



“And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!”

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Lesson 1: Introduction to the Book of Esther

Author and Date

The authorship of the Book of Esther is traditionally unknown. Some Jewish traditions attribute the writing to Mordecai, a central figure in the story. Some hold the position that “According to *Baba Bathra* 15a, ‘the men of the Great Synagogue wrote ... the roll of Esther.’”¹ But most opinions hold “Josephus (*Antiquities* xi.6.1) considered Mordecai to be the author, and this opinion seems also to have been held in the synagogue. In favor of this there has sometimes been urged the fact that in the last two chapters of Esther mention is made of letters and writings of Mordecai. But there is no evidence that these letters or writings are the book of Esther or even a part thereof. Furthermore, in the light of 10:3 it seems rather clear that Mordecai was not the author of the book.”² Other possible authors might be Ezra or Nehemiah, but for either of these there is no good linguistic evidence, judging from the style or diction of the three books concerned.³

The fact is that we do not know who the author was. It seems clear that he was not only a Jew (4:14; 6:13; 8:16-17) and had knowledge of Jewish customs (9:26-32) but also lived in Persia rather than in Palestine, since he exhibits such an intimate acquaintance with Persian life and customs (1:1-8; 2:18; 8:8-9; 10:1-2)

The events of Esther are generally believed to have taken place during the reign of King Xerxes (Ahasuerus) of Persia, approximately 486–465 B.C. and would have occurred during the time period between “Ezra 6 and 7.”⁴ “The king in the Book of Esther is Xerxes, the son of Darius I, Darius the Great. He ruled the Persian empire from 486 to 465 B.C. Vashti was dethroned in the third year of his reign (1:3), which would be 483. History tells us that Xerxes held a great feast for his princes in that year in preparation for his invasion of Greece. The campaign lasted until 479 and was a disaster. It was probably his shame and defeat that led Xerxes to wish he had not deposed Vashti. Esther was made queen in the seventh year of his reign (2:16), the year 479. It was in the twelfth year of his reign that the plot of Haman was hatched (3:7), the year 474; so Esther had been queen about five years when Haman went to work. Xerxes was assassinated in 465.”⁵ “The latest *terminus ad quem* is prior to 330 B.C. since there are no traces of Greek influence either in language or in thought to be discovered in Esther. The most likely date of composition is somewhere in the latter half of the fifth century.”⁶

Historical Context

The story of Esther is set in the Persian Empire, specifically in the capital city of Susa (Shushan). This period was marked by the vast expansion of the Persian Empire, which included a diverse population and cultures. The Jewish people, who had been exiled to Babylon and later came under Persian rule, played a significant role in the narrative. For some further study on the challenges to the Historicity of the book I would refer you to “Historicity of the book” from Edward J. Young, [An Introduction to the Old Testament](#). (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 355 and “Opposition to the Historicity of Esther” from Gleason Archer Jr., [A Survey of Old Testament Introduction](#), 3rd. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 464.

¹ Edward J. Young, [An Introduction to the Old Testament](#). (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 354.

² Ibid

³ Gleason Archer Jr., [A Survey of Old Testament Introduction](#), 3rd. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 464.

⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament](#) (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), Es.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Gleason Archer Jr., [A Survey of Old Testament Introduction](#), 3rd. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 464.

Main Characters

- **Esther:** A Jewish orphan who becomes queen of Persia. The name Esther (“star”) is Persian. Her Hebrew name, Hadassah, means myrtle. She was beautiful, lovely in form and features.⁷
- **Mordecai:** Esther’s cousin and guardian, who uncovers a plot to destroy the Jews. Mordecai is a Babylonian name taken from the god Marduk. The name *mrđk* is attested in fifth-century Aramaic documents. Mordecai was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin.⁸
- **King Ahasuerus (Xerxes I):** The king of Persia who marries Esther. The Persian king Ahasuerus reigned from 486 to 465 bc; he was the son of Darius I, who is mentioned in Ezra and Nehemiah (e.g., Ezra 4:5; Neh 12:22). Prior to events in the book of Esther, Xerxes had already had experiences with the Jewish people—he is also mentioned in Ezra 4:6, where a group of people complain to him about the building projects of the Jewish people who returned to Judah.⁹
- **Haman:** The villain of the story, who plots to annihilate the Jewish people. The name, Haman, is probably the same as the classical Omanes, and in ancient Persian, *Umana*, an exact equivalent of the Greek “Eumenes.” Hammedatha is perhaps the same as *Madâta* or *Mahadâta*, an old Persian name signifying “given by (or to) the moon.” *the Agagite*] The Jews generally understand by this expression “the descendant of Agag,” the Amalekite monarch of 1 Sam. 15. Haman, however, by his own name, and the names of his sons (9:7–9) and his father, would seem to have been a genuine Persian.¹⁰

