

ESTHER

Title:

The name “Esther” comes from a Persian word meaning “star”.

Author:

Unknown to men. See the introduction to Judges concerning the authorship of the books of the Bible.

Date:

Probably sometime between 465 and 400 BC.

Themes:

The danger that came to the Jewish exiles in Persia; the deliverance God gave through Mordecai and Esther; the destruction of those who plotted to destroy the Jews. A remarkable fact about this book is that there is no mention of God anywhere in it. However, it is clear that the author recognized God behind events working out His purposes. For example, see 4:12-17. The rise and fall of Haman is a striking illustration of how God sometimes deals on earth with the wicked enemies of His people. See Deut 32:35; Ps 7:15-17; 9:16; 18:25-27; 37:34-36.

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1 Now it happened in the days of Ahasuerus (this is the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia, over a hundred and twenty seven provinces), ²in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace, ³in the third year of his reign, that he made a feast for all his princes and those who served him. The military *officers* of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces were in his presence.

⁴At that time he displayed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty for many days, a total of a hundred and eighty days. ⁵And when these days were over, the king made a feast for seven days for all the people who were present in Shushan the palace, for both great and small, in the garden courtyard of the king's palace, ⁶where there were white, green and blue *hangings*, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and marble pillars. The couches were of gold and silver, on a pavement of red and blue and white and black marble. ⁷And they gave them drinks in golden cups (the cups were each different from one another), and royal wine in abundance, in accordance with the king's bounty. ⁸And the drinking was according to *their* law. There was no compulsion, for the king had ordered all the officials of his house that they should do according to each one's wish.

⁹Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to King Ahasuerus.

¹⁰On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha and Abagtha, Zethar and Carcas, the seven eunuchs who served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king, ¹¹to bring Vashti the

queen into the king's presence, with her royal crown, to display her beauty to the people and the princes, for she was beautiful in appearance. ¹²But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command through his officials. Therefore the king was enraged, and his anger burned in him.

¹³Then the king said to the wise men, who understood the times (for this was the king's custom toward all who knew law and justice; ¹⁴those next to him were Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media who saw the king's face and who were highest in the kingdom),

¹⁵"What shall we do to Queen Vashti, according to law, because she has not obeyed the command of King Ahasuerus through the officials?"

¹⁶And Memucan answered in the presence of the king and the princes, "Vashti the queen has done wrong not only to the king, but also to all the princes, and to all the people who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. ¹⁷For this action of the queen will become known to all women, so that their husbands will be despised in their eyes, when it is reported that King Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she did not come. ¹⁸This very day the ladies of Persia and Media will say to all the king's princes that they have heard of the action of the queen. So there will be much contempt and anger.

¹⁹"If it pleases the king, let a royal command proceed from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, so that it will not be altered, that Vashti can no longer come into the presence of King Ahasuerus, and let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she. ²⁰And when this decree of the king which

1:1 "Ahasuerus"—better known as Xerxes. He was king of Persia (Iran) 486-465 B.C.

"Ethiopia"—note at Isa 18:1-2.

1:2 "Shushan"—Neh 1:1; Dan 8:2. This city was the winter capital of the Persian kings, and the Hebrew word translated "palace" can mean capital.

1:3 "Media"—Ezra 6:2; Isa 13:17.

1:10 "Eunuchs"—in Hebrew this word sometimes indicated officials appointed by a king, whether literal eunuchs or not.

1:12 No reason is given for Vashti's refusal to obey the king. It was done at a public

function and was a great and deliberate insult to the king. Certainly the king considered it an arrogant blow at the traditional order of things existing between husband and wife in his empire.

1:13 Vashti's disobedience involved matters of law and justice in the Persian empire (v 15).

1:18 Their fear was that Vashti's example would be followed by many women in the empire, resulting in social upheaval.

1:20 "Decree"—this shows how serious the problem was in their eyes. It was far easier to make this decree than to enforce it.

he makes is published throughout his whole empire (for it is great), all the wives will honour their husbands, both great and small”.

²¹And this word pleased the king and the princes, and the king did according to the word of Memucan, ²²for he sent letters to all the king’s provinces, to each province in accordance with its script, and to each people in their language, that every man should rule his own house, and he published *it* in the language of each people.

