there came a great river with abundant water light came and the Sun rose and the lowly were exalted and consumed those held in honor that's the dream and that is presented as a introduction to the book of Esther and at the end we have this epilogue that the same writer adds after the story is closed after chapter 10 of Esther they add this little bit he says I remember the dream that I had

concerning these matters and none of them has failed to be fulfilled the tiny stream which became a river and there was light and the Sun and abundant water the river is Esther whom the king married and made Queen the two dragons are Haman and myself the nations are those gathered to destroy the name of the Jews and my nation this is Israel who cried out to God and were saved unquote now what's interesting about this is there's an actual story a historical story with ordinary events in it but the apocryphal dream is written in an apocalyptic style similar to that of Revelation there's dragons roaring at each other and all the nations of the world are mobilized and there's earthquakes and there's lightnings and there's thunders and there's this little river that becomes a great river and water I mean all those are images you find in the book of Revelation or for that matter in all the apocalyptic writings of the Jews there are many apocalyptic writings the Jews that should not be regarded as a scripture and they're not but they all use this kind of imagery so when you read the book of Revelation written in the first century AD you recognize that the Jews and Christians who are acquainted with this apocalyptic literature would have immediately found the book agreeable with the kind of literature they were used to reading and of course they would not think of it as literal any more than that you know Haman and Mordecai were literally dragons or Esther was literally a little spring that became a river and so these additions to the book of Esther actually become instructive for us in just understanding how the Jewish mind used apocalyptic imagery to describe events that we actually know the story behind and so you know that that can be helpful to us and warn us to not be overly literal in our approach to other apocalyptic writings including the book of Revelation well we come to the end of Esther now