Theme

Esther tells how the Jewish nation was rescued from extinction. It explains the origin of one of the Jews’ most festive holidays, the Feast of Purim. The word “Purim” means “lots,” and refers to the casting of lots by Haman to determine the day of the slaughter of the Jews (9:26–31; 3:7). Purim is held the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the last month of the Jewish calendar (our Feb.–March). It is usually preceded by a fast on the thirteenth day in memory of Esther’s fast (4:16). That evening the Book of Esther is read publicly in the synagogue. Each time the name of Haman is read, the Jews stamp on the floor, hiss, and cry, “Let his name be blotted out!” The next day, they again meet at the synagogue for prayers and the reading of the Law. The rest of the day and the next day are given over to great rejoicing, feasting, and giving gifts. There is no OT authorization from God for this feast, but the Jews have been observing it faithfully for centuries.¹¹

Providence

God’s name is nowhere seen in this book, but God’s hand is nowhere missing! He is “standing somewhere in the shadows” ruling and overruling. As you study the book, note the following evidences of God’s providential workings: (1) Esther being chosen queen over all the other candidates, 2:15–18; (2) Mordecai discovering the plot to kill the king, 2:21–23; (3) the casting of lots for the day to destroy the Jews resulting in a date late in the year, giving time for Mordecai and Esther to act, 3:7–15; (4) the king’s welcome to Esther after ignoring her for a month, 5:2; (5) the king’s patience with Esther in permitting her to hold another banquet, 5:8; (6) the king’s insomnia that brought to light Mordecai’s deed of kindness, 6:1ff; (7) the king’s apparent lapse of memory in 6:10–14, that led him to honor one of the Jews he had agreed to slay; (8) the king’s deep concern for Esther’s welfare, when he had a harem to choose from, 7:5ff.¹²

⁷ John A. Martin, “Esther,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 703–704.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), Es 1:1.

¹⁰ Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament: I Samuel to Esther*, ed. F. C. Cook, J. M. Fuller (London: John Murray, 1879), 494.

¹¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), Es.

¹² Ibid.

Summary Message of the Book

The Book of Esther is a narrative of deliverance, highlighting God's providence and faithfulness in preserving His people. It emphasizes themes of courage, faith, and divine intervention.

Lesson 1: Overview and Background (Esther 1:1–2:18)

Summary of the Verses

Esther 1:1-9: The Banquet

- **Verses 1-4:** King Ahasuerus (Xerxes I) hosts a grand feast to display his wealth and the splendor of his kingdom. This lavish display serves to highlight the king's power and the vastness of his empire, which spanned from India to Ethiopia, over 127 provinces.
- **Verses 5-8:** A subsequent feast is held for all the people in Susa, both great and small. The detailed description of the feast, including the luxurious decorations and the king's open-handed generosity, underscores the opulence of the Persian court.
- **Verse 9:** Queen Vashti also hosts a banquet for the women in the royal palace, suggesting her prominent status and the separate social spheres for men and women in Persian culture.

Esther 1:10-22: Vashti's Deposition

- **Verses 10-12:** On the seventh day of the feast, the king, in high spirits from wine, commands Queen Vashti to appear before him and his guests to display her beauty. Vashti's refusal to comply is significant, showing her independence and potentially setting a precedent for women in the empire.
- **Verses 13-15:** The king consults his advisors, who are experts in law and justice, about what should be done to Vashti for her disobedience. This illustrates the importance of law and order in the Persian administration.
- **Verses 16-20:** Memucan, one of the advisors, argues that Vashti's refusal will encourage other women in the kingdom to disobey their husbands. He recommends that Vashti be stripped of her royal position, and that a decree be issued to ensure that all women honor their husbands.
- **Verses 21-22:** The king agrees with Memucan's advice, and a royal decree is sent out to all parts of the empire, proclaiming that every man should be ruler over his own household. This decree emphasizes the extent of the king's authority and the importance placed on male dominance of the era.