2 After these things, when the anger of King Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her. ²Then the king’s servants who ministered to him said, “Let there be beautiful young virgins sought for the king. ³And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the beautiful young virgins to Shushan the palace, to the women’s quarters, into the custody of Hege, the king’s official, custodian of the women. And let cosmetics be given *them*. ⁴And let the young lady who pleases the king be queen in the place of Vashti”. And this word pleased the king, and he did so.

⁵Now in Shushan the palace there was a Jew whose name was Mordecai. *He* was the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite. ⁶He had been taken away from Jerusalem in the captivity which had been taken away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had taken away. ⁷And *Mordecai* had brought up Hadassah, that *is*, Esther, his uncle’s daughter, for she had neither father nor mother, and the girl was lovely and beautiful. When her father and mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.

⁸So it came about when the king’s

command and his decree were heard, and when many young ladies were gathered together to Shushan the palace, into the custody of Hegai, that Esther also was brought to the king’s house, to the custody of Hegai, custodian of the women. ⁹And the young lady pleased him, and she won his favour, and he quickly provided her cosmetics, with such things as pertained to her, and provided her with seven choice maids from the king’s house. And he moved her and her maids to the best *place* in the women’s quarters.

¹⁰Esther had not revealed her people or her kindred, for Mordecai had ordered her not to reveal *it*. ¹¹And every day Mordecai walked in front of the courtyard of the women’s quarters, to find out how Esther was doing and what would become of her.

¹²Now when each girl’s turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus, after she had finished twelve months’ *preparation*, according to the custom for the women (for the days of their beautification were completed as *follows*: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and *other* cosmetics for women), ¹³then *each* girl would go to the king like this: whatever she wanted was given her to go with her from the women’s quarters to the king’s house. ¹⁴She would go in the evening, and return in the morning to the second house of the women, into the custody of Shaashgaz, the king’s official, who was the custodian of the concubines. She would not again go in to the king, unless the king delighted in her, and unless she was called by name.

¹⁵Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his daughter, came to go in to the king, she requested nothing except what Hegai the king’s official, the custodian

2:1 “*After these things*”—the events of this chapter up to v 19 took place about five years after those of chapter 1. Vashti was removed from her position as queen in 484 or 483 B.C. Esther became queen in 479 or 478. In between these two events Xerxes was occupied with a war with Greece (which he lost).

2:2-4 In those times kings had both harems and dictatorial powers.

2:6 “*Judah*”—2 Kings 24:8-17; 2 Chron 36:9-10.

“*Babylon*”—some of those Jews who either voluntarily moved or had been taken to Susa and other places in Media and Persia.

2:7 “*Esther*”—a name probably derived from

the Persian word for star. Her Jewish name – Hadassah – means “myrtle”, a kind of flowering shrub.

2:8 Neither Mordecai nor Esther would have had any say in this matter. The king was a dictator who did as he pleased.

2:9 “*Favour*”—Gen 39:21; Dan 1:9. God was going to use Esther to save the Jews in the Persian empire from extermination. It was God Who made her beautiful so that she would be chosen as queen.

2:11 Mordecai would not, of course, have been allowed inside the harem. But he showed his concern for Esther by daily coming as near as possible in hope of getting news of her.

of the women, advised. And Esther found favour in the eyes of all who saw her. ¹⁶So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus into his royal house in the tenth month, which *is* the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

¹⁷And the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found grace and favour in his eyes more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head, and made her queen in the place of Vashti. ¹⁸Then the king made a great feast for all his princes and his servants, Esther's feast. And he made a holiday for the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the king's bounty.

¹⁹And when the virgins were assembled a second time, Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate. ²⁰Esther had not yet revealed her kindred or her people, as Mordecai had ordered her, for Esther obeyed the command of Mordecai, just like when she was brought up by him.

²¹In those days, while Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, two of the king's officials, Bigthan and Teresh, of those who guarded the door, became angry and sought to seize King Ahasuerus. ²²And the matter became known to Mordecai, who told *it* to Esther the queen, and Esther informed the king *of it*, in Mordecai's name. ²³And when the matter was investigated, it was found *to be*

so. Therefore both of them were hanged on a tree, and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the king's presence.

3 After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and gave him a higher seat than all the princes who *were* with him. ²And all the king's servants, who were at the king's gate, bowed and paid honour to Haman, for so the king had commanded concerning him. But Mordecai did not bow or show *him* honour.

³Then the king's servants, who *were* at the king's gate, said to Mordecai, "Why are you breaking the king's command?" ⁴Now it so happened after they spoke to him daily and he would not listen to them that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's reason would stand; for he had told them that he was a Jew.

