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ESTHER: QUEEN OF DESTINY

Speaker: Bro. John Martin

Study #2

The Call and Preparation of Esther

Reading: Esther 2

My beloved brethren and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ and our dear young people.

I would hope, b&s and young people, in our consideration this afternoon, that we would have been sufficiently impressed with this record, to understand and know that it has been deliberately written with a purpose in mind. And we remind ourselves again of that purpose. It is not merely a story, b&s, of a drama that happened so many years ago, nor is it merely a story of a drama containing certain divine principles, but it is also a story deliberately written that we may be able to read it and conjure up in our minds, not only what are the principles of the kingdom, but what the kingdom of God will actually be like.

And we saw the royal feast of Ahasuerus which he held for the whole empire, and we saw that intimate feast of seven days for those people immediately in association with the king in the capital city, Shushan. And we saw, b&s, at the climatic day of that feast, the seventh day of the king's feast, when all would have come to a glorious finale, we saw her who was called to reflect the king's glory, refuse to do so, for which she suffered very, very damaging consequences both for herself, I believe, and also for her posterity. And she was rejected, and you know, b&s, when you read the opening verse of chapter 2, one cannot be but impressed with a tinge of regret that's in that verse, as we heard it read before us this evening, you would have noticed in that first verse there is expressed a very great regret, 'After these things, when the wrath of the king Ahasuerus was appeased; he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what was decreed against her'. Now you can't help but be impressed in that verse, with a great deal of regret; it virtually says that because it's telling us that the wrath of the king had quieted down. And he didn't feel it as a light matter that Vashti should have been dismissed in the way that was done; it was a very grievous thing that had been done onto her. And also, b&s, the king knew that nothing could be done about it as far as she was concerned, because the law was according to the Medes and the Persians, and he had no power to alter that, even though he was king.

You don't have to read very far into that verse, to have an expression of our Heavenly Father's mind, as He looked upon the tragedy of Israel's rejection of His glory. You know, in the 31st chapter of Jeremiah's prophecy, these words are recorded concerning

the way that God felt about Israel's failure to reflect His glory; a very great regret, b&s, these words are recorded about God's attitude to Israel, in the 31st chapter of Jeremiah, a monumental chapter, and in verse 20 this is what the prophet said was God's mind towards His people, 'Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore, my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith Yahweh', and I believe, b&s, that in measure, that was the feeling of Ahasuerus. Though he had spoken against Vashti in a very direct way, in accordance with the information and the advice given to him, it was a thing of great regret that she had acted in the way that she did.

And, b&s, our Heavenly Father looks down upon the nation of Israel, even today, and must have a great deal of regret, that those people who are called to such a high and glorious destiny, should not be able to fulfill in their lives, the requirements of the King of heaven. And they are simple, b&s, very simple, difficult to perform, but simple to understand; all God wants is that we should reflect His glory in our lives. They are words, b&s, but they mean a lot to us; we even label those words as a doctrine, the doctrine of God-manifestation. Almost a legal term, but what God requires of us is that we should go about amongst each other and in the world whom we meet sometimes, and we should show in our lives, in the way we treat people with kindness and compassion, the way we stand firm for our principles, the way we look at the matters of the world, our attitude to all things, should be the attitude of our Heavenly Father, and people should be able to look at us and see in us, a reflection of His royal glory! You know, b&s, we talked this afternoon about Paul's lesson of the woman's position taken from creation; we all know the words often quoted at weddings, that Eve was to be a 'help-meet for Adam'. And looking at the English values for those words 'she was to be a help to him', I suppose that's one meaning of it; but do you know, b&s, you get any concordance, any expert on Hebrew and look at those words, the nearest thing that you could possibly get in the English to the meaning of the 'help-meet' is a 'mirror'. That would be the very nearest word which would describe the meaning of what Eve was to be to Adam, she was to be a mirror of her husband, and he was to see in her, a reflection of himself; and I believe, b&s, (and it's more than an opinion with me, and I don't know if you agree or disagree, and we'll all know in the kingdom) I believe that Adam and Eve were the most perfect set of twins the world has ever seen. I know they were boy and girl but you have twins, boy and girl, and I believe they were the most perfect set of twins ever seen upon the earth. And although Eve was in female form, I believe Adam saw himself, indelibly in that woman. And when the record says that he loved her, of course, what else could he do, for no man ever yet hated his own body.

And that was the purpose that God had in mind, b&s, for the wife in the reflection of her husband's glory. And that's the purpose that God has in mind for the marriage of His Son. God is going to supervise a marriage, imagine it!, His own dearly beloved Son, He loves Him, b&s, deeply and He's going to marry Him to a wonderful woman, and He'll only marry Him to a woman that reflects His Son, because His Son is the image of His Father. That, b&s, is the divine purpose, and look at the words, 'he remembered Vashti, what she had done and what was decreed against her'. Israel had failed, b&s, there was a generation that was consigned forevermore from the kingdom; not all Israel will be

saved as we know, many of them being disobedient will never see God's kingdom. That's a cause of regret and it's because they failed to reflect God's glory, and the decree against them, b&s, is immutable. Now what to do about that?

You know, the apostle Paul in speaking about Israel's rejection says, 'shall their unbelief make the faith of God of none effect?' or in other words, because Israel's failed does that mean that God's purpose has failed? 'By no means' says the apostle Paul, and we know, b&s, that by no means because that happened. What could God do therefore but to call for another to do what Israel would not do to reflect His glory. And this is the advice, of course, that Ahasuerus got, in our story that is before us. And the king's servants said, 'Look, let's call for fair young virgins from all the provinces and gather them together, to the house of the women'. Listen to that language, b&s, in the typical story; let's call for fair young virgins in all the provinces and gather them together in the house of the women. Beautiful language! and in the typical story that is before us, we know what happened when the bride of Yahweh rejected Him, then the call of the gospel went out to the Gentiles, 'seeing you count yourselves unworthy of everlasting life; lo, we turn to the Gentiles', and so out of the nations came forth that chaste virgin whom Paul said, 'He espoused to Christ' (2 Corinthians chapter 11). And they were fair young virgins; the Corinthians as well as the other ecclesias that the apostles had formed in those days, and be they men or women they were all virgins because in Revelations 14 and verse 4, those congregating on Mount Zion are all said to be, both men and women, 'these are virgins who are not defiled with women'; that's the language of Revelation, 'they're not defiled with women'. We generally associate the word 'virgin' with a woman that hasn't been defiled by a man, but says the Revelations, 'these are they which haven't been defiled with women'. And the women the Revelations had in mind, b&s, were those women, the anti-typical Jezebel and her like, that corrupted the truth of God through their lives, and seduced God's servants to commit fornication and to eat those things sacrificed unto idols, in other words, to leave the truth, and to become associated with all that's worldly; they no longer were virgins in God's sight, they had been corrupted through women. Evil associations in the world, and it's a strange thing in one way and not in another, that the Word of God taking the women as a symbol of ecclesiastical systems uses it in that way, so that when they were defiled with women they became defiled with the associations ecclesiastically as well as morally in this world. Israel married the daughter of a strange god, the daughter of a strange god, because the women again was used as a symbol of a religious system. And in the book of Revelation, those virgins who had been corrupted, had been corrupted by the mother of harlots and all her daughters.