Esther 2:1-18: Esther Becomes Queen

- **Verses 1-4:** After some time, the king's anger subsides, and he remembers Vashti and what was decreed against her. His advisors suggest searching for beautiful young virgins throughout the kingdom to find a new queen. This indicates the king's desire to move forward and find a replacement for Vashti.
- **Verses 5-7:** Mordecai, a Jew living in Susa, is introduced. He is a descendant of the Jews exiled from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. Mordecai has raised his cousin Hadassah (Esther), who is described as lovely and beautiful.
- **Verses 8-11:** Esther is taken to the king's palace and placed under the care of Hegai, the custodian of the women. She gains favor with Hegai, who provides her with special beauty treatments and privileges. Mordecai instructs her not to reveal her Jewish identity.
- **Verses 12-14:** The young women undergo a year-long beauty treatment before being presented to the king. This process emphasizes the value placed on physical beauty and preparation in the Persian court.
- **Verses 15-18:** When it is Esther's turn to be presented to the king, she wins his favor and affection more than any of the other women. The king places the royal crown on her head and makes her queen instead of Vashti. A great banquet is held in her honor, and the king declares a holiday in the provinces and gives gifts, signifying his approval and celebration of the new queen.

Textual Questions

1. What did Ahasuerus do for the leaders of the provinces of Persia for 180 days (1:1-4)?
2. What did Ahasuerus do for the people who were present in Shushan for seven days (1:5-8)?
3. What did Vashti do for the women (1:9)?
4. What did Ahasuerus request of Vashti and how did she respond (1:10-12)?
5. What argument did Memucan make to the king concerning Vashti's actions (1:13-18)?
6. What suggestion did Memucan make to the king concerning what should be done to Vashti (1:19)?
7. What effect did Memucan believe this command would have on all the wives in the kingdom of Persia (1:20-22)?
8. What did the king's servants suggest to him concerning the replacement of Vashti (2:1-4)?
9. How are Mordecai and Esther introduced for the first time in this story (2:5-7)?
10. How was Esther treated differently from the other maidens (2:8-11)?
11. What was the routine for the maidens who took turns visiting the king (2:12-14)?
12. What happened when it came time for Esther to take her turn (2:15)?
13. When was Esther taken to the king and how did he feel about her (2:16-18)?

Deeper Thought Questions

1. What was the other name for Ahasuerus and what are the approximate dates of his reign over Persia (1:1)? Where in the books of Daniel and Ezra is “Ahasuerus” mentioned and is he the same as the “Ahasuerus” of Esther 1:1?
2. What were the 127 provinces of Persia and where on a map are they located (1:1)?
3. What was the other name for Shushan and where was this city located (1:2)? Where in the books of Daniel and Nehemiah is it mentioned?
4. When was the third year of the reign of Ahasuerus (1:3)?
5. What caused Vashti to refuse the king, was it modesty or something else (1:12)?
6. Who are Jair, Shimei, and Kish? Are they close relatives of Mordecai (father, grandfather, and great-grandfather), or are they distant relatives (2:5)?
7. Who is being carried away captive from Jerusalem (which person mentioned in verse 5)? What is the approximate date for the deportation of Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) king of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar? Where in the books of Kings and Chronicles is this particular deportation recorded (2:6)?
8. What is the approximate amount of time that has transpired between chapters 1 and 2 of the book of Esther (2:16; see 1:3)?

Application Thoughts for Today

1. With some people, all they have to show for their life is their physical wealth, but nothing of their spiritual wealth (1:1-4; 1 Tim. 6:17-19).
2. Drinking alcohol is popular and it is also problematic (1:5-8, 10; Prov. 20:1; 23:29-35).
3. The modesty of a woman will keep her from showing herself as an object of beauty purely for the enjoyment of others (1:10-12; 1 Tim. 2:11-12; 1 Pet. 3:1-6).
4. Be careful who you allow to give you advice and counsel (1:13-22; Prov. 12:5).
5. Wives are to respect and honor their husbands (1:20-22; Eph. 5:22-33; 1 Pet. 3:6).
6. Make the best of your situation in life even though it may not always be good (2:5-7; Prov. 16:3).
7. Take care of others when you can (2:7, 15; Zech. 7:10; Lk. 14:13; Jas. 1:27).
8. Have respect for those who take care of you and do what they say (2:10, 20; Eph. 6:1).
9. A good wife not only brings favor from man, but favor from the Lord (2:15, 17; Prov. 8:35; 18:22).

