

**Christ in Prophecy**  
**Jesus in the Old Testament 23**  
**For Such a Time As This (Esther)**  
**Key Verse: Esther 4:14**

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## Opening

**Tim Moore:** Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope and soon-returning King. Welcome to Christ in Prophecy! I'm Tim Moore.

**Nathan Jones:** And I'm Nathan Jones. For the past couple of weeks in our Jesus in the Old Testament series, we've followed the order of books as they're actually laid out in our Bible, instead of the chronological order of the events they describe.

**Tim Moore:** Exactly. For that reason, we've already discussed Ezra and Nehemiah, describing the return of the Jewish people from exile in Babylon back to the Promised Land. In the weeks to come, we'll return to the poetic and prophetic books that were written prior to the exile. But today, we will focus on a book that speaks of a young woman who seized an opportunity to intervene on behalf of her people in such a time as this.

**Nathan Jones:** Esther was obviously the name of the young Jewish woman who became a queen in Persia, and the book named after her. The events described in the book took place in about 480 BC, 2,500 years ago.

Thankfully, Esther did not shrink from the urgent need to intercede for God's chosen people. She stands as an exemplar for us still today, and the Jewish people still commemorate her role as a deliverer every year at Purim.

**Tim Moore:** God is still calling people to seize opportunities and intervene on behalf of His people. Our guest today is a lady with a tremendous personal testimony. She serves in a high position on a global scale, even as her focus is on the Middle East. She is an exemplar in her own right as someone lifted up to serve in such a time as this.

## Part 1

**Tim Moore:** The lady I've been describing is Rita El-Mounayer, the CEO of SAT-7, a television network that directs Christ-centered programming toward the Middle East. Rita, thank you for joining us today via Zoom.

**Rita El-Mounayer:** It's my honor. And I pray that I'll bring a different perspective from the Middle East that unites with this interview.

**Tim Moore:** Rita I first had the privilege to meet you and hear your powerful testimony at the National Religious Broadcasters Convention last year. Can you tell our viewers a little bit about your background, where you are from and how you came to be the CEO of SAT-7?

**Rita El-Mounayer:** It has been a very long journey. I am from Lebanon. I was born during the war in Lebanon. I lost dear ones during the war in Lebanon. My father was so much involved in the Christian Militia in Lebanon, and I lost my mom when I was seven, and my sister was five. From what I remember of my childhood years, and teenage years is bunkers, and grenades, and bombs, and running from one place to another, and living in shelters and fear. Sometimes I still smell the smoke of the grenades and bombs in my nose until today.

But I think all this made me the kind of person I am today because at the age of 15 I decided I'd commit myself to Jesus Christ and started going to church. And at that time, I thought that all of the problems would go away, but they didn't. The difference was that I knew that day that the problems would remain, and I would still have challenges, especially as Lebanese living in Lebanon, but I am not alone, He is with me. He's going to guide me. He's going to carry me. He's going to protect me. He's going to teach me. And this was this journey that started at the age 15.

I studied media, went into radio, and then after that I started with SAT-7. I've been there since the beginning, since 1996 when SAT-7 was established. And until today I've worked in everything. I worked as a camera woman. I worked as a producer, as a presenter, as a director. I worked as a program manager, and then at the end I became the CEO of SAT-7. And how I got here, I really believe that it is a call, because when I started with SAT-7 it was not a job for me, it was a call to proclaim God's love to millions of people who are confused and are suffering, and they don't have answers. People like me afraid; they are not sure about the future. And this is where I saw myself guided by His Holy Spirit to make a difference in the lives of people that I love and I'm serving today.

**Nathan Jones:** Rita I was also overwhelmed by your testimony. In the brief interview we aired last year as a Prophetic Perspective you made a shocking statement. You said, you would not trade away the tragedies in your life. In other words, given seasons of great pain and suffering, you would not undo anything that you endured. Can you explain your reasoning?