⁵And when Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him honour, Haman was filled with rage. ⁶And he scorned seizing Mordecai alone, for they had told him *who* the people of Mordecai *were*; therefore Haman sought to destroy all the people of Mordecai, the Jews throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus.

⁷In the first month, that *is*, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus,

2:19 Verse 2. Though a new queen was chosen the search for other girls for the king's harem went on.

"*King's gate*"—the main gate of the citadel in the city where business was transacted and courts of justice were held. Mordecai sitting there suggests he may have been an official in the kingdom.

2:20 Verse 10. She did not get proud and arrogant because of her high position, as many do.

2:22 Here again we can see the unseen hand of God.

2:23 "*It was written*"—this became very important later on – 6:1-2.

3:1 "*After these things*"—more than four years had passed since Esther became queen. Compare v 7 with 2:16.

"*Agagite*"—this very likely means that Haman was a descendant of King Agag the Amalekite (1 Sam 15:8). This view is in accordance with Jewish tradition and seems to throw light on what follows. The Amalekites were enemies of Israel from the time Israel came out of Egypt (Ex 17:8-16; 1 Sam 15:2-3; Ps 83:2-6). It would be no surprising thing if Amalekites as well as Jews should be found in one of the capital cities of the Persian empire, and there continued to express their ancient enmity.

3:2 Abraham and his descendants at other times showed respect to others in this way (Gen 23:7; 33:3; 44:14; 1 Sam 24:8; 2 Sam 14:4; 1 Kings 1:16), why not to Haman? If Mordecai knew Haman was an Amalekite, this would account for it. He would refuse to honor anyone of a people who were enemies of the Jews and with whom God Himself had continual warfare (Ex 17:16).

3:4 "*Reason*"—one of the many possible meanings of the Hebrew word.

"*Jew*"—apparently this was the only reason Mordecai gave them – as if to say it was unthinkable that a Jew would show honor to an Amalekite. Observe that he did not conceal his national origins as he ordered Esther to do.

3:5 5:9. This was wounded pride, the kind of foolish anger some people in power will have against those who refuse to give them the respect they think they deserve.

3:6 "*Who the people of Mordecai were*"—this also is evidence that Haman was an Amalekite – his hatred of the whole Jewish nation is revealed.

"*The Jews*"—compare Ps 83:2-6.

"*The whole kingdom*"—this would have been the vast majority of all the Jews then living. Xerxes ruled from India to Cush (see 8:9).

they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth *month*, that is, the month Adar.

⁸And Haman said to King Ahasuerus, “There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom, and their laws are different from *those of all other* people and they do not keep the king’s laws. Therefore it is not for the king’s benefit to tolerate them. ⁹If it pleases the king, let it be written that they be destroyed. And I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who will have charge of the business, to bring *it* into the king’s treasuries”.

¹⁰And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it to Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews’ enemy. ¹¹And the king said to Haman, “The money and the people are given to you to do with them as it seems good to you”.

¹²Then the king’s scribes were called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and a decree was written according to all that Haman had commanded the king’s officers and the governors who were over every province and the rulers of every people of every province, according to its script, and to every people in their language. It was written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king’s ring. ¹³And the letters were sent by couriers to all the king’s provinces, to destroy, to kill and to annihilate all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, on the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth *month*, which is the month Adar, and to plunder their possessions. ¹⁴A copy of the writing as a command to be given in every province was published to all people, that they should be ready on that day.

¹⁵The couriers set out quickly because of the king’s command, and the decree was

given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city Shushan was perplexed.

4 When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai tore his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the middle of the city, crying out with a loud and bitter cry, ²and came only up to the king’s gate, for no one wearing sackcloth *might* enter the king’s gate. ³And in every province, wherever the king’s command and his decree came, *there was* great mourning among the Jews, and fasting and weeping and wailing, and many lay down in sackcloth and ashes.

⁴So Esther’s maids and her officials came and told it to her. Then the queen was exceedingly grieved, and she sent garments to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him. But he did not accept *them*. ⁵Then Esther called for Hatach, one of the king’s officials, whom he had appointed to attend on her, and commanded him concerning Mordecai, to find out what *the matter was*, and why.

⁶So Hatach went out to Mordecai into the street of the city, which was in front of the king’s gate. ⁷And Mordecai told him about everything that had happened to him, and about the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay to the king’s treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them. ⁸He also gave him a copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, that he might show *it* to Esther and explain *it* to her, and to charge her to go to the king, to make supplication to him and to make request before him for her people.