Lesson 2: The Plot Against the Jews (Esther 2:19–4:17)

Summary of the Verses

Esther 2:19-23: Mordecai Uncovers a Plot

- **Verses 19-20:** As the virgins are gathered a second time, Mordecai sits at the king's gate, a position of some importance and influence. Esther continues to follow Mordecai's advice by keeping her Jewish identity a secret.
- **Verses 21-22:** Mordecai overhears a plot by two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, to assassinate King Ahasuerus. He informs Queen Esther, who in turn informs the king, giving credit to Mordecai.
- **Verse 23:** The matter is investigated, found to be true, and the conspirators are executed. This event is recorded in the chronicles in the presence of the king, setting the stage for future recognition of Mordecai's loyalty.

Esther 3:1-15: Haman's Rise and Plot

- **Verses 1-2:** Haman, an Agagite, is promoted above all the other nobles, and the king commands that all officials at the king's gate bow down and pay homage to him. Mordecai, however, refuses to bow or pay homage, likely due to his faith in the one true God.
- **Verses 3-4:** The king's servants question Mordecai about his refusal to bow. Despite repeated questioning, Mordecai remains steadfast, and they report his behavior to Haman.
- **Verses 5-6:** Haman is filled with rage upon learning of Mordecai's defiance and decides not only to punish Mordecai but to destroy all Jews throughout the kingdom.
- **Verses 7-9:** Haman casts lots (pur) to determine the best date to carry out his plan. He then approaches King Ahasuerus with a slanderous description of the Jewish people, accusing them of disobedience to the king's laws and offering a large sum of money to the king's treasury to have them destroyed.
- **Verses 10-11:** The king gives Haman his signet ring, authorizing him to carry out his plan, and agrees to Haman's proposal without question, trusting Haman's judgment.
- **Verses 12-13:** Letters are sent by couriers to all the king's provinces, with orders to destroy, kill, and annihilate all Jews, young and old, on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month (Adar), and to plunder their goods.
- **Verses 14-15:** The decree causes confusion and distress throughout the empire, while the king and Haman sit down to drink, indifferent to the chaos they have unleashed.

Esther 4:1-17: Mordecai Urges Esther to Act

- **Verses 1-3:** Mordecai and the Jewish people respond to the decree with mourning, fasting, weeping, and lamenting, expressing their deep distress and hopelessness.
- **Verses 4-5:** Esther, upon hearing of Mordecai's distress, sends garments to clothe him, but he refuses them. She then sends one of the king's eunuchs, Hathach, to find out what is troubling Mordecai.
- **Verses 6-8:** Mordecai informs Hathach of Haman's plot and gives him a copy of the decree to show Esther, urging her to go before the king to beg for mercy and plead for her people.
- **Verses 9-11:** Esther responds, expressing her fear and reminding Mordecai of the law that anyone who approaches the king without being summoned risks death unless the king extends the golden scepter to them. She notes that she has not been summoned to the king for thirty days.
- **Verses 12-14:** Mordecai's reply is a turning point in the narrative. He warns Esther that she will not escape the fate of the Jews even in the palace and suggests that she may have attained her royal position

“for such a time as this.” His words challenge Esther to recognize her responsibility and the possibility that divine providence has placed her in this position to save her people.

- **Verses 15-17:** Esther, accepting the challenge, instructs Mordecai to gather all the Jews in Susa to fast for three days on her behalf. She resolves to go to the king, despite the risk, saying, “If I perish, I perish.” This statement reflects her courage and willingness to sacrifice herself for her people.

Questions

Textual Questions

1. What did Mordecai find out while sitting in the king’s gate that he revealed to Esther (2:19-23)?
2. What did the king do for Haman and what did the king’s servants do as a result of this (3:1-2)?
3. What did Mordecai do regarding the king’s command to bow down to Haman (3:3-4)?
4. How did Haman react to Mordecai’s refusal (3:5-6)?
5. What was done in the first month and twelfth year in front of Haman (3:7)?
6. What request did Haman make of the king and what was the king’s response (3:8-11)?
7. What did Haman have written and sent to the leaders of the provinces (3:12-15)?
8. What did Haman and the king do after Haman’s decree was sent out (3:15)?
9. How did Mordecai and the Jews react when they heard the news of Haman’s plot to destroy the Jews (4:1-3)?
10. How did Esther react (4:4)?
11. What message did Mordecai give to Esther through Hathach her chamberlain and what did Mordecai want her to do (4:5-8)?
12. What message did Esther give to Mordecai in return (4:9-12)?
13. What message did Mordecai give to Esther to encourage her to save her people (4:13-14)?

