

Esther 5 – Complete Reversal and Restoration

READ

We love a turnaround story: 5 years ago, they were going to get a divorce, but things really turned around and now their marriage is flourishing. His finances were in the red and he was going to declare bankruptcy, but things really turned around and now business is booming. The doctors had given up hope, but then a miracle happened, and things have really turned around. We love those stories.

Our God is a God of turnaround stories. Our God is a God of Redemption. The gospel is a turnaround story. The history of the world in the hands of God is a turnaround story. Esther is a turnaround story.

Esther, a person of breathtaking beauty.... a Christlike figure. Prefiguring.

But the story also shines forth as a picture of what God has in store cosmically. Esther is a mini-picture of the great reversal of fortunes, the end of the redemptive story of the whole world, when all is made well once again.

Complete REVERSAL IN THE BOOK OF ESTHER

Everything turns around. Haman's plot to catch the Jews comes unraveled and catches him in a net. Every evil he planned comes undone.

How to Read the Bible Book by Book:

You will hardly be able to miss other, although less humorous, touches of irony: Haman, who intends to destroy the Jews, ends up destroying himself and his family; the gallows erected for Mordecai are those on which Haman himself is hanged; Haman's edict was intended to plunder the wealth of the Jews—instead his own estate falls into Jewish hands; Haman, in writing the script for his own honor and recognition, in fact writes the script for Mordecai, and instead of receiving honor Haman must lead Mordecai through the streets of Susa on horseback. And these are not all of them, so be looking for other such moments as you read.

NIV Study Bible Chart

3:10 – the king Gives Haman his ring	8:2 – The king gives Mordecai the same ring
3:12 – Haman summons the king's scribes	8:9 – Mordecai summons the kings scribes
3:12 - letters written, sealed with ring	8:10 – letters written, sealed with same ring
3:13 – The Jews to be killed on one day	8:11 –the Jews can kill their enemies in one day
3:14 – Haman's decree as publicly law	8:13 – Mordecai's decree as public law
3:15 – couriers go out in haste	8:14 – couriers go out in haste

3:15 – the city of Susa bewildered	8:15 – the city of Susa rejoices
4:1 – Mordecai wears sackcloth and ashes	8:15 – Mordecai wears royal robes
4:1 - Mordecai goes through city crying	6:11 – Mordecai led through city in honor
5:14 – Zeresh advises Mordecai’s death	6:13 - Zeresh predicts Haman’s ruin
4:3 – Jews mourned throughout Empire	8:16 – Jews celebrated throughout Empire

The repetition, mirroring of the earlier peril highlights the reversal that is taking place. The threat is turned to blessing. The villain’s plot engulfs him. Those who honored themselves are cast down. Those who were humbled are raised up. This sort of rebounding of sin is seen as part of God’s wisdom in the Wisdom literature:

Proverb 11

- ³ The integrity of the upright guides them,
but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.
- ⁵ The righteousness of the blameless makes their paths straight,
but the wicked are brought down by their own wickedness.
- ⁸ The righteous person is rescued from trouble,
and it falls on the wicked instead.
- ⁹ With their mouths the godless destroy their neighbors,
but through knowledge the righteous escape.
- ¹⁰ When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices;
when the wicked perish, there are shouts of joy.
- ²¹ Be sure of this: The wicked will not go unpunished,
but those who are righteous will go free.

Psalm 30:11-12 - You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever!

In Esther, we see those in Exile turn to Revival. From a Jewish website:

Additionally, Haman’s edict catalyzed a spiritual revival among the Jews. In a sense, this was even more significant than the Covenant at Sinai—an overwhelming spiritual experience that compelled the Jews to accept the Torah—since it occurred of their own volition, even as they were scattered among the Persian people and immersed in their culture. It was in the merit of this spiritual reawakening that God orchestrated their salvation.

Our God is a God of redemptive turn-around. He loves to reclaim, redeem, and restore. Out of the worst possible situations, he is able to save completely to the uttermost.

So, we pray. We cling. We trust.