⁹And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai. ¹⁰Again Esther spoke to Hatach, and ordered him to *tell* Mordecai:

3:7 “Pur”—9:24-26. They cast lots to fix a date to destroy the Jews. The fact that the day turned out to be eleven months from the time of casting lots gave Mordecai time to avert the calamity. Was not God in this also? See Prov 16:33.

3:8 Apparently Haman does not tell Xerxes the name of the people he wants to destroy.

3:9 “Talents”—one talent equals about 34 kilograms. Haman was willing to spend a huge sum to fulfill his evil plan.

3:10 The signet ring was an official seal, equivalent to a signature. Once Haman had the king’s signet ring he could authorize any course of action he pleased.

3:11 “As it seems good to you”—apparently the king agreed with Haman’s proposal without further enquiry. This shows the complete trust he had in Haman, but also how little he cared what happened to minorities in his kingdom.

3:13 Haman may have been thinking of the event set in motion by the words of 1 Sam 15:2-3. He would show his defiance of the God of Israel.

4:1 “Ashes”—Gen 37:34; Num 14:6; 2 Sam 13:19; 2 Kings 19:1; Neh 9:1; Job 2:12; Ezek 27:30-31; Dan 9:3; Jonah 3:5-6.

4:5 Esther was isolated in the king’s palace and was not free to come and go.

¹¹“All the king’s servants, and the people of the king’s provinces, know that any man or woman who goes to the king into the inner court, who has not been called, *there is only one law of his: to put the person to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden sceptre, that he may live. And I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days*”.

¹²And they told Esther’s words to Mordecai. ¹³Then Mordecai commanded *them* to answer Esther: “Do not imagine that being in the king’s house you will escape any more than all the Jews. ¹⁴For if you keep altogether silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s house will be destroyed. And who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for *such a time as this?*”

¹⁵Then Esther ordered *them* to take *this answer* back to Mordecai: ¹⁶“Go, gather together all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me, not eating or drinking for three days, night or day. I also and my maids will also fast, and so I will go in to the king, which is against the law. And if I perish, I perish”.

¹⁷So Mordecai went and acted in accordance with all that Esther had commanded him.

5 Now on the third day it came about that Esther put on *her royal robes*, and stood in the inner court of the king’s palace, opposite the king’s hall, and the king was sitting on his royal throne in the royal hall, opposite the door of the hall.

²And it happened that when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, she obtained favour in his sight, and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near and touched the tip of the sceptre.

³Then the king said to her, “What do you want, Queen Esther? And what *is* your request? It will be granted to you, even up to half of the kingdom”.

⁴And Esther answered, “*If it seems good to the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared for him*”.

⁵Then the king said, “Have Haman hurry, that he may do as Esther has said”. So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

⁶And the king said to Esther at the banquet of wine, “What *is* your petition? It will be granted you. And what *is* your request? Even up to half of the kingdom, it will be done.

⁷Then Esther answered and said, “My petition and my request *is this*: ⁸If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition, and to act on my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said”.

⁹Then Haman went out that day happy and with a glad heart, but at the king’s gate when Haman saw that Mordecai did not stand up, or move for him, he was filled with indignation against Mordecai. ¹⁰Nevertheless Haman restrained himself. And when he came home, he sent and called

4:11 This reveals the power and cruelty of those ancient despots, and how highly they regarded their royal presence. Compare the behavior of the King of the universe – Matt 11:28; Heb 4:16. **4:14** “*From another place*” – Mordecai was sure that God would preserve the Jewish people in some way or other. He was doubtless familiar with God’s promises to do so (such as Lev 26:44-45; Deut 4:30-31; Jer 31:35-36; 33:25-26). But he also realized his and Esther’s responsibility to do what they could to save the Jews. He did not passively leave everything to God’s sovereignty. We should all understand that God will work out His sovereign purposes on earth, but also that He will hold each person responsible for what he or she does or does not do.

“*Such a time as this*” – note at 2:9. When he said this Mordecai did not know how things would turn out. He did know that those in a high position

should use that position for good.

4:16 “*Fast*” – prayer is not mentioned but is surely implied. God’s people naturally fasted unto God (Jud 20:26; 1 Sam 7:6; 2 Sam 12:16; Ezra 8:21-22; Neh 9:1-3; Isa 58:3; Jer 14:12).

