Esther - Commentaries by William Kelly

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Chapter 9:20-32.

THE day comes when the enemies of God and His people shall fall, not by providential means only, but by predicted inflictions of extraordinary and unprecedented character, and finally by the manifest intervention and presence of the Judge Himself. But there will be another immense change antecedent of a spiritual nature. A residue, which in due time will be constituted a strong nation or its nucleus, will be humbled in heart and accept of the punishment of their iniquity, and instead of being as now since Pentecost added together as part of the church of God, will return (as Micah says) “unto the children of Israel.” For the times will have then arrived to form afresh the broken links, and to prove publicly that God has not cast away His people, nor abandoned the land of His promise and oath to the patriarchs, but will fulfill every pledge of blessing to and in them completely and forever. “For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”

What we have in the book of Esther is no more than the witness of secret providence in the face of the extremest dangers looking onward to that grand public issue, and meanwhile yielding a striking and standing ordinance of Him Who delivers though unseen.

“And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all Jews that were in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, both nigh and far, to enjoin them that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly, as the days wherein the Jews had rest from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning into a good day: that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.

“And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them; because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that is, the lot, to consume them, and to destroy them; but when it [or Esther] came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head; and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. Wherefore they called these days Purim, after the name of Pur. Therefore because of all the words of this letter, and [of that] which they had seen concerning this matter, and that which had come unto them, the Jews ordained and took upon them and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so that it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to the writing thereof, and according to the appointed time thereof, every year; and [that] these days [should be] remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and [that] these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed. And Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all authority to confirm this second letter of Purim. And he sent letters unto all the Jews, to the hundred twenty and seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, words of peace and truth, to confirm these days of Purim in their appointed times, according as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had enjoined them, and as they had decreed for themselves and for their seed, [in] the matters of the fastings and their cry. And the commandment of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim; and it was written in the book” (ver. 20-32).

Here again, it will be noticed, the book cleaves to its sincerely impressed character, and not even then is He named Whom ordinarily and naturally it were the highest duty to proclaim. Yet is the utter difference made plain in man's word; for the Talmud lays down that at the feast of Purim a man should drink till he knew not the difference between “Blessed be Mordecai,” and “Cursed be Haman.” “Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?” Judaism, and Christendom where Christ is ignored, each sinking into the driest ditch of heathenism, both dare to sanction a reveling carnival where had been a holy feast.

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Chapter 9:1-19

THERE is no assurance more clearly, frequently, and solemnly given throughout the Prophetic books than the final restoration of Israel to the joy of all the earth and the blessing of all the families of man. But there is no feature of it more characteristic than the execution of judgment on the wicked whatever they may be, especially on their enemies. Herein it stands in the fullest contrast with the church's hope in pure and heavenly grace—to be taken completely on high to join the Lord Jesus and be in the Father's house; just as Christ rose and ascended without the least sign of retribution for the world. The Jews pass through the fires of that day and are purified thereby. The church is simply caught up to be with Christ. We may readily see that the type of the earthly people's deliverance is pursued in what follows, “And in the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day thereof, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have rule over them (whereas it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them), the Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt. And no man could withstand them; for the fear of them was fallen upon all the peoples. And all the princes of the provinces, and the satraps, and the governors, and they that did the king's business, helped the Jews; because the fear of Mordecai was fallen upon them. For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went forth throughout all the provinces: for the man Mordecai waxed greater and greater. And the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and with slaughter and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them. And in Shushan the fortress the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men. And Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and Aspatha, and Poratha, and Adalia, and Aridatha, and Parmashta, and Arisai, and Aridai, and Vajezatha, the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Jews' enemy, they slew; but on the spoil they laid not their hand. On that day the number of those that were

slain in Shushan the fortress was brought before the king.”

“And the king said unto Esther the queen, The Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the fortress, and the ten sons of Haman; what then have they done in the rest of the king's provinces! Now what is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: or what is thy request further? and it shall be done. Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan to do to-morrow also according unto this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows. And the king commanded it so to be done; and a decree was given out in Shushan; and they hanged Haman's ten sons. And the Jews that were in Shushan gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day also of the month Adar, and slew three hundred men in Shushan; but on the spoil they laid not their hand,”

“And the other Jews that were in the king's provinces gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives, and had rest from their enemies, and slew of them that hated them seventy and five thousand but on the spoil they laid not their hand. [This was done] on the thirteenth day of the month Adar; and on the fourteenth thereof they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. But the Jews that were in Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth [day] thereof, and on the fourteenth thereof; and on the fifteenth of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. Therefore do the Jews of the villages, that dwell in the unwalled towns, make the fourteenth of the month Adar a day of gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another” (vers. 1-19).

In the first book of the law God gave the type of Him Who, rejected by His brethren after the flesh, is exalted to administer the kingdom over the Gentiles, preserving His brethren as others also during days of famine, and at length made known to them. Here in the closing book of history in the O.T. we have not only the arch-enemy ignominiously destroyed who sought their destruction but the adversaries of the Jews everywhere put to; the sword. So full is scripture of this mighty change yet to be accomplished, that it would be easy to point out phases of it in perhaps every book of the O.T., and in none more conspicuously than the Psalms, unless it be in the Prophets. But this it may suffice here simply to affirm. The N. T. pledges the same expectation from the first Gospel to the last, the Acts of the Apostles confirming it; the Epistles, while occupied with the heavenly people and their proper hope, in no wise forget the blessed vista for the earth in the day of the Lord; and the Apocalypse crowns the truth for both heaven and earth under Christ the Heir of all things.

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