THERE IS STILL NEED FOR A BETTER REDEEMER

So, here at the end of Esther, we not only find that the death sentence hanging over them has been taken away. They are also no longer **outsiders** but **insiders**. They were strangers, but have now been given a prominent place, because they are well-represented. They now have an advocate in the highest place.

Mordecai was in a place of power, to reign over them and secure their protection and well-being. He is second only to Xerxes himself. He made sure to put an end to all that threatened the lives and livelihood of the Jews. But, Mordecai did not remain on the throne, did he? He was a sinner and eventually died. Mordecai could not bring full, complete, permanent kingdom stability. He could not be a complete Savior. If you are familiar with the Apocrypha, historical Jewish books, the Jews were still oppressed, under the thumb of foreign powers. And when you get to the New Testament, the Jews were under the thumb of Roman oppression.

And this episode with Esther was not full and complete. Esther was the breathtaking advocate who interceded for her people when they faced certain doom. She saved them from one event, but ... She is still in exile in a pagan land. She is still married to Ahasuerus a leering, adulterous, lecherous, pagan egotistical, self-absorbed man. There is still something wrong for her that will not be made right in this life. Her rescue was not a complete rescue. This story is not a story about Esther's complete triumph.

Things have certainly improved. Mordecai has influence and power. Esther is a breathtaking advocate. But, rescue is incomplete and nothing is permanent.

We see these halfway redemptions throughout the Old Testament. Salvation comes in that situation, but it only stretches so far.

- Noah's salvation only went so far. It was only a flood. Did not take away sin. Shortly after that, the tower of Babel, pride.
- Joseph only went so far. It was only a famine. Did not take away brokenness. Shortly after that, they were enslaved.
- Moses only went so far. It was only the Egyptians. Soon, it was the Amalekites, and Achan, and the Canaanites.
- David only went so far. It was only Goliath. But there was still Saul, and there was still David himself.
- Esther only went so far. Haman. Ahasuerus. The Persians.

We need a better Noah, and a better Moses, and a Better David, and a Better Esther, and a better Mordecai. We need a better savior, one who can save our saviors, because they couldn't save themselves. We need Jesus. And that is where Esther is pointing us, lining us up.

JESUS IS THE BETTER ESTHER.

In the end, we see the themes of the gospel in this passage pointing us to Jesus in two ways:

- 1. We see a picture of Jesus taking away the curse hanging over us.**

The law of the Persians could not be overturned once made. So the question arises: A law, though unjust and unfair, is permanent and unable to be repealed is made which condemns all of God's people to destruction, so How can they ever be rescued? God provides a way. He raises up an intermediary, a mediator who represents both sides, the royal family and the condemned people, and a way is found for the people to be protected and saved.

Does that sound familiar? Except, in the case of the gospel, it is even more difficult. The Jews did not deserve death at Haman's decree. But all of us do deserve death because we are truly guilty of God. The law of God cannot be repealed, and it would be wrong, unjust, and futile for anyone to try to stand against the execution of the sentence against the condemned. The law says, justly and rightly, that the guilty are condemned, and all of God's people being guilty are condemned. There IS no way out. The law cannot be repealed, but the people can be redeemed.

So, what did God do? He sent someone who represents both parties, the royal family and the condemned perpetrators, and this advocate took on himself the just judgment that we deserved for our crimes. Thereby rescuing all of God's believing people from the sentence passed against them.

Mordecai came up with a way to rescue his people. Jesus is the way he rescued his people. He took on all of the punishment, all of the sin, all of the guilt for his people. His people will not be redeemed by defending their lives but by Jesus giving his own life. He was a more complete Advocate. Someone who interceded for us and accomplished our rescue. We were under the curse of death, but we have one who made a way. We needed a better advocate, one who not only would intercede for the deserving but one who would intercede for the undeserving. One who would intercede for the guilty. At great cost to himself. He is a Better Esther.

2. We see a picture of Jesus permanently removing the evil that threatens us.

This theme is pulled all the way through scripture. God is removing the brokenness of the world. All of the effects of sin, the sources of sin. In the end, in Revelation 21, I am making everything new.