Well, as I said they made me the person that I am today. So, when I witness to people in Syria I know their pain and I can speak a word of wisdom to them. And I can tell them, I've been there. I know what it feels like to be a person who lived in a war zone. Or even when I talk to children especially that are afraid about their future, they are losing dear ones. I remember one child said that her mother is dying of cancer, and I could just feel myself in her shoes, and trying to help her. I told her, "Hey, my mom was sick as well." And because of the war I lost her because there was no medical attention, like those days. So, yeah, I thank God for all of the things that happened in my life. And sometimes I think if God comes to me today and says, "Hey, Rita I'm going to give you a beautiful life. You're going to be born in the US and you will not lose your family. Your father wouldn't be dead. Your mother wouldn't be dead." I would say no. No because this is the journey. It was hard. It was rough. Full of challenges, fears, and insecurities, but this is the journey that God wants me to walk in it. And God will use it and is using it through SAT-7 to make a difference in society, and the culture I live in.

**Tim Moore:** Rita your testimony sounds a lot like Joseph. And I'm convinced that our human inclination to avoid any pain or suffering often shortchanges the lesson God wants us to learn experientially. That is true for us as individuals and for our children and our grandchildren. How many times do we intervene and undermine what God is doing? Although we do not

intentionally seek seasons of trial and suffering we should always be attuned to what God is doing, and opportunities that He is presenting us with in every season of life.

**Rita El-Mounayer:** And it's not easy. It is challenging. There are a lot of times, maybe let's put challenges, hardship, persecution, to make a church grow, but a lot of times it kills the church. And we saw a lot of examples from history, history of Christianity especially in the Middle East and North Africa. So, talking about maybe Japan, maybe China. I mean China is a beautiful example of a thriving church after persecution. Japan no. So, between North Africa and Iran today you see there is a growing church in Iran that you don't see in North Africa. So, you don't know, but you have to trust. A lot of times when we don't know we have to trust Him because He knows better. And this is the challenge in our Christian faith, in our journey, walking with Him is the trust issue.

**Nathan Jones:** The Bible is just full of pagan people and rulers who came to recognize and respect the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. All of us here have been grafted into the family of God as Gentiles following the footsteps of Cornelius in Acts. Well, you're calling is to reach primarily into the Arab world. The Holy Spirit is certainly moving in the Arab world. Can you share some of the exciting things that our American media will never report regarding the church in the Middle East and North Africa?

**Rita El-Mounayer:** Well, the Middle East and North Africa has the fastest growing church in the world. And where? Iran. I mean just unbelievable, and this is like a miracle. And the size, the church in the Middle East and North Africa is big in size. Now, if you compare it to the history of Christianity it is small, but we know it is not about the size, it's about the effect of the church. We have between 15-16 million indigenous Christians born in the Middle East and North Africa, and another maybe 2 million expats. And the third thing that this church lives out Jesus' teachings; what Jesus taught us about forgiveness, about reconciliation, about peace, about love. I still remember when some of the terrorists burned the churches in Egypt, and they wrote on them we hate you. I mean the church wrote and said, but we love you. I still remember, now we are celebrating the martyrdom of the Egyptians in Libya on the shore and they behead them. You know a woman called our program and told us, the day, or the second day when they were killed, she told us, "I am a mother of three, two brothers and one son-in-law, they all were beheaded, but I forgive ISIS because ISIS has now showed the world that martyrdom is laying your life for others. Martyrdom is considering everything God which in order to win Christ."

**Nathan Jones:** Well, Rita speaking of faithful believers in the Middle East and their willingness to glorify Jesus Christ regardless of the cost to themselves, you shared a powerful word of testimony regarding brothers and sisters in Algeria. What was their attitude regarding their Christian testimony?

**Rita El-Mounayer:** I remember I went to Algeria in 2013 after they were really nagging me on the phone, "Come and visit our church. Come and visit our church." I went there and the church was packed. Something that you don't see a lot of in Europe or other places in the world, and they are all Muslim converts. And when I was there they were saying, "Okay film us. Let's be on SAT-7. You've filmed churches in Lebanon, or Egypt and other places but film us."

And I was just concerned because filming in Egypt and Lebanon they are all Christians and they are not converts they were born Christian, but these people filming them and millions of people seeing their faces it will jeopardize their life. And I said, "Are you sure, I mean your faces will be shown on our screens." "Yes." "But millions of people will see." "Yes." "And they will know that

you come from a Muslim background.” “Yes.” Then I was looking at them and then one lady looked me in the eye and said, “Rita, what are you afraid of?” I said, “I’m not afraid of anything. I live in a free country of Lebanon and Cyprus, but you.” She said, “What do you mean? Persecution?” And I said, “Yes.” And she said, “Rita, persecution is a crown we put on our heads every single day. Don’t take it away from us.”