Now the king didn't want that, he didn't want them to be called; and when the gospel goes out, b&s, Jesus Christ wants to gather all the fair young virgins; He wants to bring them together from all the provinces now. For the call goes out, it's a world-wide thing and they come to the house of the women, which I believe in the story, represents our ecclesial associations, because b&s, they didn't go straight to the king's house. There was a period of purification before they moved from the house of the women, to the house of the king. And we are today, b&s, all of us, virgins from this world and its influences, and we are undergoing a stage of purification in order that we may one day

be presented before our King, to see whether or not, we fit the royal setting and reflect the glory that belongs unto Him.

And of course, we know that having been referred to the house of women, under the charge of Hegai, the keeper of the house of women, he was greatly impressed with Esther, b&s. Greatly impressed with Esther, and it's powerfully obvious, that he was not impressed with that woman as far as any physical attraction was concerned, because that man was a eunuch. It was beyond him, b&s, to be attracted in that way to that woman, that's why he had the job that he did. The fact that he was the keeper of the house of the women, put him beyond the pale of the influence of that kind, and therefore, him being impressed with Esther, it had to be something else other than physical attraction. And that impression that she made upon him was lasting, not only from his viewpoint, b&s, but from her own, because when she went before the king, she did everything that that man said, and there was built up a tremendous relationship between her and that man; and it had to be, it just had to be something more than just physical beauty and attraction because as I suggest, he was a eunuch and therefore, he had that trusted charge because he was beyond that.

So Esther must have been a very, very impressive maiden indeed, b&s. I believe that when you read through the record of her life, it's obvious that the thing which impressed everyone about Esther, was her quiet charm, her quiet submissiveness to all that was proper and dignified. Even her submissiveness to Mordecai later on, was a cause of wonder among people, and her submissiveness to the king was something that gained for her, the first place along his side. A wonder thing, b&s.

We read in verse 3, 'because that she had obtained such favour with the king's chamberlain here, that he gave her very swiftly, things for purification. Things for purification, now the RSV has 'ointment'; he gave her the ointment of purification. And the RSV uses that word because in the original Hebrew, the word for 'purification' means 'to rub with oil' and although it isn't a related word, b&s, it has almost the identical meaning of the word 'Messiah', which literally means 'to rub with oil'. Although I say these two Hebrew words are not related in themselves, the meanings are the same, and you know, b&s, 'Messiah' or 'anointed' to rub with oil, what was the point of that? Oh, yes, we know that they poured the oil upon the head of the kings and the priest in order to distinguish them from amongst the laymen in Israel, and therefore, to show that they were God-appointees. We know that the oil symbolized the spirit, but b&s, the scriptures tell us in several occasions in the New Testament, 'that we are anointed'. And as the bride of Christ we must undergo an anointing; now in 1 John chapter 2 we learn what that anointing consisted of, and of course, we can relate ourselves clearly with Esther, as we go through these principles. 1 John 2 and verse 27, this is not the only place in the New Testament that says that we have an anointing; now what is that 'anointing'? Now John warns in verse 26 writing concerning those who seduce these believers, but he says in verse 27, 'but the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him'. Now John makes it plain by stating three times what the anointing is,

teaching you. Now, b&s, is it difficult to comprehend the meaning of 'anointing' as a teacher by rubbing the oil in? Now we know what the oil is symbol of, it's a symbol of the Word of God; it's not only used in Israel for cooking purposes, medicinal purposes, it was also used to light the lamps. It gave light to Israel and this light, b&s, will never do anyone good by being merely poured on; no good pouring the Word of God on, it's got to be rubbed in, and when we rub that Word in, we are in every sense of the word, anointed, and that anointing will teach us, and we won't be seduced by the world.

That was Esther's position! and she swiftly came under the care of one who gave her things necessary for her purification. Now I know, of course, that as far as he was concerned, probably that significance never touched him, but there's no doubt about it, b&s, these things were not written for their sakes alone, but for our sakes are they written, that we might understand that as the fair young virgins called from all parts of the world, we've got to have things for purification! And they start by rubbing in the oil. Now we can't stress this enough, we can't stress this enough, I know that people believe that the group of ecclesias to which I belong, think that knowledge is the 'be-all and end-all' of everything. Well, we do not! nor do we believe that a wide margin bible is bad for the kingdom of God; for it is not! But you know, b&s, whilst those things in themselves don't constitute the be-all and end-all of our existence in the truth, they constitute the absolute foundation of what we're going to build upon, without which we can build absolutely nothing! and I mean NOTHING! Now if people here are not going to get hold of that book, in one way or another, according to our several abilities and rub it in, then forget about it! because we're wasting our time in the truth, b&s. You know, you talk about study, nobody's advocating study for study's sake, but I'll tell you something, if an angel walked through that door, in glowing form and offered himself for questions, would you question him? Would you want to talk to him about God and the kingdom and what he understood about it? Of course, you would; well, you don't need an angel, all the answers are in that book. There is God speaking to you! who would not stand and listen to God? that's how silly it is for people to criticize study; don't ever do that, rub that oil in! By so doing, b&s, we have the foundation for things that must be done, in order that we can be presented before our King.

Now in the next few verses, verses 5 to 7 of chapter 2, it records the relationship of Mordecai and Esther. Beautiful little section this, very touching; 'Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew', you know, you read that quickly, b&s, but let me read it as I believe it was intended to be read, because the word 'Jew' or the term 'Jew' there, is chosen deliberately. Let me read it like you should read it; 'Now there was in Shushan the palace, a certain Jew' because that's the term of contempt. When the people in the days of Ezra wrote to the authorities back in Persia, they accused certain Jews who had a bad reputation; in the age to come when people go up to worship at Jerusalem, 'they shall take hold of a skirt of him that is a Jew', to indicate the change that will come over the earth; that's a term of contempt and we've got in the palace, a man who by sheer deed, I believe, of perseverance, and of personal ability and integrity to the king, sat in the king's gate, despite his title. And b&s, the fellow who wrote that book, would have us to understand that he was at that gate for a reason. And I'm going to show you that, later on in this chapter, where it said twice, that he was there for a reason. God's

providence was there, b&s, and although it may have been a glorious palace of the white-lily kingdom, yet right in the centre of that white-lily kingdom there was a certain Jew.