No, Jesus defeated the evil behind the evils. He will remove him so that he has no more influence whatsoever. He is completely removed from the landscape of the cosmos. Crush the head of the serpent. He made a public spectacle of them at the cross. In his weakness he took away their power. By his death he made us alive. By his wounds we have been healed. By his rejection we have been accepted. His is the ultimate reversal, the ultimate renewal.

REMOVAL OF ALL THAT IS BAD

BLOODTHIRSTY ESTHER

Start with the elephant in the room: Bloodthirsty Esther.

- Haman. I'm going to kill Mordecai and all his people.
- Esther. I'm going to kill Haman and all his people.

Bloodthirsty Esther. What are we supposed to do with that? It just seems like a way of revenge, like a way of unleashing her anger and fear and greed, like genocide.

- 9:6 – 500 men were killed in Susa alone
- 9:12 – the ten sons of Haman were killed and later impaled
- 9:15 – the next day, 300 men in Susa
- 9:16 – 75,000 men throughout Empire

So, what do we do with that?

1. Esther's request is for **Protection**.

Now, I feel no need to defend the actions of any human personage in the Bible, knowing that they are all flawed but Jesus, but Look at Esther's plea in 8:5-6: ⁵“**If it pleases the king,**” she said, “**and if he regards me with favor and thinks it the right thing to do, and if he is pleased with me, let an order be written overruling the dispatches that Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king's provinces.**” ⁶“**For how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family?**” Her request is simply to overturn the un-overturnable law. So, the king gave them room to make a law to meet the other law head on. Not to overturn it, but to meet it.

9:5 – those who hated them.

2. Mordecai's Edict was for **Defense**

Persian law said that a traitor's wealth was seized by the crown, as seen in **8:1 where Xerxes gave Queen Esther the estate of Haman.** And in 8:11, the edict of Mordecai included the provision **to plunder the property of their enemies.** The passage is careful to tell us several times, that, even though by law the Jews had the right to kill their enemies and take their property, the Jews did not seize the property of their enemies. 9:10, 15, 16 They only defended themselves from those who tried to do them harm.

3. Mordecai's Edict flowed from **Obedience to God's Word**

The other religious factor you will want to watch for is the author's recognition that the action of Mordecai and Esther—and the Jews who are spared from annihilation—is an expression of the holy war. This comes out first in the conflict between Haman and Mordecai, who carry on the centuries-old conflict between the Israelites and the Amalekites. As the first to attack Israel after her deliverance from Egypt (Exod 17:8-16), the Amalekites came to be viewed as the epitome of the surrounding nations that stood against her. But especially

this story needs to be read against the background of 1 Samuel 15. It is probably not incidental to this story that Haman is regularly called an Agagite (an intentional link to the Amalekite king in 1 Sam 15 whom Saul refused to slay?), whereas Mordecai—as Saul was—is a Benjamite who also belongs to the line of another Kish (1 Samuel 9:1-2). *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*

This is how you are also to understand the narrative in chapters 8-10. In a way similar to the narrative of Joshua, the Jews assemble in all the cities of the empire and “no one could stand against them” (9:2). That they saw this as a continuation of the holy war is highlighted by the author in his repeated notation that they would not touch the plunder (9:10,15, 16; cf. Saul's action in 1 Sam 15:7-9), even though the king had decreed that they should have it (Esth 8:11). In the holy war the firstfruits of the plunder belong to God (cf. Deut 13:16). *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*

4. It is clear, too, that this was not **Racially Motivated**.

8:17 - **And many from the peoples of the country declared themselves Jews, for fear of the Jews had fallen on them.** This wasn't just compulsion or duplicity. It seems that Many of the people watching all of this transpire became Jews. Wait! What? Gentiles became Jews. They converted. They became followers of the Lord God.

5. It was **Permanent Protection**, a necessary **House Cleaning**.

The Death of Haman's sons and hanging them on the pole was not an act of revenge, or brutality, or escalation. We have to get out of our minds individualism, being able to decide for yourself, etc. We form identity based on finding ourselves, inventing ourselves. Those ancient cultures, and modern traditionalist societies, by conforming, finding your place in that structure, meeting its rules and expectations, living out its values. So, children did not reinvent themselves. They were their culture. They were their traditions. They were duty bound to carry it on. Why converting to Christ is a death penalty in some places in the world.