And you know they started closing the church in 2019, the churches in Algeria. And I called them, the believers there, the people that we connected with, “Oh, don’t worry. They close our churches we can worship under a tree. We can go another person’s home and worship. Rita, they close our churches but they can never close our hearts loving Jesus Christ.”

**Tim Moore:** What a wonderful testimony of persevering faith. Rita, if you ever encounter those brothers and sisters in Christ again I hope you’ll tell them that they’ve impacted believers all over the world with their faith, including all of us here. Returning to our focus text for today, scoffers like to point out that God is never mentioned by name in the book of Esther. How would you respond to that accusation?

**Rita El-Mounayer:** Well, as with our own lives God is in control whether we cite His presence or not. But let me tell you it is just a fact. Perhaps in part that Mordecai told Esther not to mention her background, her nationality, or reveal who she is. But the whole thing is the story of politics, of racism, of attempted genocide. And this is where we have to learn that we have to put others, or other nations before us, this is what Jesus told us, and be like a jewel of proclaiming His love to people around us.

**Tim Moore:** Well, turmoil in the Middle East seems to be the norm rather than the exception, and if anything, the tension and the threats are growing day by day. Your own birth nation, Lebanon has descended into a cycle of unrest and chaos. Iran despotic government is sowing radicalism throughout the region and determined to annihilate Israel. We know that God loves the Arab people and is calling many of them to a saving faith in Jesus, but there are also multiple prophecies concerning these nations. How should we engage with our Middle Eastern brothers and sisters in Christ and how should we interact with those nations?

**Rita El-Mounayer:** This is a beautiful question. And I wrote a couple of things down so not to forget mentioning them. First there are many misunderstandings because of the news in the West. You know like only the acts of war and terrorism are on the news. And we see it not just in the West, also in this part of the world. Most people are very kind. Most people in this region are hospitable, are family oriented. They want to live in dignity. They care for their children. This is most of the people. Maybe what you see on TV is only 5-10% of people who are terrorists, etcetera. And these people, and especially the believers we need to support them. As we in the West, like especially in the US support Israel, you need to support the church it is the body of Christ that is always is forgotten. You know people in the church in Iraq, the church in Syria, the Christians in Lebanon, the Christians in Egypt, these are the first people who suffer, you know when there is an extremist attack on the nation. And these are the people that I consider like Esther today, for the time like this these people exist to bring change, to bring reconciliation, to bring peace, to witness to Jesus Christ. This is the church that we believe that the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. These are the people of the Middle East and I’m talking especially Christians there.

**Nathan Jones:** Rita it is a real privilege to pray for fellow believers around the world and be an instrument of outreach for Christ. For our viewers who are unfamiliar tell us about SAT-7, what is its purpose and mission, and where do you focus your outreach?

**Rita El-Mounayer:** Well, just briefly we are a Christian television services in Arabic, Farsi for Iran, and Turkish for Turkey. And Arabic with different dialects, you know the Middle East and North Africa. We are there on satellite. We are there on digital media just to proclaim God's Word to many. We are there to strengthen the church. There was a strong church maybe hundreds of years ago, but now it is a church according to many that is dying or immigrating, even though I don't believe that because I really believe that the church is stronger than ever. The numbers don't show us like the strength of the church. And we are there to strengthen the church and also to win millions of people who are in desperate need to know Him, to love Him, who have lots of questions in their mind about Jesus Christ, to give them the truth of Jesus, through the Word of God. So, we are there for children. We are there for women. We are there for families. We are there just to give the peace, and love and the Word of God to millions of people in the Middle East and North Africa.

**Tim Moore:** Rita, your background with children and children's programming is such a powerful way to connect with families and to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ. How can our viewers connect with SAT-7 viewing the wealth of material you stream into the Middle East and supporting your effort to point people to Jesus Christ?