And who was he? Well, it says his name was Mordecai; in the original Hebrew text, it says 'there was a man by the name of Mordecai', that's the original text in the Hebrew. The word for man is 'ish' which means a great man and Mordecai according to Gesenius means 'a little man'. If we were, therefore, to read that literally, translating his name we would read it this way, 'there was a great man there who was a little man, sitting in the king's gate'. And he was a little man from the tribe of Benjamin; who knows another little man from the tribe of Benjamin? Paul was a little man from the tribe of Benjamin, how little he was though, in the kingdom of God; in the kingdom to come, b&s, in the service of His Master, it was said of Paul by one writer, and he's not far from the mark, 'that he was the greatest human being ever to follow Christ'; but he was a little man. And Mordecai, b&s, was a great little man, there's no doubt about that; and he was a Benjamite. Now two things strike us about that immediately, of course, that 'Benjamin' means 'the son of my right hand' and Mordecai typified the Lord Jesus Christ; small in his own sight but the son of God's right hand, he was therefore, preeminently suited to typify the Lord Jesus Christ with that sort of a title. But you know, b&s, there's something almost poignant in the fact that he came from Benjamin, because he was there to get rid of the Amalekite that the leader of Benjamin had failed to do so. That in the days of Saul who was given the ideal opportunity to rid the nation of that curse, left it there! And here's a Benjamite who now is going to suffer the job of ridding the people of God from underneath the curse of that sort of person, the Agagite, the Amalekite; what a dreadful thing that Saul had done!

You know, the strange thing about the Benjamites, sons of God's right hand, they were all left-handed. They were noted as a tribe of left-handers', that's not accidental, b&s, because there is a prophecy that the son of God's right hand just wasn't there; they were left-handed, but here is a prophecy of one who spoke of One who would come and be the Son of God's right hand, and who would rid the earth at last, of the curse of the Amalekite against whom God said, 'I will have war from generation to generation'. So Mordecai, the Jew, is paraded before us, but look at this, this is really interesting, look, it says in verse 6, 'he had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away'. Now look, b&s, there were three great invasions of the Land; Nebuchadnezzar came down and he took away a bunch of captives in the reign of Jehoiakim, later on he came down and took away more captives in the reign of Jehoiachin or Jeconiah as he's there called, and then finally, (I'm giving you the 3 great invasions) he took away the whole of the captivity in the days of Zedekiah that last profane and wicked prince of Israel, whose day had come when iniquity had an end. So there were three great deportations of treasure in God's sight, among whom was not only Mordecai but Ezekiel! Ezekiel was one of those carried away in that captivity.

Now you look what Jeremiah says about that captivity in his 24th chapter, I find this extremely interesting; you listen to these words and imagine Mordecai knowing of this

prophecy. In Jeremiah 24 and read the first seven verses, 'Yahweh showed me, and, behold, two baskets of figs were set before the temple of Yahweh, after that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah (now there it is) the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the carpenters and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon. One basket had very good figs, even like the figs that are first ripe: and the other basket had very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad. Then said Yahweh unto me, What seest thou, Jeremiah? And I said, Figs; the good figs, very good; and the evil, very evil, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil. Again the word of Yahweh came unto me, saying, Thus saith Yahweh, the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans FOR THEIR GOOD'. And then He says, 'For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land; and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up. And I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am Yahweh: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto Me with their whole heart', and that, b&s, was the group that Mordecai went with. Imagine it! sitting in the gate of the king, with the words of Jeremiah thundering in his ears, 'I will watch over them for good; some will pull down and I will build, some will pluck up but I'll plant; they'll come back to Me with all their hearts, and HE DID! and so did Ezekiel who was in that group of little captives that went away in the days of Jeconiah. What a wonderful thing that is! Can you imagine knowing that, b&s, of those that had been carried away first, those that had been carried away last, but the middle group were taken away for their good!

Now there was the faith of Mordecai, I believe that was the foundation principle of his faith; the words of the prophet! There's no way in the world that he should have anything else but come out of that with good, because the Word of Yahweh in the figure of the very good figs had spelt that out very clearly, that those that were carried away with Jeconiah, would have the shadowing protection of God, in all circumstances. And that, b&s, became the absolute pinnacle, I believe, of his faith, as he saw that enlargement would arise from the Jews from any place, but there's no way they could be destroyed, because of that prophecy and, of course, of the principles that ever had gone before, as far as the salvation of Israel is concerned.

Such, I believe, was the man, Mordecai. More about him later! Come to Esther, b&s, and the 2nd chapter; here we learn something about Esther in verse 7, 'And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful, whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took her for his own daughter'. Several observances about that, b&s! First of all, her Hebrew name, and here we can really get into the meaning of it, because we've got some foundation in the Hebrew language. Hadassah, of course, which is 'the myrtle tree', and you know, b&s, of the myrtle tree it is said, in the prophecy of Isaiah on two separate occasions, it was a symbol of 'the reviving of Israel.' And Isaiah 55 says it in these words (I try to save time, b&s, where we can with these quotations, but this one is important) here was the myrtle tree, and we read of the restoration of the people of Israel, in the last verse of that chapter, 'Instead of the thorn

shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to Yahweh for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off'. Alright, so the myrtle tree is a symbol of the revival of Israel, it's more than that, b&s! because Isaiah tells us that it will replace the brier. And when Israel came out of Egypt under Moses they were warned, when they went into the land of Canaan, to get rid of the enemies of Israel who would be briars, and thorns in their sides. When they came to the edge of the Land, they were reminded by Joshua who quoted Moses words, 'to get rid of the habitants of the land because they'll be briars, and when they came into the Land, the angel of Bochim came there where they were weeping together, and he warned them in the words of Joshua, 'to get rid of the people of the Land because they'll be briars'. And they didn't believe him, and so in the days of Gideon, because they didn't believe the message of God, when he got rid of some of those briars in the forms of Zebah and Zalmunna, he came back to a place called Succoth, got 70 of the elders of that city, took them outside the city, bared their backs, plucked up the brier bush and thrashed them; and said 'believe what God has said'. There are some lessons which can only be learnt painfully; you know, b&s, the greatest thorn in Israel's side, or one of the greatest thorns, was Haman. And the story tells us when they hung him, they gave his house to Esther, instead of the thorn came up the myrtle tree. There was a revival of Israel under the shadow of this wonderful tree which gave its beautiful shade, and no longer would the thorn of the Jew's enemy, to prick in their eyes and cause all the distraction and misery that was brought upon that nation. No, b&s, she had a very significant name and we've already said this but there in the first chapter of Zechariah, he said, 'I saw the angel on a red horse, under the shade of the myrtle tree', and you know, b&s, the red horse is the symbol of war, God will go and fight for Israel; there's an angel astride that red horse and he's under the myrtle tree which shows that there is the protection of Almighty God; and if ever there was a myrtle tree for Israel, it was in Esther, because overshadowing the king was that woman's relationship with the king, and which of course, invoked him to issue those decrees for Israel's benefit. They moved under her shade and the angel rode that horse to great victories in the life of Esther, b&s. Wonderful things were to take place in that woman's life!

And Mordecai sat in the king's gate, and he was a good fig; remember that, he was a good fig and not a naughty fig like Jeremiah's says, he was a good fig, and great things were to come to Israel out of his hand, b&s, and they were to blossom and bud and fill the face of the then known world with fruit, because of Mordecai; and Esther, of course, was the one that he used so powerfully, to extricate the people from this dilemma in which they were put.