We see this with Haman. He carried the old hatred, the old grudge, the old war, the old disgrace. This is my fight. And it was his children's fight.

Haman, tried to use the helpless situation of the Israelites against them. It is in some ways the final biblically recorded attempt to destroy the Jews before the coming of the Messiah.

6:13 – Haman's wife says something key: You can't stand against the Jews. Why would she say such a thing? It wasn't scorn. *I am so ashamed of you*. It was about Mordecai being a Jew. You will fall, not because of them, but because there is someone unnamed who will not allow it. That divine passive. Mordecai didn't say it. Neither did she. But agency is still implied. She knew it. How would she know such

a thing? The ancient texts and prophecies. So did Haman. But he could not acknowledge it. Why didn't Haman heed these words? He was hardhearted.

THE SIN BENEATH THE SURFACE

9:1, 5. Now in the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's command and edict were about to be carried out, on the very day when the enemies of the Jews hoped to gain the mastery over them, the reverse occurred: the Jews gained mastery over those who hated them.

The idea seems to be that there was a persistent, acceptable oppression of the Jews during this time. So, the people had the edict: it's okay to kill the Jews and take their property. They could have swept right in. The Jews had no right to stop us.

But then, the edict came allowing the Jews to defend themselves. But, the original edict stands that I can kill them and take their stuff. It's not wrong. I'll take my chances. I won't be held accountable.

Haman's plot aroused the sinful selfishness of all of these people around. This was an evil in their hearts, aroused by opportunity. This evil was lying low, but ever present, as is all sin. Their sin. Our sin. My sin. Your sin.

Sin is extensive and deep. We just have all sorts of reasons for masking it, framing it, downplaying it, justifying it. Haman couldn't just say to Xerxes, I hate that Mordecai because he won't bow to me and that makes me angry so I want to kill all of the Jews. So, he has the laws changed to get what he wants.

What would you do if you wouldn't get in trouble, never held accountable? What if the laws could be changed, like in Nazi Germany or in Rwanda. What if you could redefine it so that it wasn't considered a crime or a taboo anymore?

What would you do if no one would ever find out that you did it? Think about the things that restrain our sin: Consequences. Public knowledge. Shame. Embarrassment. The idea that other people might know and shun us. This is why online addictions are so rampant. It is not just the nature of technology. It is the nature of secrecy. No one will ever find out. No one can see.

What if you could hide it? That is often how sin awakens in the human heart: No one will ever know. It latches onto those ideas. What if the constraints of appearance, culture, reputation, and consequences could be thrown off through secrecy?

The evils of the human heart are in every human heart.
Father Brown - I am the murderer. It is in me. If I can put myself in that situation, and see my own motives, my own heart, understand the person.

The evils of the human heart are in every human heart.

GOD'S INTERVENING JUSTICE

We read these words and they sound like jihad. They sound violent, petty even, bloodthirsty. That's not it. It is a recognition of the unrelenting nature of evil.

“The picture of Jesus as the coming Judge is the central feature of another absolutely vital and nonnegotiable Christian belief: that there will indeed be a judgment in which the creator God will set the world right once and for all. The word judgment carries negative overtones for a good many people in our liberal and postliberal world. We need to remind ourselves that throughout the Bible, not least in the Psalms, God’s coming judgment is a good thing, something to be celebrated, longed for, yearned over. It causes people to shout for joy and the trees of the field to clap their hands. In a world of systematic injustice, bullying, violence, arrogance, and oppression, the thought that there might come a day when the wicked are firmly put in their place and the poor and weak are given their due is the best news there can be. Faced with a world in rebellion, a world full of exploitation and wickedness, a good God must be a God of judgment.” Surprised By Hope, Wright

God drove them out of the land primarily because their practices were “detestable” in his sight—gross idolatry, sorcerers and mediums, sexual perversions, even sacrificing their own children to the gods (Deut. 18:9–14). *Is God Guilty of Genocide?* Michael Krueger

THE REASON FOR HELL

Hell is not for the weak. Hell is not for people who make mistakes or have failed. Hell is not for the struggler, the straggler, the broken, those whose consciences bother them. Hell is not the place for people who messed up their lives. Those are the people Jesus came to seek and to save. He came for the lost. Jesus came for the broken person whose heart needs grace. The sheep are the people who recognize, receive, and delight in the good news about forgiveness of sins and acceptance in Jesus.