14. What message did Esther give to Mordecai in return (4:15-17)?

Deeper Thought Questions

1. How much time has passed at this point in the story and what is the approximate date for the “twelfth year” of Ahasuerus (3:7; see 1:3 and 2:16)?
2. What time of the year was “the first month, which is the month of Nisan” (3:7, 12) and “the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar” (3:13)?
3. What was the purpose for casting Pur (the lot) on this occasion (3:7; see 3:13; 9:24)? Was the decision made from the casting of the lot on this occasion given by the Lord as Proverbs 16:33 teaches?
4. How was Haman’s accusation against the Jews filled with both truth and error at the same time (3:8; compare with Acts 16:21; 17:7)?
5. What is sackcloth and what was the purpose of putting it on with ashes (4:1-3)?
6. What or where was the other “place” that Mordecai believed help would come (4:14)?

Application Thoughts for Today

1. When you see something (wrong), say something (2:21-23; Prov. 3:27; 16:13).
2. God’s providence is seen in how he caused Esther to “move to the front of the line” in the selection process (2:8-15) and how he caused Mordecai to be honored (2:21-23; Prov. 16:1, 4, 9, 33; 21:1; 19:21; 20:24).
3. A person should not allow his promotion and advancement in life to cause him to become proud (3:1-4; Prov. 25:27; Dan. 5:20; Obadiah 3; 1 Tim. 6:17).
4. Anger can lead a person to plan and do bad things to hurt others (3:5-6; Psa. 37:8; Prov. 14:17; 15:18; 29:22).
5. Christians do not use the practices of the occult, magic, or astrology to give them guidance in life (3:7; Acts 8:9; Gal. 5:20; Rev. 18:23).
6. Just because people in power have codified their laws does not necessarily mean that their laws are morally and ethically right and good (3:7-15; Psa. 94:20; Isa. 10:1; Acts 5:29).
7. God’s people will have enemies who do not like them (3:10; Mt. 13:39; Acts 13:10; Rom. 12:20).
8. Bad news brings mixed responses (3:15; Ex. 33:4; Psa. 112:6-7).
9. It should cause us great sorrow that harm would come to God’s people (4:1-4; Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:26).
10. If we do not do what is right, God will still do what is right despite our lack of action (4:14; Psa. 65:5; 103:6; 2 Thess. 1:6).
11. God wants us to use our time and talents on this earth to do his will and the time to do what is right is now (4:14; Eccl. 3:1-8, 17; 2 Cor. 6:2; Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5).
12. Always encourage others to do the right thing (4:13-14; 1 Sam. 25:23ff).
13. If we have to die for doing what is right, so be it (4:16; Jn. 15:13; Acts 15:26; Phil. 2:30; 1 Jn. 3:16).

Lesson 3: Esther's Banquets and Haman's Downfall (Esther 5:1–7:10)

Summary of the Verses

Esther 5:1-8: Esther's First Banquet

- **Verses 1-2:** Esther, after fasting, courageously approaches the king in his inner court. The king, pleased with her, extends the golden scepter, signaling his acceptance and favor.
- **Verses 3-4:** The king offers Esther anything she desires, up to half of his kingdom. Esther invites the king and Haman to a banquet she has prepared.
- **Verses 5-8:** At the banquet, the king again asks Esther what she wishes. She invites him and Haman to another banquet the next day, where she will reveal her request. This delay builds suspense and demonstrates Esther's wisdom in approaching the king strategically.

Esther 5:9-14: Haman's Plot Against Mordecai

- **Verses 9-10:** Haman leaves the banquet joyful, but his mood darkens when he sees Mordecai at the king's gate, who neither rises nor shows fear in his presence.
- **Verses 11-14:** Haman, boasting to his friends and wife Zeresh about his wealth, his many children, and his high standing with the king, expresses his frustration with Mordecai. At his wife's suggestion, he has a gallows built, intending to ask the king to have Mordecai hanged on it the next morning.