Then we read this, 'that, of course, she was his cousin'; obviously there was quite a discrepancy in their ages, but she was his cousin; 'she had neither father nor mother'. And as the bride of Christ typically, b&s, she had therefore, 7 earthly relationships. And in the 45th Psalm, which we will not now turn up, you'll remember the words, when the daughter was brought before the king to be made his bride, she was told to forget her own people and to join herself to the king's relations, that she might produce in the earth a posterity and a seed royal, belonging to the king; and this woman had neither mother nor father, and so therefore, she had 7 earthly connections, caught not, of course, deliberately, but in the accidents of life, b&s, as the arm of death had taken her mom



and dad, there she was bereft of parents, and taken up by Mordecai.

Now there's no mention, b&s, of Mordecai's wife; there is reference to the fact that he had access to the court of the women, we know the custom of those who took captives in Israel, was to make them eunuchs, and there is very good reason to believe that Mordecai was a eunuch, how else would he have access to the realms of the courts of the women, if he wasn't, if he wasn't a eunuch? I believe, he obviously was, and he had taken this woman as his own daughter. 'Let not the eunuch say, I have a dry tree; for thus saith Yahweh, unto the eunuchs that take hold of My covenant'. And there were 7 of them in Ahasuerus' room, eunuchs that take hold of My covenant, and there were 7 of them, mark you. 'Thus saith Yahweh unto those, I will give them a name better than the sons and daughters; I will make them joyful in my house of prayer, for my house of prayer shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples', Isaiah 56:3-7. So here was a eunuch who had a daughter and the relationship, b&s, was splendid, enduring, full of that filial love that they had for each other, and of that obedience of a daughter to her father, which was absolutely incredible under the circumstances that that woman found herself. Here was something again, something a little bit more than flesh and blood, and though they were cousins, this woman had accepted him as her father! And you know, it's rather significant that in verse 15, it gives her father's name, her real father as Abihail, of course, you'll recognize in that, b&s, two Hebrew words 'aba' and 'ail' father of mighty power, so her original father was 'father of mighty power, you know, b&s, whatever he was like and we'll never know this side of the kingdom, she had a father of mighty power in the little man, Mordecai. And it's rather significant that that relationship is given alongside of the relationship that she bore to him, as if to say, that he had taken over the role of the 'father of mighty power' to bring that woman to the situation in which she found him.

Alright, from verse 8 then, we look down to verse 14, to the way that Esther was treated in the house of the women by Hegai, the keeper of the women. We know, b&s, 'that the king's decree was heard and many maidens were gathered', isn't that wonderful language? 'the king's decree was heard and there were many maidens gathered, but one was chosen'. What wonderful lessons are here for us. The decree went out, b&s, they're sound is going out into all the world, says the apostle; 'how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace'. And our gospel, says Paul, was heard in that day, and the decree was heard and many maidens were gathered, into the house of the women; but few were chosen only one was on this occasion, b&s, but she represents a multitude, even so, of the thronging millions, who will be chosen in that day.

'And she pleased the keeper of the women'. And we read in verse 9, 'and the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification'. Now, b&s, when we read down through here now, there are 4 things, 4 favours which that keeper of the house of the women, did for Esther. Every one of those favours has a spiritual significance to it; we are in the ecclesia, I believe, Hegai represents an influence of ecclesial life upon us. We can't evaluate, b&s, the value of ecclesial life; we're not an kingdom unto our own, nobody can live to themselves. There are people who try, there are people who try and are still trying; dismal failure, none of

us can live to ourselves, b&s, we need each other so desperately, and I don't believe that not one of us knows how much we really need each other. And Esther was put in a situation, and she was given 4 things which went to make up for her preparation to be chosen as the bride of the king of the world, and that's what we're called to; and in those 4 favours there are 4 great principles which we've got to be associated with.

Now the first thing that he did was to give her speedily things for purification, the ointment for the purification. Now we've already spoken about that, b&s, but what does the ecclesia need to give its members first and foremost? What should be the objective of an arranging brothers group? What is the objective of your arranging brethren? do you know? do you go along to their meetings and find out? Do you know what their priorities are? I know what our priorities are, I know that very clearly, because we on our a.b. enjoy a wonderful unity, b&s. I say that quite honestly and sincerely and I say it with a great deal of gratitude from our Heavenly Father; we've enjoyed for many, many years a wonderful unity of thinking on our arrangements and top priority is the Word of God. And I've been to an a.b. meeting some years ago now when we were a little less dignified, when at 10:30 at night, the recording brother said, 'shouldn't we get down to the business of the meeting because all we've done is the daily reading'. That's the priority that we placed upon the Word; things for purification first, the oil; now the word used here for purification is of that oil which was one of the ingredients of the holy anointing oil. Under the Law of Moses, which says God, if any man imitates I'll kill him; you imitate that and I'll kill you, that's what God said, and there's no imitations for that Word of God, b&s. The holy anointing oil spoke of the power of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Holy Spirit today is that book, and there are imitations for it! Beware of them! Imitations like you'll find in the Pentecostal church, where great stress is placed upon the emotional side of religion, and people are whipped up into a frenzy like the Australian aborigines or the Indians doing a war dance, and they go away, b&s, believing they have the Holy Spirit; it's a very poor, it's a paltry imitation for that Word. There are some even more subtle than that, that might not give credence to that idea, but would give credence to the idea that we can be anointed by doing nothing about studying the bible; that God in some mysterious way will operate upon us, to cause us to understand it. Don't you ever believe it! There's only one way we're going to understand God's words and that's to listen to them. And there's only one way to listen to them and that's to read them; there are many imitations, b&s, in ecclesial life, the first thing necessary for our purification is the pure word of God as a means of rubbing that oil in for purification. As Peter says 'it is the spirit that purifies; you purify your heart, he says, in the belief of the truth'.

We want to be pure, believe the truth! Can't believe it if you don't know it; but you know, b&s, the spirit also is a symbol of character. You take for example the Song of Solomon, the bride of Christ here, the ointment became a symbol of character. In the Song of Solomon chapter 1 and verse 3, it became a symbol of character, 'because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee'. Thy name is as ointment poured forth, it has a sweet aroma about it, b&s, there's a sweetness about that character, and what's the good of rubbing oil in if you can't see the imprint of that upon the person themselves? If a person studies very

powerfully as far as oil is concerned, and are rubbing oil in all the time (I'm talking about literal oil now) you're going to see them as oily characters, I mean, they're going to appear oily they're going to look like their skin is glowing. But it's rich and full! You look at some people who practice today the rubbing of oil over their skin; there are races who do this, there are segments of the Jewish people who do it, they do look differently, physically they do, there's a gloss about them, there's a vibrance about them! If a person is studying the Word of God and it's going in one ear and straight out the other, there's no impact; but if it's rubbed into them, b&s, the Word of God comes out of them; you can see it! If you look at the Lord Jesus Christ, He was the WORD MADE FLESH, how did that happen? by God splashing upon Him some understanding of the Word of God? NO, as a boy of 12, He was asking questions, did you know that means that? and rubbing it in and out it came. 'Thy name is like good ointment', it's character building, b&s, and that's the first thing that Esther was given in this typical story.