Hell is for the persistent, the relentless, the ruthless, the hard-hearted, the proud who willfully stand against the peace and harmony that God intends for the world. Hell is the removal of the obstinate person whose heart is hostile to the things of God.

Were the Nazi's going to stop? No. Why did they stop? They were made to stop.

We tend to focus on Hell as a punishment for sin. It is that, but the primary reason for Hell is to remove the relentless influence and impact of sin from what God has in store for his people in the kingdom of God that Romans 14 succinctly describes

as a place of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. That is the nature of the kingdom that God has in store.

But, think about the world as it presently is: Brutality, cruelty, sex trafficking, child pornography, children pressed into militia groups, terrorism, drug cartels, rape, murder, corruption, corporate greed, slave labor, environmental pollution, threat of war, loss of moral center, and the list goes on. God did not make the world this way.

God's final purpose in salvation is not simply getting us to heaven when we die but world reclamation, transformation, and restoration of all that is beautiful, life-giving, joyful, and excellent. For this to exist, God must remove anything that harms, distorts, dehumanizes, and threatens these values. Hell exists because it serves God's plan of Kingdom prosperity. This is what the image of the fire of Hell in the Bible means.

Matthew 13:40-41 - As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil, and throw them into the fiery furnace.

Think about it: What happens when you put something in a fire? It never comes back.

ILL – On NPR, I heard about a married couple who lost their entire home in those California fires of last year. They were Art collectors. The interviewer said that they once enjoyed taking people on a tour of their artwork. They took the NPR reporter on a different kind of tour, a tour of ashes. They walked through ashes and rubble. Everything was consumed. They lost it all. It is never coming back.

Hell means that everything that causes grief, harm, strife, pain, or death is never coming back. We get it. There can be no happiness or peace until all that causes pain is removed. The evil won't stop, so it must be stopped. And the catharsis comes at the end, with victory, and after the victory, celebration. And after the celebration, peace.

That is the image of fire. God is throwing all of the harmful things into the fire. They will burn up and never come back. They will never gain any traction. They will never get a foothold. They will never have another opportunity. They will just be gone. They will not come back in some other form. They will not adapt or evolve. Evil will just be gone.

The world will be well once again. There will be peace. There will be flourishing. There will be joy. And it will be permanent.

The justice for a person's life.

This sounds fantastic, doesn't it? But it is still troubling to us because Jesus is clear that people will also be removed from the world when Jesus remakes it. For anyone with a soul, this is troubling. But we understand why it is necessary. At a deep level, we all know, that a person who persists in threatening the peace has to be removed.

ILL – Everyone knows this. This is why, even at Disney World, people have to follow rules. You can get kicked out of Disney World. All of the Disney parks enforce expectations to promote park happiness. Let me give you three reasons that Disney will eject you from one of their parks:

1. Getting out of a slow-moving ride. While I worked there a teenage girl got killed doing that. You will be kicked out.
2. Attacking a costumed performer will get you kicked out.
3. Swimming in a fountain, pool or moat will not only get you kicked out, but could get you banned. People have died in those areas.

And because the sins of the human heart are in every human heart, God sent his Son to be a better Esther and to be a better Mordecai.

This is why the gospel of Jesus Christ is good news for me. Jesus took my hell to give me his heaven. Jesus experienced Hell for me. He paid my sin. He paid my debt. He paid my penalty, so I can experience his presence, his glory, his acceptance. Jesus went into that fire carrying all of your sins, all of the guilt, all of the penalty. It was burned up. There is nothing left for you. There is no record of it. And it all burned up and is never coming back. It is gone. You have a clean slate. You are not in jeopardy each time you blow it. That penalty has been paid.