“*If I perish I perish*” – Esther realized (as we all should) that there are more important things than personal survival on this earth. Compare Dan 3:16-18; Acts 20:24; 21:13.

5:2 2:9; 4:11; Prov 21:1.

5:3 7:2; Mark 6:23.

5:4-8 We are not told why Esther delayed to reveal her real burden to the king. Perhaps her courage momentarily failed. Perhaps she was testing the genuineness of his favor before making her request.

5:9 3:5.

5:10 “*Restrained himself*” – he thought his day of revenge was soon coming.

for his friends and Zeresh his wife.

¹¹And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and of his many children, and all *the things* in which the king had promoted him, and how he had placed him above the princes and servants of the king. ¹²Moreover, Haman said, “Yes, Esther the queen did not let anyone but myself come in with the king to the banquet that she had prepared. And tomorrow also I am invited to her with the king. ¹³Yet all does not satisfy me, as long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate”.

¹⁴Then Zeresh his wife and all his friends said to him, “Have a gallows made, fifty cubits high, and tomorrow ask the king that Mordecai may be hanged on it. Then go happily with the king to the banquet”. And the thing pleased Haman, and he had the gallows made.

6 On that night the king could not sleep, and he gave orders to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read in the king’s presence. ²And it was found written that Mordecai made a report about Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s officials, the doorkeepers who sought a way to seize King Ahasuerus.

³And the king said, “What honour and dignity was bestowed on Mordecai for this?” Then the king’s servants that ministered to him said, “Nothing was done for him”.

⁴And the king said, “Who is in the court?” Now Haman had come into the outward court of the king’s house, to ask the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.

⁵And the king’s servants said to him, “Look, Haman is standing in the court”.

And the king said, “Have him come in”.

⁶So Haman came in. And the king said to him, “What is to be done to the man whom the king delights to honour?” Now Haman thought in his heart, “Whom would the king delight to honour more than myself?”

⁷And Haman answered the king, “For the man whom the king delights to honour, ⁸let a royal robe which the king has worn be brought, and the horse upon which the king rides, and the royal crown which is placed on his head, ⁹and let this robe and horse be put in the hands of one of the king’s most noble princes, that they may clothe the man whom the king delights to honour with it, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, ‘Thus it is done to the man whom the king delights to honour.’ ”

¹⁰Then the king said to Haman, “Hurry and take the robe and the horse, as you have said, and do this to Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king’s gate. Let nothing fail of all that you have spoken”.

¹¹Then Haman took the robe and the horse, and clothed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, “Thus it is done to the man whom the king delights to honour”.

¹²And Mordecai came back to the king’s gate. But Haman hurried to his house grieving, with his head covered. ¹³And Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him. Then his wise men and his wife Zeresh said to him, “If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish descent, you will not overcome him, but will surely fall before him”. ¹⁴And while they were still

5:11 “Told”— see 1 Sam 2:3; Ps 49:5-20; 52:1-7; 94:4-7. Compare Ps 34:2; 44:8. A person’s character is revealed to some extent by what he boasts about. See Gal 6:14.

5:13 Hatred can outweigh any other emotion in man’s fallen sinful heart and completely overcome his reason.

5:14 “*The thing pleased Haman*”— he delighted in thoughts of murder and revenge. The things in which a person delights also reveals his character and the course of his life. Compare Ps 37:4.

6:1 “*Sleep*”— compare Dan 2:1. God oversees all events and can use even the most trivial to work out His purposes.

“*Chronicles*”— 2:23.

6:2 2:21-22.

6:3 “*The king said*”— Prov 21:1.

6:4 God’s timing of events is perfect. Always He not only does the best possible thing, He does it at the best possible moment.

6:6 Prov 16:18; 18:12.

6:9 Compare Gen 41:41-43. In those days this was regarded as a mark of great favor and honor. Spiritually speaking, believers in Christ have the high honor of being clothed with the robe of the heavenly king – Isa 61:10; Zech 3:3-5; Phil 3:9.

6:10 “*Mordecai*”— what must have been the utter dismay in the heart of Haman when he heard this name (v 12)!

“*King’s gate*”— 2:19.

6:13 Compare Ps 7:15; 57:6; Prov 26:27; 28:18.

talking with him, the king's officials came, in a hurry to bring Haman to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

7 So the king and Haman came to the banquet with Esther the queen. ²And again the king said to Esther, on the second day at the banquet of wine, "What *is* your petition, queen Esther? It will be granted you. And what *is* your request? Even up to half of the kingdom, it will be done".