What was the second thing given to her? Well, coming back to chapter 2 again, we read this. The second thing given to her, 'with such things that belonged to her'; in the original Hebrew, her daily portion of food, quite necessary, b&s, as much as Esther was a wonderful woman she actually ate to live, they couldn't live without food so she was given her daily portion of food, and I believe that because of the purpose which Hegai had in her, and for the purpose she was called, that is that she might please the king, because it says that she was beautiful, fair and beautiful of face and form, the Hebrew says, in verse 7, and the maid was fair and beautiful, and it means as the margin says, 'both of face and of form'(she was on a diet). Now, I wouldn't want to tell you what I think of diets, you're either trying to diet or dying to try it, one of the two, but I don't believe, b&s, that we should go on these crazy diets! That's my point of view, but I don't believe either that you should eat just rubbish; I think we ought to be circumspect in what we eat, and I don't think there's a great spiritual lesson in diets, but there's no doubt about it, it was absolutely critical that that woman appear beautiful of form as well of countenance, b&s. Spiritually speaking there is a diet for us, isn't there? Now I eat very poorly out of the Word of God; you don't believe that? Tell you something, it's true! because I eat in great big bites, then I go on fasts for I don't know how long! See that study of Esther, marked up all my notes done, one month of my life; intensity, what did I do with the rest of my time? Fooled around, mucked around out in the garden with Sammy or something. I mean, it's crazy; and we go through life and we dilly-dally around and do every else but what we should do; Easter camps in a month, oh! now big bites....then they get all sorts of problems! I don't believe we should do that, I believe that Esther in the house of women was treated to a special diet; alright, we've got to rub the oil in, but b&s, the way to do that, it's a constancy that counts! There are people here who could eat enormous amounts of the Word of God, every day of their life and need to do that; there are other people who couldn't do that and really don't need to do that, and no one needs to excuse themselves on the grounds that they're in that category, because God knows your heart. You've got to be honest, but do you know, b&s, we can also make ourselves very despondent on the way to the kingdom, if we feel that we've got to know as much as everybody else; it's not true! according to every man's ability is the scriptural term, but be it known unto all of us, b&s, that God knows what we can do, and let me tell you something! it's always more than you think you can.

But let us ever keep Esther in mind. It's a question of a daily application, a daily intake and application of that spiritual food, in order that we may appear before our King spiritually fit, and beautiful of spiritual form in that sense of the word!

What did Hegai next give Esther in the house of the women? in order that she might be prepared? Well, '7 maidens which were meet to be given her out of the king's house'. With whom do your children mix? who would you like in the ecclesia, if you went on a holiday, (and I hope you don't go on a holiday with your children, but I shouldn't say that!) if you were on the work of the truth, or something like that? or you were indisposed for illness and your children had to be committed into the hands of brethren and sisters, with whom would you like them to be with? I would like 7 maidens out of the king's house, please! In other words, b&s, evil communications corrupt good manners, that's what Paul told the Corinthians, Hegai knew that, so Esther's companions were 7 women all of them regally splendid; out of the king's house, necessary b&s, very necessary indeed that we should know with whom our children are mixing. Ah, we say, 'they mix with Christadelphians! b&s, I say this sadly, 'not all of Israel are of Israel'. I want to know here, at this place, where my children are, and with whom they've been speaking. I don't know a lot of you, and most of you that I do know, I know well! I have every confidence in the people who come to this camp, and I say that almost to the whole of the people we've met here, because we have enjoyed a wonderful atmosphere here, b&s, but there are some places where my children, Christadelphian or no Christadelphian, do not get themselves involved; they have 7 maidens as much as I can allow from king's houses. Now let's ever be on our guard about that! Do you know what your doing for me and I'm doing for you by bringing our children up in the way that they should go, b&s? How many children do you take home on a Sunday that don't belong to you? And how many children at your house do you miss at the Sunday dinner table, that you didn't know were missing, because someone replaced him? We interchange so much, isn't it critical that we bring up our children the same? Isn't it critical that my children have the same standards as your children? How many times at the table do you have a half a chicken leg in your mouth and a little one pipes up and says, 'my daddy wouldn't allow that!' Oh, my, well, neither do we, love, it's the slip of the tongue or something! and these sort of things go on, what I'm trying to get at is that we have 7 maidens of regal splendour; now if I've got 7 maidens of regal splendour in my house, and you've got them in yours, good on us, and then we intermingle, b&s, and those children of God have got a good environment and they've got good companionship! Hegai knew the value of that and he gave that woman those virgins. And said the Song of Solomon, 'those virgins loved her'. Why? because of the good ointment. The virgins loved her because of the good name symbolized by that ointment.

Now, what was the last thing he did for her? Well, he changed her quarters, he preferred her and her maids under the best place in the house of the women. So you see, b&s, companionship in itself is good, but not if that companionship in itself is in a bad environment; he changed that! See how careful he was! So he's got 7 lovely little girls around him, they are all of regal splendour, but ah, the others! imagine the type of people that would have been called by the king. Fair young virgins, and some of them are, of course, of doubtful authority. Imagine all those aspiring to be Queen of the world,

congregating together in that place, looking for the honour and glory and pomp and the vanity of that kingdom. Imagine Hegai looking them over and thinking, 'she's got 7 good little kids with her, but I don't know, there are neighbours here'; and he takes her and puts her in the best place. You know, b&s, if we were as half as careful as he was, our children will be in the kingdom! He was very careful about the care of that woman; that was his advice, and while all this was going on, what was Mordecai doing?

Well, we read in verse 10 that 'Esther had not showed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not show it'. You know, b&s, that was almost an immutable law of nature. I wished my children had obedience like that! 'Esther, don't tell them you are a Jewess' Right! that was the end of it, b&s, that was the end of that conversation; he charged her that she should not tell it, so she didn't tell it. There's a model of obedience, b&s, why didn't she tell them? What's wrong with being a Jew? Weren't they proud of their national distinction? Yes, they had a relative importance in Shushan the palace as we'll see later on, evidently the whole Palace was impregnated with Jewish influence, as we'll see later on, and for a very good reason, and in the type a marvellous thing emerges from that, but evidently they were not in ill favour in the capital. Why then should she hide it? Well, you see, back in chapter 1, b&s, we read in verse 19, 'If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered. That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she'. The word for 'another', b&s, is a word from which we get the idea of 'a flock of sheep', and what they said in effect was, and this word has been translated by the bible as 'neighbour or kinsman'; they wanted another Persian, let another of her flock be chosen, Vashti's flock. Now Esther is no way associated with Vashti's flock. She is a sheep of another fold, b&s, another fold entirely; now Mordecai does not want to prejudice that woman's chances, and nor do I believe, Mordecai wanted Esther to become queen of the world, to be queen of the world! I believe, and as the story unfolds, it is absolutely obvious that he saw a crisis or anticipated a crisis, or if he didn't even anticipate it, he knew the situation was so critical, b&s, that anything he could do to put before the throne and cement that relationship HAD TO BE DONE! never mind about Esther as far as being queen of the world was concerned, when she became queen of the world, he was king of the world; he knew that! because she did exactly what he told her. It wasn't honour and glory for her, that he was seeking, b&s, it was a man of wisdom. He was like the Lord Jesus Christ and it says in verse 11, 'And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, and Jesus Christ is in Revelation, 'I am He that walketh among the ecclesias and I know thy works', and Mordecai knew her works. You know, Rotherham strengthens that, he says from the Hebrew 'he walked throughout every day before the women's house. In other words, he didn't go there once a day, b&s, he went up and down, up and down all day, before the court of the women, to know what she did and what her future was; he wanted to know two things, to know how she did and what should become of her. And the ecclesias, 'I am He that walketh in the midst of the ecclesias, I know thy works', He wants to know, b&s, what we're doing and He's concerned for our future. That's what Mordecai was doing, and that's what the Lord Jesus Christ is doing walking in the midst of the ecclesias.