**Rita El-Mounayer:** Well, you can visit our website: [www.sat7usa.org](http://www.sat7usa.org). And we have an app called Sat-7 Plus, android or IOS, it is for free. You download it and you can watch many in four languages, some are English, so you watch it in Turkish, Arabic, and Farsi, and some are in English. And you can always, I know that you will be praying for us, but you can always visit us. Come and visit. Come and meet these people. I mean when I go around, maybe because of the children program, people invite me not because I'm a CEO, they don't know anything about how important I am in the organization, they invite me because they've seen me on the screen, this is the lady that teaches our children about Jesus. So, I come and sit with them, and eat with them and play with them, and talk with them. Come and visit and you will fall in love with the people of the Middle East and North Africa.

**Tim Moore:** Rita you are such a tremendous blessing. And God has poured out blessing not only into your life, but through your life. I'm so glad you could join us today. And we do pray God's continued blessing on your life and on your leadership at SAT-7.

**Rita El-Mounayer:** Thank you for giving me this opportunity. Please continue to pray and come and visit us.

## **Part 2- Signs of the Times Segment: War and Rumor of War- Does God Care?**

**Tim Moore:** Throughout human history, wars or rumors of war have been the norm. Small wars wage almost continually, although that description doesn't capture the human tragedy of war, regardless of the perceived size.

**Nathan Jones:** Over the past several weeks, attention has turned to Ukraine, where Russian president Vladimir Putin has unleashed the dogs of war. The devastation inflicted to that nation,

let alone the mounting toll of human suffering, just boggles the mind. Which leads many people to ask: Does God care and is this a sign of the End Times?

**Tim Moore:** Let us put our bottom line up front: God does care! He cares for nations as well as individuals. If a sparrow cannot fall from the sky without Him taking notice, He certainly cares for every man, woman, and child regardless of where they live.

I'll come back to that overriding point in a moment, but let's turn our attention to the lessons the Ukraine war should offer to Christians. Our insight is tempered with humility because the situation is too fresh to offer final clarity in hindsight.

Having said that, we know from Scripture that God:

One: allows us to exercise free will even when we choose to act in a sinful manner.

Two: God works all things together to fulfill His own purpose and plan.

Three: God sometimes judges nations by raising up other even more wicked nations.

Four: In the end every evil deed will receive the punishment and wrath it deserves.

**Nathan Jones:** Well, what does this mean for the Russian onslaught of Ukraine?

Well, to be blunt, it means one: Whether Vladimir Putin or Joseph Stalin or Adolf Hitler or countless other dictators, oppressors, and bullies, those acting wickedly will inflict suffering on others. Well, I mention bullies because this inclination toward callous oppression is evident even at your local elementary school. The sinful heart of man will seek, and find, opportunities to act on the sin that festers in every unredeemed heart. The damage done to others depends only on the scope of power and weaponry at an evil actor's disposal.

Number two: We know that Satan also schemes to inflict harm on us, just as he did with Job. At times, the suffering seems senseless and more than we can bear. Well, certainly, we recognize that many are permanently harmed and killed as Satan and his unwitting allies wreak havoc on our fallen world. But Satan's outrage at Calvary became God's greatest victory to His own glory. Rita also testified that God took the ashes of pain and suffering in her own life and turned them into beauty as she now ministers to others.

**Tim Moore:** The next lesson is one we can only submit as Biblically true; we do not have enough insight to apply it specifically in Ukraine's situation. That brings us to three: We do know that God pours out judgment on nations by allowing even more wicked nations to ascend and inflict great suffering. He did that to Israel with Assyria, and later to Judah with Babylon. The suffering documented in Jeremiah and Lamentations is horrifying to consider. But even as the prophet recognized that God was allowing judgment to fall, Jeremiah's faith in God and His faithfulness was not shaken. Even in wrath, God does remember mercy.

And four: Ultimately, the perpetrators of evil in our world will be judged. They may avoid human prosecution but they will stand before the righteous Judge, as will we all. God will judge not just the wicked actions but the wicked heart and motivations of every person who ever lived. And He will mete out just punishment by His own perfect wisdom.

**Nathan Jones:** For all of us who put our trust in Jesus Christ, the punishment we deserve has already been poured out on Him at the cross. He endured the suffering death on our behalf, so now there is now no condemnation for those who put their faith in Him.