Esther 6:1-14: The King Honors Mordecai

- **Verses 1-3:** That night, the king cannot sleep and orders the book of the chronicles to be read. He is reminded of Mordecai's loyalty in foiling the assassination plot and realizes that Mordecai has not been rewarded.
- **Verses 4-5:** Haman arrives early in the court to request Mordecai's execution. The king, however, calls him in first to ask his advice on how to honor someone deserving.
- **Verses 6-10:** Haman, thinking the king means to honor him, suggests a grand display of public recognition. The king instructs Haman to do all he suggested for Mordecai.
- **Verses 11-14:** Haman, mortified, must honor Mordecai publicly. Upon returning home, he tells his wife and friends, who foresee his downfall. Before he can process their words, he is summoned to Esther's second banquet.

Esther 7:1-10: Haman's Downfall

- **Verses 1-2:** At the second banquet, the king again asks Esther for her request.
- **Verses 3-4:** Esther reveals her Jewish identity and pleads for her life and the lives of her people, who have been sold for destruction.
- **Verses 5-6:** The king, outraged, demands to know who is responsible. Esther identifies Haman as the adversary and enemy.
- **Verses 7-8:** The king, in his anger, leaves the banquet. Haman, realizing his fate, begs Esther for his life, but the king returns and misinterprets Haman's actions as an assault on Esther.
- **Verses 9-10:** Harbona, one of the eunuchs, informs the king of the gallows Haman built for Mordecai. The king orders Haman to be hanged on it, and Haman's plot backfires spectacularly.

Questions

Textual Questions

1. What question did the king ask Esther and what was her response (5:1-4)?
2. What question did the king ask Esther at her banquet and what was her response (5:5-8)?
3. How did Haman react when he left the banquet and saw Mordecai (5:9)?
4. What did Haman tell his friends and wife (5:10-12)?
5. How did Haman's attitude toward Mordecai affect his life (5:13)?
6. What did Haman's wife and friends counsel him to do (5:14)?
7. What event was the king reminded of from the Persian record book and what question did he ask (6:1-3)?
8. What question did the king ask Haman (6:4-6)?
9. What answer did Haman give the king (6:7-9)?
10. What did Haman have to do for Mordecai (6:10-11)?
11. How did Haman react to Mordecai's honor (6:12)?
12. What did Haman's wise men and wife say to him (6:13)?
13. Where was Haman brought after Mordecai was honored (6:14)?
14. What did Esther reveal to the king about herself and her people (7:1-4)?
15. Who did Esther say was the Jews' adversary (7:5-6)?
16. How did the king react to this new revelation (7:7-8)?

17. What was done with Haman (7:9-10)?

Deeper Thought Questions

1. How tall was the gallows using an 18-inch cubit (5:14)?
2. What was the Persian “book of the records of the chronicles” (6:1)?
3. Where in the book of Esther is the account of Mordecai preventing the king’s assassination found (6:2)?³.
4. Was the wrath of the king (7:7, 10) different from the wrath of Haman (3:5; 5:9; see also 8:7)?
5. How is Esther 7:9-10 an example of the reversal theme that is found in book?

Application Thoughts for Today

1. When you go from joy to anger quickly, there may be something wrong with your character (5:9; Gal. 5:20).
2. Pride goes before destruction (5:10-12; Prov. 16:18; Esther 6:13).
3. When you brag about your earthly successes without any spiritual content you are likely laying up treasures for yourself and you are not rich toward God (5:10-12; Lk. 12:13-21).
4. Don’t let other people define how you view your life; let God define you with his word (5:13; 1 Cor. 4:1-4; Gal. 1:10; 1 Thess. 4:1).
5. Be careful from whom you get your counsel (Prov. 12:5). Some people are inventors of evil things and they want you to be a part of their evil schemes (5:14; Psa. 37:12ff; Prov. 6:16-19; Rom. 1:30).
6. Give honor to whom honor is due (6:3; Rom. 13:7; 1 Pet. 2:17).
7. Don’t assume that you are always the subject of the conversation (6:4-6; Prov. 18:13).
8. God knows what we say in our heart (6:6; Rom. 2:16; Heb. 4:12-13).
9. God has a way of giving to others what proud people want for themselves (6:7-9; Dan. 5:20).
10. God gives grace (blessing, favor) to the humble (6:10-11; Jas. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5).
11. We are supposed to rejoice with them that rejoice (6:12; Rom. 12:15).
12. A haughty spirit goes before a fall (6:13; Prov. 16:18).
13. God’s people will always have enemies and adversaries (7:4, 6; 1 Cor. 16:9; Phil. 1:28).
14. Out of the heart comes evil plans and actions (7:5; Mt. 9:4; 15:19).
15. Never be afraid to identify publicly the Lord’s enemies and adversaries, and do so by name, if necessary (7:6; 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 1:15; 2:17; 4:14; Tit. 1:12).
16. Open rebuke is necessary at times (7:6; Prov. 27:5).
17. Speak good and do good to others around you (7:9; Acts 10:38; 1 Pet. 3:11).⁶ You reap what you sow (7:9-10; Gal. 6:7).