Now, of course, having provided all things necessary that pertain unto life and godliness for Esther, we now come to the critical factors of purification for the women. There were certain laws governing this, verse 12, 'Now when every maids turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women', now 12 months, b&s, is of course, for your information, a startling revelation this, a full year! Look up a concordance and you'll find it's 360 days in the Jewish calendar (I'm being funny, of course) but what I'm trying to stress upon you is that it was a full cycle of time, in other words, as far as our purification is concerned, there are no shortcuts; that's the lesson we learn from that. It was a full 12 months and do you know, b&s, it was divided up equally between two parts, equal parts. And the purification consisted first of all, of oil of myrrh-six months. Now myrrh, b&s, was the resin of a tree; when an incision was made in the tree, it oozed out and in the atmosphere it crystallized and went very brittle and very white. It was then crushed into a fine white powder and as such, b&s, it was mixed with other ingredients to make up the oil. So this oil of myrrh was oil with the myrrh impregnated in it; now the important thing about the oil of myrrh is that it became of course, one of the very cheap ingredients (there were two great ingredients in the anointing oil, one of which was myrrh, it therefore had a very sweet savour, it gave, of course, resinoid to the oil, and there it was, b&s, one of the cheap ingredients as it is called in Exodus 30 of the anointing oil, and it became a figure of a dedicated life). You know, when they poured anointing oil on a person, that person was set aside for God, not without significance that wise men out of the east (now you think about that) Persia or the regions thereof, brought the oil of myrrh to a little babe in Bethlehem; now there was One dedicated, b&s, if ever there was One dedicated. There He was, dedicated to the service of God, do you know something else? you have a look at the word 'myrrh' in a concordance and there's an excellent way to check this, you look at Strong's and get the meaning of the word, (and there's another addition to Strong's being put out, the Englishman's concordance, I've only got the Hebrew version at the moment, they're producing the Greek one which lists all the places where that particular word is found; you'll find it in Young's but it's much more easy now in this new addition to Strong's) and you look at the way in which the word is used, and do you know that word there for 'myrrh' is only used outside these contexts of anointing oil, in marriage scenes. It's used in Psalm 45 again, it's used in the Song of Solomon and it's used there. What more can we say about the principle of dedication than the principle of two people united in marriage! they're dedicated to each other or they should be! Do you know that when Joseph was made prime minister in Egypt, he was given a wife whose name means 'dedicated', now here is the principle of dedication; six months of that year the girl was purified with the principle of dedication.

What followed after that? Well, 'six months with sweet odours'; now the word 'sweet odours' Hebrew word meaning 'fragrance' and this time, b&s, the word was not associated with the anointing oil but this time the words 'sweet odours' is associated with the powder of the incense that they burnt in the Holy Place, that went up to God as a cloud of a sweet smell, and as a sweet savour in the nostrils of God, and we're told in Psalm 141 and verse 2 that David said, 'lifting up of my hands be as the evening sacrifice and as incense before thee'. The wafting up of incense, b&s, was a symbol of

prayer; remember Zacharias who went into the temple to burn incense, not like the young Knowles lad who said he went in to burn insects (imagine that coming from that family! he himself being a little pest!) but you see, he went in there to burn incense and it was the time of prayer, and they were all praying outside. You know in Revelation chapter 5 we're told that the saints are there and their incense is going up to God, as the sweet odour of their prayers, so it became a symbol of prayer. What follows dedication? Prayer! prayer, b&s, prayer!

You know we had an effort on prayer at Enfield just recently, we did it among ourselves, among our own brethren who were the speakers; we wanted to do it that way because we wanted to do it as a family, an ecclesia. We wanted to tell each other that we ought to pray! It's six months of our life (and I'm only using these terms in a symbolic sense; we don't dedicate ourselves for 6 months and then pray for 6 months in that sense) but what the record is trying to tell us, our life must be made up of two basic ingredients, dedication to God and dedication to God in prayer! You know, it's a remarkable thing to find those two things like that, isn't that what our life is made up of, b&s? You know, it's an incredible fact of life, isn't it? that when we give ourselves to prayer, everything is so different. Our relationship is different to God, we feel under an obligation to do what we've promised or to accept the goodness of God because we've asked for it. It makes a difference in our outlook, it gives us a sense of well-being, we've reached unto God, we've prayed to Him, we must believe that He is because we wouldn't pray to Him if we didn't. And therefore, there's a refreshment about prayer; do you know, b&s, it never ceases to be a cause of marvel to me, that when the Lord Jesus Christ went out and prayed all night, people say, 'what a marvellous thing that He prayed all night', and they think that's marvellous, and so do I, but what's even more marvellous is that He worked all the next day, and I believe that in the very intensity of that prayer which went on through the night, of communion with His Heavenly Father, He found, b&s, a refreshment of His physical power far greater than the disciples vast insight. You know, there's a wonderful thing, and what happened the next day? the sheer dedication of that man to his duty is quite incredible, but His life was made up like that, dedication to His Father and then dedication to His Father in prayer. Wonderful that, b&s!

You know, what's the good of studying that book if we never talk to God? God's talking to us, time and time again; marking up our bibles from end to end, what's the good of that if we're not speaking to God and telling Him what we think about His Word? and asking His advice and seeking His grace and forgiveness, and being specific in our prayers; our life's got to be made up like that, b&s. How do we pray? do we get down with our families and pray? do we for everything? do we make our house a house of prayer? for our nation, if not for all nations? do we do that? And that's the burning question, and I know and you know, that when it comes to the subject of prayer, there's not one of us greater than the other, because everyone finds that hard! and there's nobody who can stand up here and say they're a great criteria and example in prayer. I certainly can't, because we find that difficult, b&s, and we find it difficult for one single reason; and it isn't because we lack concentration, it isn't because we're tired, it isn't because we don't know what to say, I'm very sad to say this, but I've analyzed myself very carefully and critically and this is the reason, I don't believe in God! Ah, yes, I know

I believe in God but there are degrees of that belief; what if that angel came here again and went, would we pray to God that night? I think we might, because we'd know that God was there, and although we profess to know God and believe Him, b&s, and we all do, there are degrees of that belief! A man that's dreadfully aware of the enormity of God and His presence is a man who approaches him in prayer; you know, David put it this way, he saw himself in a city while describing one of the psalms, and he saw himself chased by an enemy into the city, and the enemy put an army around the walls and then leaned over the wall with his hand, and put his hand on David's head and pressed him into the ground, and that's how he felt God in his life, he was besieged by God, and God's hand was on him and he knew that God was there! That was David's awareness of his Creator, and David's life was full of prayer.