Well, regarding the signs spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 24, we are witnessing a precipitous rise in the frequency and intensity of all the signs. The war in Ukraine has already impacted us here at home. And the real threat of another Cold War, let alone the possibility of a nuclear exchange, something that we thought was merely a nightmare from the past, has become a reality once again.

**Tim Moore:** Wars and rumors of wars are front and center on the world stage. The international political stage is being set for the End Times as foretold in Bible prophecy. Soon and very soon, Jesus will collect His Bride. Then, the horrors unleashed by Russia will pale in comparison to the Tribulation that falls upon the world.

Do not trust in princes or kings or presidents or prime ministers. Do not rely on your savings or retirement plan. Put your trust in Jesus Christ and know that an eternity of indescribable joy awaits you in the presence of our great God and Savior.

### **Part 3- How Then Shall We Live?: The Rise of Ignorance**

**Tim Moore:** Esther was in the right place at the right time to be an instrument of God to save the Jewish people. But only in hindsight do we see the hand of the Lord guiding her path to prominence.

Before Judah was defeated and carted into exile, Isaiah warned that God's anger was being aroused by His people's wicked ways. He spoke "woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness. Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight!" He predicted that the Jewish people would go into exile "for their lack of knowledge" or what we would call discernment or wisdom.

**Nathan Jones:** Isaiah could have been describing our wayward society and our confused culture. As the meme says, our leaders are incapable of great deeds anymore, they can't even figure out which bathroom to use.

Well, like Israel and Judah before us, our ignorance is without excuse. We have willfully abandoned the wisdom handed down to us by forebears who at least respected the truth of God's Word. Now, our leaders tell people to embrace their own truth, or dismissingly scoff, what is truth?

Younger generations are bearing the scars for such foolishness. Increasingly numbers of them don't know who they are, what gender they want to be, or whether their life has any meaning. How did we stray so far? We've abandoned the Rock to be tossed about on a raging sea of moral relativism.

**Tim Moore:** Unlike Esther you may not be in a position to save an entire people. But God has positioned you in such a time and a place to touch the lives around you. As Mordecai said, "If you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise from another place," but as he warned, "many who could be saved will perish."

You are like Esther in one other important way. If you've been grafted into the family of God you too have attained royalty because you are a child of the King. Do not let ignorance or fear silence your voice. Rise to the occasion, in such a time as this.

## Closing

**Tim Moore:** Well, I think it is obvious why I wanted Rita El-Mounayer to be our guest on this episode focusing on Esther. Rita demonstrates God's ability to turn ashes to beauty! From an upbringing marred by tragedy and pain, He raised her up to intercede for people whose lives tend toward tragedy and pain.

**Nathan Jones:** Well, all of us come to faith in Christ with baggage, some due to our own sin and sinfulness, and some due to the suffering inflicted on us by other people's sin and sinfulness.

Rita exemplifies someone who takes what Satan meant for evil and turns it to an opportunity to glorify Christ and pour into others. Like Joseph, who said regarding his own brothers' malicious offense, "You meant it for harm, but God meant it for good."

**Tim Moore:** That's the promise of Scripture for those who put their faith in Jesus Christ. God works all things together for good in our lives. We just have to trust in Him.

Our Key Verse this week is Esther 4:14 which points to Esther's opportunity to trust in God, even though He is not mentioned by Name. She had been put in a position to intervene for her people, as long as she rose to that opportunity in such a time as this.

All of us, not just Christians in hostile nations like North Korea and China and Iran, are called to serve the Lord and intervene on behalf of His people in such a time as this.

**Nathan Jones:** Esther demonstrates that Jesus is woven throughout the Word of God, even when He is not mentioned by name and when He does not appear in a Christophany.

Our *Christ in Prophecy Study Guide* is a tremendous resource to help you become attuned to the presence of our Savior throughout the Bible. For a gift of \$20 or more, we would be glad to send it to you.

**Tim Moore:** Well, that is our program for today. Join Nathan and me the next time we focus on Jesus in the Old Testament, as we grapple with one of the oldest books in the Bible. Read Job and put yourself in Job's position as you consider the questions he wanted to ask the Almighty. Until then, I'm Tim Moore.

**Nathan Jones:** And I'm Nathan Jones, saying, look up, be watchful, for the Lord, who is not silent but offers us deliverance, in this time and place and forevermore, is drawing near.

## End of Program