Lesson 4: The Jews' Victory and the Feast of Purim (Esther 8:1–10:3)

Summary of the Verses

Esther 8:1-17: A New Decree

- **Verses 1-2:** King Ahasuerus gives Haman's estate to Queen Esther and promotes Mordecai, giving him the king's signet ring.
- **Verses 3-6:** Esther pleads with the king to revoke Haman's decree. She falls at his feet, weeping, showing her deep concern for her people.
- **Verses 7-8:** The king grants Esther and Mordecai the authority to write a new decree in the king's name, allowing the Jews to defend themselves.
- **Verses 9-14:** Mordecai drafts the new decree, which is sent out quickly by couriers to all the provinces. The decree allows the Jews to protect themselves and destroy any armed force that might attack them.
- **Verses 15-17:** The Jews celebrate their newfound hope and are filled with joy and gladness. Many people in the empire profess to be Jews, fearing the Jews' power.

Esther 9:1-19: The Jews' Victory

- **Verses 1-5:** On the appointed day, the Jews gather to defend themselves. They gain mastery over their enemies, with many officials supporting them due to Mordecai's influence.
- **Verses 6-10:** In Susa, the Jews kill 500 men and the ten sons of Haman, but they do not lay hands on the plunder.
- **Verses 11-15:** Upon hearing the number of the slain in Susa, the king grants Esther's request for another day of fighting in the citadel. The Jews kill 300 more men in Susa.
- **Verses 16-17:** Across the empire, the Jews kill 75,000 of their enemies but do not take the plunder. They then rest and celebrate.
- **Verses 18-19:** The Jews in Susa celebrate on the fifteenth day of Adar, while those in the rural areas celebrate on the fourteenth, establishing a tradition of annual celebration.

Esther 9:20-32: The Feast of Purim

- **Verses 20-22:** Mordecai records these events and sends letters to all the Jews, instituting the annual Feast of Purim to commemorate their deliverance.
- **Verses 23-28:** The Jews agree to celebrate Purim every year on the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar, remembering their sorrow turned to joy and their mourning into celebration.
- **Verses 29-32:** Esther and Mordecai send a second letter confirming the observance of Purim. The letters establish the feast as a time for feasting, joy, and giving gifts to one another and to the poor.

Esther 10:1-3: Mordecai's Promotion

- **Verses 1-2:** King Ahasuerus imposes tribute throughout his empire, and Mordecai's deeds are recorded in the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia.
- **Verse 3:** Mordecai is exalted to a high rank, second only to the king, and is held in high esteem by his fellow Jews for seeking the welfare of his people and speaking peace to all his descendants.

Questions

Textual Questions

1. What was given to Esther and to Mordecai (8:1-2, see also verse 7)?
2. What did Esther request of the king (8:3-6)?
3. What was the king's response to Esther's request (8:7-8)?
4. What were the Jews now authorized to do regarding their up-coming day of destruction (8:9-14)?
5. What was the new demeanor of Mordecai and the Jews compared with earlier in the book of Esther (8:15-17; see 4:1-3)?
6. What did some of the people of the land (the Persians) do (8:17)?
7. Why were the Jews successful in defending themselves when the day of their destruction came (9:1-4)?
8. What did the Jews do to their enemies and to Haman's sons, and what did they refuse to take (9:5-10; see also 9:15-16)?
9. What additional request did Esther have for the king after she was given permission to ask (9:11-15)?
10. How many people did the Jews kill in Shushan and throughout the provinces (9:12, 15-16)?
11. When did the Jews have a day of feasting and gladness (9:17-19)?
12. What did Mordecai write for the Jews (9:20-22)?
13. How does the author of the book describe what happened to Haman and his wicked plan (9:23-25)?
14. How did the feast of Purim get its name, how often was it celebrated, and by whom (9:26-28)?
15. What did Esther write that gave additional authority to what Mordecai had already written for the Jews (9:29-32)?