Hell is not for sinners. It is for sinners who persist in sin and refuse to come to God and to take life on their own terms. I am a sinner. I have failed over and over. I have failed against family and friends. I have wronged church and community. I have sinned against God. But Jesus has paid the penalty forever and I need not worry. He has not failed to secure my salvation. He is unrelentingly good.

This is true for all those who believe. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, if your delight is the prospect of an eternity spent with him, if you recognize his provision of grace for you in his death burial and resurrection, if you trust his death as a substitute for your own, if you recognize the undeserved grace of God as the ground of your eternal acceptance into the kingdom prepared By God, and if that grace is transforming your life because the love of Christ compels you, then, yeah, this promise is for you, too. Come inherit the Kingdom.

Unbelievably good news. The evil that hung over your head, the threat, the antagonism, the hatred, the violence, it is all gone.

FLOURISHING OF ALL THAT IS GOOD

From Center Church, Tim Keller:

At Creation we were made a Home where life flourishes fully — spiritually, physically, and socially. It was a place where physical life and health are sustained and where our most intimate relationships are nurtured. It is a place of rest, shalom/peace. Nothing missing. Nothing broken.

Sin, self-centeredness has broken and marred this peace, but we long for it and seek it on our own terms. As a result, we are cast out rejected. Enslaved in Egypt. Exiled to Babylon.

We long to return home. In Esther's time, some had already returned home from exile. They were back at home in Israel. Ezra, Nehemiah show that we Can return but can never go back. We can never truly rebuild what we lost. There are too many obstacles. Too much opposition. We long for a fuller, more complete return, renewal and restoration. We long for a renewed earth, restored by its original creator himself.

RESTORATION OF ALL THAT IS GOOD

Complete reversal. Renewal of all things. The flood in Genesis 6 the waters over the earth, taking it back to the studs, to very beginning. Covered in water at Creation. Taking back to the beginning, before sin, fall, guilt. Because sin resides in people, the people need renewal. Palingenesis, God remaking everything. Renewal of all things. That is the mandatory happy ending. That is the desire of God that we see expressed in the Bible and in Revelation. Now the dwelling of God is with man. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Can you visualize this as your happy ending, as what God has in store for you?

New heavens and new earth

“Paul Marshall concludes, **“This world is our home: we are made to live here. It has been devastated by sin, but God plans to put it right. Hence, we look forward with joy to newly restored bodies and to living in a newly restored heaven and earth. We can love this world because it is God's, and it will be healed, becoming at last what God intended from the beginning”**

ILL – Last year, we saw an episode of Fixer Upper on HGTV where Chip and Joanna Gaines took on a project that was a gift to an Older couple. He was a War veteran. She had lots of physical problems. Their house needed serious repair work to be livable simply because it was old, but it also needed some remodeling to make it accessible to this older couple. Chip and Joanna fixed it up as a gift. They not only removed what was dangerous and dirty, and not only repaired what was broken, they made some incredible modern technological improvements on the home. At the end of those shows there is always the walk-through, where the homeowners walk in and see the changes made to their home. As they took this older couple through, room by room, this war veteran's wife kept saying, Oh, my goodness. Oh my goodness.

She could not believe that her space had been so improved, cleaned up, redesigned, upgraded. It was clearly their space but it had been built to accommodate them in ways they themselves could never have dreamed.

RESTORATION OF US

- Penalty - justified. Cannot keep me from God
- Power - sanctified. Growing. Real growth. But not fully eradicated
- Presence - glorified. In the presence of Jesu, with all who have gone on.

ILL - leaving a war zone. You leave behind the accoutrements, weapons, propaganda, battle plans, supplies, attitudes, stress, guardedness, tension, trauma, power hierarchy, sounds, orders, mechanisms, food, sleep patterns, etc. everything there is left behind.

The you that you were there, however, does not get left behind. PTSD. What if you could really leave it all then. Cleansed inwardly.

