

Introduction

New York City Police have recorded at least 13 Anti-Semitic assaults last week in both Manhattan and several Brooklyn neighborhoods. The city has put more police on the streets. In each of the incidents, the targets were visibly Orthodox Jews. 2019 has been the worst year in recent memory for anti-Semitic incidents in New York City. As of last Sunday, the city saw 214 complaints of hate crimes against Jews. This represents half of all hate crime complaints in that city which is up from 182 in 2018. The rash of anti-Semitic attacks gripping the New York and New Jersey areas may feel like alarming coincidences, but statistics show they're part of a wave of anti-Semitic violence that has risen across the country over the past half-decade. Anti-Semitic assaults in the United States more than doubled in 2018 and anti-Semitic incidents are near all-time highs, according to the Anti-Defamation League.

They also revealed that more than one billion people worldwide hold anti-Semitic views. The poll, which tracked attitudes in 102 countries and territories, provided a rare glimpse of dominant worldwide sentiments about Jews. Among the insights: 35 percent of people in the countries polled had never heard of the Holocaust. 41 percent believe Jews are more loyal to Israel than their own country, and 74 percent of people in the Middle East and North Africa hold anti-Semitic attitudes—the highest regional percentage in the world. Needless to say that anti-Semitism has been on the rise and sad to say I believe it will get worst. I believe God has led me to preach on the book of Esther not just because we intend to see a future production but because it addresses what is the current crisis in America and around the world in regards to Anti-Semitism.

I. The Purpose of a Study on Esther.

1. This book of Esther teaches of the evils of Anti-Semitism and how God met another satanic attempt to destroy the nation Israel. This book will also teach how vengeance was affected upon the perpetrators of these despicable deeds. Esther teaches the providence of God. Esther chronicles how vigorously a foreign power tried to eliminate the Jewish race and how God sovereignly preserved His people in accordance with His covenant promise to Abraham. We live in a time where recent history substantiates that Satan has a hate for the Jews...

2. This is one of the two books of the Old Testament named for a woman. While Ruth is the story of a Gentile who married a Jew, Esther is the story of a Jewess who married a Gentile. What is very interesting about this book it doesn't mention the name of God even once. There is no reference in it to worship, or to faith. There is no prophecy of Christ. There is no mention of heaven or hell. In short, there is nothing very religious about this book. How then did it find its' way into the pages of the Bible? Most commentators on the book of Esther take it as revealing the strange providences of God; that is, how God works behind the scenes.

God has been working behind the scenes to assure His commitment to Abraham. God I believe has used and continues to use this anti-Semitism to bring His rebellious people back to the

home land. One of the more phenomenal events of the 20th century has been the regathering of the Jewish people to the land of Israel and the rebirth of that nation. This was prophesied by God's prophets and Ezekiel made reference to this regathering in **Ezek. 37:21–22**.

3. Scattered among the nations of the world for almost two millennia, they were persecuted as no other people were during that time with nation after nation attempting to destroy them, yet they exist today as a national entity in their ancient homeland. There has been **Seven Aliyah** that is an ingathering up of Jews back to Israel. This ingathering's started in 1882 when approximately 35,000 Jews immigrated to the southwestern area of Syria and between 1929 and 1939, with the rise of Nazism in Germany, a wave of 250,000 immigrants arrived; the largest-ever number of Jewish immigrants in a single year was 249,954 that arrived in Israel.

This coincides with establishment of the State of Israel on May 15, 1948 and it stands as one of the more amazing events in the history of the world. Jews are still returning and it seems mostly due to persecution and anti-Semitism. I believe an exodus from America will happen too. Dr. Showers shared this in OT class at this passage back in 1982.

4. However we must not participate in anti-Semitism. The best response to anti-Semitism is to love the Jewish people. Pastors and priests around the country are being encouraged to have one sermon, just one homily, to explain the tragic history of Jewish-Christian relations. I was contacted this week by the Hudson Valley interfaith group to do so. They were happy to hear that I felt led of God preach this book of Esther in light of the rise of anti-Semitism.

II. Author and Date

1. The author remains unknown, although Mordecai, Ezra, and Nehemiah have been suggested. Whoever penned Esther possessed a detailed knowledge of Persian customs, etiquette, and history, plus they were particular familiar with the palace at Shushan (1:5–7). The author also exhibited intimate knowledge of the Hebrew calendar and customs, while additionally showing a strong sense of Jewish nationalism. My guess is since we have a possible reference in **Esther 9:29- And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that were in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, both nigh and far.**

We do not know for sure but this we can count on that all scripture is inspired of God. **All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 2 Timothy 3:16**

III. Background and Setting

1. Esther occurred during the Persian period of world history. The first four verses that we read is actually one sentence in the language of the Old Testament. We find in this passage the backdrop and Ahasuerus who ruled from the years 486 to 465 B.C.; Esther covers the years of 483–473 B.C. of Ahasuerus reign. The name Ahasuerus represents the Hebrew transliteration of the Persian name “Khshayarsha,” while “Xerxes” represents his Greek name.

2. However, Ahasuerus is not his name it is his title, like the word "Czar" or "Shah" or "Pharaoh." There are several men identified in Scripture as Ahasuerus, not all are the same man, because this is a common title. It means "The Venerable Father" and was a proper title for a king. Secular history identifies this man as possibly being Xerxes the Great, the one who attacked the power of Greece in the fourth century B.C.

3. Some scholars believe this is the son of Cyrus the First, who is the one called in the book of Daniel, "Darius the Mede," the man who took the kingdom from Belshazzar during the great drunken orgy in the city of Babylon on the night that Babylon fell. He is otherwise identified as Xerxes I or Xerxes the Great, who reigned over 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia (Est 1:1). Historians have described the king as quick-tempered, beset by excessive indulgences, and inadequate as a military leader.

4. Esther is of course the main character along with her cousin Mordecai. We learn that at the death of both her parents, young Esther had become the responsibility of her cousin Mordecai, who had stepped in to raise her as his own daughter (2: v. 7).

Conclusion:

The most obvious question raised by Esther comes from the fact that God is nowhere mentioned, as in Song of Solomon. Nor does the writer or any participant refer to the law of God, the Levitical sacrifices, worship, or prayer. The skeptic might ask, "Why would God never be mentioned when the Persian king receives over 175 references? Since God's sovereignty prevailed to save the Jews, why does He then not receive appropriate recognition?"

It seems satisfying to respond that if God desired to be mentioned, He could just as sovereignly have moved the author to write of Him as He acted to save Israel. Esther is the classic illustration of God's providence as He, the unseen power, controls everything for His purpose. Jehovah, whether He is named is not the issue. He is clearly the main character in the drama.

This is authentic history; it's not merely legend or myth, but it is recorded in such a way to see God work behind the scene of human history. God has no ego to bruise for His presence and signature is everywhere. Psalm 19:1