Now there are other things necessary for our preparation for the kingdom; they are the things most necessary! And Esther underwent that preparation and in verse 13 we read, 'Then thus came every maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house'. Isn't that wonderful? Now, imagine the cry comes, 'behold, the Bridegroom's here; brethren of Christ, Christadelphians, Jesus Christ is in the world; the Russian horde is attacking Jerusalem.

The world's aflame, b&s, men are gone mad, but Christ is in the earth, come with me! Now we've got a choice in this sense, what do we desire to take out of the house of the women, to the king's house? First of all, b&s, notice where Esther had to take what she wanted; out of the house of the women. Now Lot's wife would have ran back and got a radiogram, or something else out of her own house, and she turned into a pillar of salt; she was licked!

But you see, we've got a choice, b&s, to take something out of the house of the women; what would you like to take? The angel says, 'take whatever you desire'; oh, boy! let me think! whatever it is, b&s, that commends me to God! You know, Nehemiah prayed in these words, and people have criticized Nehemiah for this; he said, 'remember me for good, for all that I've done for this people'. And people have said, 'what an ego', that wasn't ego, b&s, they've misread it! that was abject humility! What Nehemiah was saying was, 'God I've lived a very miserable life set against the life that you desire; I haven't matched up to my responsibilities, but whatever I've done for the good of this people, remember me for that! that's all I want to take, b&s! Whatever it might be, and there's precious little, let us go out of the house of the women to the king's house, and take whatever we desire. And what did Esther want? Nothing! Nothing but what that man said she needed; she desired nothing, we read, nothing whatever; when the time came for her to go in, 'she required nothing', it says, but what Hegai the king's chamberlain had advised her to take'. In other words, b&s, she took the essentials, she took the Word of God, that's what she took. She took the Word of God, she took the proper balanced diet of the Word of God, she took the association she had in the ecclesia with the 7 maidens of regal splendour, and she took with her the results of a good environment. And the king was pleased her; she took nothing! can you imagine some of those other tarts that were called out of the kingdom, who would try to impress the king with all their gaudy beauty, you know, lipstick and so on, hairspray (it'd do me



no good) but all these things; can you imagine it? Powdering their noses and so on, and teasing up their hair and going in there looking like some gaudy ostentatious ostrich! Can they imagine, b&s, that the king is pleased with them?; we talk about cosmetics, what should we use today in regard to cosmetics? well the answer of Esther is nothing. What more beautiful than a natural woman! You know, b&s, there's nothing more beautiful than a natural woman; she may not be endowed with beauty as this world counts beauty, but the character of a woman is her sparkling beauty. What more beautiful than touched by the hand of the spirit of God rubbing in the oil of the Word; she wants nothing more than that and that's what Esther took; what that keeper told her to take, and if we listen to the advice of others in the ecclesia, wise men and wise sisters, b&s, we'll get into the kingdom, and we'll please the King, not because we're trying to impress Him with our beauty, but we're trying to reflect His!

And she was given that choice, and you know, b&s, there was placed before Esther, the dreadful consequences of rejection! because if she missed, we read in verse 14, 'In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines; she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name'. You know, b&s, that's a terrible alternative, the second house of the women. What's that? It's a place where the girls came back, rejected; they would go into that house, they would never be permitted to marry anyone else, because we know that from the rest of the scriptures, (when a king took unto himself a bride, if anyone else requested that bride, that was treachery! Do you know the case of Adonijah and Abishag who was given to David, in the last hours of his life, how long would she be with the king, but how that woman from that hour onwards, was no man's woman for ever and ever. And when Adonijah requested her, treachery it was, and he died for that!) Now that's the case with those women, never ever could they be married, never be married; they could never produce children and they could never see their seed, and they would never see the king. B&S, that wasn't the second house of the women that was the second death. They were as good as dead! and that was the dreadful consequences of rejection; how careful she had to be in all that she did in her approach to the king.

And of course, we know what happened! She was selected but look how the chronicles have written this up; verse 15, 'Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come' (notice that, in other words he's telling us, this woman has been selected, here are the reasons) because she's a Jewess and because Mordecai is her uncle and because he brought her up as his own daughter. In other words, as he is writing down those words he's trying to tell us that it has nothing to do with her natural beauty for why she was selected by that king; there was a power above that throne, b&s, that got her selected for other reasons, and so the full title of that woman is given, and the relationship and the reasons why she's there. There is no way in the world that she could be mis-selected because she was the daughter of the father of the mighty, Abihail, the uncle of Mordecai who had taken her for his daughter. In other words, b&s, to put it differently, what he's trying to tell you is that she was selected to save the Jews, and had nothing whatever to do with her

beauty, although it did enter into it as far as the king was concerned; it was the fact of God's purpose that was served!

And we read at the end of that verse, 'that she obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her'. She obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her, as the bride of Christ, b&s, will be hailed by the whole world for her spiritual beauty and character, when she comes to be adorned in her bridal array. Such was the cause that Esther served on that day!

And all this happened we read, 'in the tenth month of the seventh year of his reign'. Seventh year of his reign, again, b&s, seven chamberlains, seven wise men, seven virgins, seven days of feast in the palace, seventh year of his reign, you can't miss the point, can you? In the tenth month; you know what it was doing in the tenth month, don't you? Notice that the Jewish times are given here, the time of the queen's selection, b&s, the times of the Gentiles are gone; these are Jewish times we're getting here. Tenth month, you look at a Jewish calendar and see what was happening in the tenth month; raining like mad! It was the end of winter, but it was raining, but it was the last month of the heavy rain. And it was the month in which the almond blossom came into prominence, and it was the month that because spring was immediately approaching, they began to hear the voice of the turtledove in the Land. 'The winter's past, come my spouse, we hear the voice of the turtledove in the Land', do you know those words from the Song of Solomon? the winter's going, b&s, here's Shoshannim, here's the white lily of springtime about to blossom for Israel, and Esther's going to get married in spring. It's glorious the way this Word is written, the end of the winter and here she comes, out of all that storm and all that rain, she comes forth as the bride of Christ, and in the seventh year of that king's reign, he's married to his bride. Glorious b&s. Absolutely glorious!

And we read, 'the king loved Esther above all women, and she obtained grace and favour'. Two favourite words of the apostle Paul, grace and favour in his sight, more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti'. The royal crown upon her head, she was the king's woman, b&s, and we're coming to that verse I spoke about, where she most beautifully fitted into that circle of royalty, to which she now stood related.