That is what the Bible means by glorification. You are internally cleansed, washed, transformed. Characterized by rest. The struggle with sin is over. The background buzz of sin, pain, struggle, hurt, abuse, rage, lust, fear, anxiety, sadness, depression, loneliness, doubt - it is over. Not because we will cease to exist, but because our minds have been freed from sin's shackles.

reversal and Renewal. All made new. No fear. No threats can stand. No evil affect us. ILL - Tom Bombadil and the one ring. All is right in us. All is right with us. All is right in the world. All pointing ahead to when God returns. the first will be last. The great reversal image of the Bible. Weeping will turn to laughter. Restoring the years the locusts ate. Job and the restoration of his fortunes. Lion lay down with the lamb. The one who exalts himself. God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Blessed are the poor in spirit. This is a mini-picture of the new heavens and new earth. Evil is ultimately vanquished so that none of it remains at all. Haman's descendants, the seed of evil, hate, and threat are utterly eliminated. Peace. Freedom from harm and threat of harm.

LOOKING FORWARD

End, what to do?

A. Enter the fight

Still on mission. Still difficulty.

David. Big giant has been defeated.

Esther

B. Keep Looking Forward

Look forward by faith. Not Heavenly home.

Now, that does not mean that everything is always easy. It's not. The Bible never said this. God never even hints at it. Jesus said the opposite.

And the happy ending, the redemptive turn-around is not located in the 65 or so years that God gives us here. The redemptive turn-around is future.

The counterfeit gospel according Dr. Larry Crabb: **“Shrink Christianity into a good-enough life of morality, good values, friendly relating, and church involvement designed to win from God the good life of good things that define the abundant life. The obvious error of the health and wealth gospel is cleverly delivered in Christian sounding ways that encourage Christians to believe that every bad thing will become good, in this life.”**

Every time I get discouraged it is because I have bought into this counterfeit gospel, and my life doesn't reflect it. It's always in my ear whispering, “Hath God said?”

I can trust him even when the outcome is not to my liking. Esther was still in the home of that pagan man. She did not have her Prince Charming. She was married to a royal rat. But she wouldn't change what had happened. It was hard, but she could see God's hand in it. What he accomplished is worth what she had to endure.

We can trust him that even though we might not understand, and even though we can't see any real purpose in it the way that Esther could or Joseph could, yet I know that God is faithful to accomplish his purposes I. The fulfillment of his ultimate promises. I will have that, even if my life here is not what I hoped.

Hebrews 11 - Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. The future fulfillment of the promises of God. This is what the ancients were commended for. They were all looking forward to the fulfillment. None of them received it. It's not seen in political currency. It's not circumstantial. It's not momentary. It wasn't here yet. But they were convinced that it would be.

When we die, we leave the good things of the world God created for us and enter immediately into the awe-inspiring presence of God Himself, which is what the Bible calls Heaven. Then, when Jesus returns, at the resurrection, we receive new bodies, and he brings with him all of the awe-inspiring glories of God's presence in heaven and unites them to the all of the good things of God's created world so that we have both in one place. The God-Man, Jesus, who as mediator represents and combines both spheres,

unites Heaven and earth. He is the better Esther, the person of breathtaking beauty whose intercession pleases the judge over the condemned.

Peter Toon: “For the Christian, all those partial, broken and fleeting perfections which he glimpses in the world around him, which wither in his grasp and are snatched away from him even while they wither, are found again, perfect, complete and lasting in the absolute beauty of God.”

Joni Erickson Tada understands this. You may remember her. In 1967 she was paralyzed in a diving accident. She says this about what God has in store: **“I can’t wait to be clothed in righteousness, without a trace of sin. Yes, it will be wonderful to stand, stretch, and reach to the sky. But it will be more wonderful to offer praise that is pure and won’t be crippled by distractions, disabled by insincerity, handicapped by a ho-hum half-heartedness. Now my joy will join with yours, and we will bubble over with effervescent adoration, finally able to worship with the Father and the Son. For me, this is the best part of heaven.”**

Why English Poet, John Donne, said: **“I shall rise from the dead. . . . I shall see the Son of God, the Sun of Glory, and shine myself as that sun shines. I shall be united to the Ancient of Days, to God Himself, who had no morning, never began. . . . No man ever saw God and lived. And yet, I shall not live till I see God; and when I have seen him, I shall never die.”**