16. What did Ahasuerus do with his power for the people of the empire (10:1-2)?

17. What did Mordecai do with his greatness for his own people (10:3)?

18. How would you summarize the character of the following persons?

- Ahasuerus -
- Haman -
- Mordecai -
- Esther -

19. How is the providence of God displayed in the following events?

- The selection of Esther to replace Vashti as queen (Esther 1-2) –
- The plot of Haman to kill the Jews (Esther 3) –
- The involvement of Mordecai and Esther with the king to save their people (Esther 4-8) –
- The decree of the king allowing the Jews time to defend themselves (Esther 8-9) -
- The advancement of Mordecai to greatness in the kingdom (Esther 10) -

20. What are some examples of the “reversal” theme in the book of Esther?

Deeper Thought Questions

1. What was the “house of Haman” that was given to Esther and Mordecai (8:1-2)?
2. When was “the third month, which is the month of Silvan” and how much time was left until the Jews’ day of destruction (8:9; see 9:1; compare with 3:7, 13)? How much time had passed since Haman first planned to kill the Jews (see 3:7, 12)?
3. Was the order allowing the Jews to defend themselves the same in content as the previous order of Haman to kill the Jews (compare 8:11 with 3:13)? In other words, were the Jews now allowed to do to the Persians what the Persians were allowed to do to the Jews?

4. What did it mean for the Persians to become Jews (8:17)?
5. What time of the year is “the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar” (9:1)?
6. Why would Esther ask for Haman’s sons to be hanged when they were already dead and for an additional day of fighting for the Jews in Shushan (9:13)? Does this show a moral defect in her character?
7. What is the feast mentioned in the gospel of John that may be a reference to the feast of Purim (9:26)?
8. Where earlier in the story had the Jews fasted and cried out (9:31)?
9. What is the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia (10:2)?
10. How does Mordecai’s advancement in the end show Haman (3:8) to be wrong?
11. How does Mordecai’s advancement in the end show Haman’s wise men and wife (6:13) to be right?

Application Thoughts for Today

1. God will take away from those who don’t deserve what they have and give it to others more worthy (8:1-2; Mt. 13:12; 25:28).
2. Pray to God that he will “reverse” the misfortunes of life that are caused by wicked men (8:3-8; Psa. 12:5; 37:12ff; Prov. 15:25; 21:1; 29:13).
3. Life is precious, so take a stand for your life and the lives of others (8:11; Neh. 4:14).
4. The ability to save a life should cause great gladness, joy, and “a good day” (8:17; Psa. 82:4; Pro 24:11).
5. God can reverse the wicked plans of evil people (9:1, 25; Esther 8:5; Psa. 75:7; 147:6; Lk. 1:52).
6. God’s servants will always have those people in the world who hurt them and hate them (9:2, 5, 16; Mt. 10:22; 24:9-10; Lk. 1:71; 6:22; Jn. 15:18-19; 17:14; 1 Pet. 3:13-14).
7. Those who are truly great serve others for good (9:4; Mt. 20:26; Lk. 22:26).
8. Those who live by the sword will die by the sword (9:1-10; Mt. 26:52).
9. Pray that we might have rest from our enemies (9:11-16, 22; Deut. 12:10; Josh. 23:1).
10. Life is precious, so take a stand for your life and the lives of others (9:16; Esther 8:11; Neh. 4:14).
11. Wicked people want to take life, but righteous people want to spare life (9:25; see also 7:6; Prov. 24:11; Lk. 6:9).
12. The day that life is spared is a day of gladness and a day to be remembered (9:17-32; Acts 2:46).
13. When God advances you to a position of greatness in life, always use it to serve others and help them (10:3; Lk. 2:52; Gal. 1:14).
14. Always seek the good and the peace of your brethren (10:3; 1 Pet. 3:11).