And he made a great feast and he called it Esther's feast!, you know, b&s, can you tell me the reason given why the marriage supper of the Lamb is called? what announces the beginning of the supper of the Lamb? Anybody know? What's the signal for the beginning of the supper of the Lamb? The bride has made herself ready, that's the signal for the beginning of that feast, not so much that the bridegroom has come, which is necessary, but the bride has made herself ready; that's Esther's position. That's why it's held, because she's made herself ready and that's a signal for that feast to open. Not that that doesn't mean that Christ needs us to prepare before He comes; it doesn't mean that at all! But when He does come, the feast will be inaugurated because the bride has been prepared; it's her day! and who doesn't know that! And we know, of course, in the age to come, marriage ceremonies will have a little greater significance than our own do; it won't be her day in that sense of the word, it's every sense His day! but because it's His day, it's her day, because it's His day. They're getting married, b&s,

and she's marrying him because he is the be-all and end-all of her life, and therefore, it's her day! And the feast had been called because the bride had made herself ready.

And we read in verse 19, 'and when the virgins were gathered together', now if you read that there, 'when the virgins were gathered together the second time', it would appear, b&s, that after the selection of Esther, Ahasuerus did the rounds again, as if he wanted another bride, but the Companion bible suggests and I believe their suggestion is correct when they say, 'whilst they gathered the virgins for the second time', in other words, while this gathering was going on, Mordecai sat in the gate of the king. And in verse 21, 'In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate', you know, I don't doubt for one minute when we read through in our daily readings or in the course of the study of Esther, if we were not careful, we'd miss that and write it off as of no importance, that, b&s, is of monumental importance! The historian is telling us, all the while this is going on, while people are standing aghast at all the wonder and splendour, while all these girls are being paraded as a beauty contest, in that sense of the word, and all this is going on, the important thing is this, that God had placed a man strategically right where He wanted him. He sat in the king's gate, he saw everyone go in, he saw everyone come out, he knew everything that was going on, he could tell you everything. Do you know, b&s, when the crisis came, Mordecai knew the price that Haman had offered to pay for the Jews' death, and nobody else knew that! How did he find out about these two chamberlains, these two eunuchs who plotted the king's death, who kept the door of his private chamber? how did he know? how did he know all the facts that he did? Because, God put him there, and that's what that record is telling us, while all this is going on, Mordecai sat right where the King of heaven wanted him, and he heard everything and knew everything, b&s, and Mordecai had all under his supreme control, and, look at him down by the gate!! with the rest of the eunuchs. As the princes went in and out as the custom was, they would bow in humility; no way would you do that with Haman, but that was the custom for other princes giving them their due reverence as the authority of the land. Mordecai the Jew down at the gate, and he knows everything! because God is revealing everything to him. And so the historian makes that point, 'Mordecai sat in the gate of the king'.

And you know, b&s, in verse 20, 'Esther had not yet showed her kindred nor her people, as Mordecai had charged her; for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him'. B&S, she is queen of the world, receiving her orders from the Jew sitting down there as a servant in the gate. You know what she could have done, don't you? She could have got before her mirror in her private chamber, looked at her royal beauty and think to herself, 'hah, it was a good life with Mordecai, he's not a bad chap really! but after all, I am Esther, and I am the queen; the world's at my feet. He wants me to do certain things, but it's really below my dignity and after all said and done, he's a eunuch in the king's gate; well, it's just not on'. She could have said that, like my children like your children, go to the bible school or somewhere, where we're not; 'now listen, you do this or that'. Sure, dad! Now my children would always obey that implicitly, but there's a question of memory! Weak response, 'I never thought about it! we didn't quite catch what you said!. You know, Esther was not like that; she's in there in supreme power, he's down there; there's no way in the world, b&s,

that he can affect her. She is immune from him, and that woman obeyed him implicitly; I'm going to show you through this Word, b&s, where he refused her command on two occasions; he threw it back at her and said, 'I will not', and when she went back to him she said, 'I will'. And he dictated the terms to that woman in no uncertain language, and that was the attitude of Esther.

You know what the apostle Paul called the Philippians don't you? He said, 'I've heard of your obedience, not only when I am with you, but in my absence also', and the Philippian ecclesia, b&s, because they were Paul's crown and joy, they enjoyed his ministrations so much that they were obedient to his commands; and they didn't need his presence to be obedient. Marvellous isn't it? Marvellous when we see that sort of obedience from children who might outgrow their parents in dignity and importance in this world, but still regard their parents as their parents, as she did! And he wasn't even that you know! You know, she could have excused herself, on other than the grounds of queenship, she could have excused herself on the grounds that he wasn't really her father; she could even have said, 'really he's an equal, he's my cousin. She had every reason naturally speaking to throw off the shackles of Mordecai. No way in the world would Esther do that, and when the time came, b&s, for two of the chamberlains to get together and no one was around, who kept the very door of the king's bedroom, 'let's kill him'. Mordecai sat in the gate of the king, and he heard; from where we're not told, but it merely says, 'the thing was known to Mordecai'.

Now you can imagine how providential circumstances would have revealed that to him; how I would never know! But herein it did, and he told Esther the queen. Who did he tell? Esther the queen! note that, b&s, and it doesn't mean that Esther and Mordecai recognized her as his superior. Oh, no! what it means is this, here is a man who's got brains; here's a man, b&s, who doesn't go through life haphazardly and things happen to him and he says, 'I wonder if that was God working in my life', nor is he a man who said, 'that God was working in everything in his life'. He wasn't like that either, he wasn't irresponsible, he didn't toss a coin and then say that that was the spirit of God directing him one way or the other. He wasn't a man like that! he was a man, b&s, however, that when a thing was revealed to him of great importance, he put it in its right perspective, and he knew the issues of life! Now here's something he hears which he knows will be of the utmost significance; they're planning the death of the king, so who does he tell? ESTHER THE QUEEN, for which I believe, the historian is telling us, he went and said to Esther, 'Look, Esther (he would have said it to her or sent a message to her, I believe he had some contact with her, and he probably said to her) 'now look, I found this out; I want you to tell the king as the queen' (in other words, I want you to make this official) and away she went and she certified it in Mordecai's name, wrote it down in a book, with the queen's signature; they looked into the matter, caught the two scally-wags, strung them up, and then the Hebrew indicates that they were crucified, and they wrote it in the book), marvellous, b&s, 'Mordecai sat in the king's gate'.

You know, he would never know what use would become of that; he wouldn't know, but he was one of those brethren in the ecclesia who always used to the utmost, every opportunity that God gave him, and he used that extremely wisely; and having certified

it officially, she followed his instructions to the letter, and recorded it in that book, b&s. The day was going to come, which on the very night of his execution, I mean Mordecai's execution, that record saved him! Incredible! on the very night they planned to take him, and take him the next day and crucify him, on that very night that record in that book, saved him! What an incredible thing it was, and in saving him, God saved the lives of all the Jews in the Land, because Mordecai became their leader. There's no doubt about it, b&s, the name of God isn't in that story, but it's in every line of that story and that book!