³Then Esther the queen answered and said, "If I have found favour in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. ⁴For I and my people are sold to be destroyed, to be killed and to be annihilated. And if we had been sold as male and female slaves, I would have held my tongue, although the compensation the enemy offers could not make up for the king's loss".

⁵Then King Ahasuerus answered and said to Esther the queen, "Who is he, and where is he, who dares to presume in his heart to do so?"

⁶And Esther said, "The adversary and enemy *is* this wicked Haman". Then Haman was terrified before the king and the queen. ⁷And the king, getting up from the banquet of wine, in his rage *went* into the palace garden, and Haman stood up to ask Esther the queen for his life, for he saw that the king was determined to harm him.

⁸Then the king returned from the palace garden to the place of the wine banquet, and Haman had fallen on the couch where Esther was. Then the king said, "Will he even force the queen in my presence, in the house?" As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.

⁹And Harbonah, one of the officials,

said to the king, "Look, the fifty cubits high gallows, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who spoke good on the king's behalf, is standing at Haman's house". Then the king said, "Hang him on it".

¹⁰So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's rage subsided.

8 On that day King Ahasuerus gave the house of Haman the Jews' enemy to Esther the queen. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told how he *was related* to her. ²And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther appointed Mordecai over the house of Haman.

³And Esther spoke again to the king, and fell down at his feet and begged him with tears to put an end to the evil *conspiracy* of Haman the Agagite, and his scheme which he had devised against the Jews. ⁴Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. So Esther arose and stood before the king, ⁵and said, "If it pleases the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing *seems* right to the king, and I *am* pleasing in his eyes, let a *command* be written to overrule the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews who *are* in all the king's provinces. ⁶For how can I bear to see the evil that will come to my people? Or how can I bear to see the destruction of my kindred?"

⁷Then King Ahasuerus said to Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, "Look, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows, because he stretched out his hand against the Jews. ⁸Write also a *decree* for the Jews, as it pleases you, in the king's name, and seal *it* with the king's ring. For no one can overrule

6:14 "*Banquet*"— 5:8. The custom was to send an escort to bring honored guests to feasts. Compare Matt 22:1-4.

7:2 The third time the king had asked this (5:3,6).

7:3 At last Esther is persuaded of the king's sincerity and tells him what is in her mind.

7:4 3:9-10,13.

7:6 "*Terrified*"— he who sets out to terrify others will one day be terrified himself.

7:7 Prov 16:14; 19:12.

7:9 Once before an Amalekite begged an Israelite for his life — 1 Sam 15:32-33. It seems some of them were better at boasting than dying.

7:10 God's justice is not always revealed so quickly or so dramatically. But it is always at work and will inevitably prevail — Ps 7:11; 9:16; 18:25-27; 37:35-38; 94:23; 96:13; Prov 11:5-6; Dan 6:24; Acts 17:31; Gal 6:7.

8:1 "*Gave the house of Haman*"— 5:11; Job 27:13,15-17; Prov 13:22; 22:23; 23:10.

8:2 3:10.

8:4 4:11.

8:5 3:13-14.

8:8 "*Overrule*"— 1:19; Dan 6:8,12,15. The king could not cancel a former decree, but he could issue another which would counteract the former one.

a letter which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring".

⁹Then the king's scribes were called at that time, in the third month, that is, the month Sivan, on the twenty third *day of that month*, and they wrote down all the commands that Mordecai gave to the Jews, and to the officials, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which *are* from India to Ethiopia, a hundred and twenty seven provinces, to each province in its script, and to each people in their language, and to the Jews in their script and in their language. ¹⁰And he wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, and sealed *it* with the king's ring, and sent letters by couriers on horseback, *and* riders on mules, camels, and swift horses.

¹¹In them the king gave *permission* to the Jews who *were* in every city to gather together, and to stand up for their life, to destroy, to kill and to annihilate all the forces of any people and province who assaulted them, *both* little ones and women, and to plunder their possessions, ¹²on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, *namely*, on the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar. ¹³A copy of the writing as a command to be given in every province was published to all people, so that the Jews could be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.

¹⁴So the couriers, riding on royal horses, went out, going swiftly, impelled by the king's command. And the decree was given at Shushan the palace.

¹⁵And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal robes of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple. And

the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. ¹⁶The Jews had light and gladness and joy and honour. ¹⁷And in every province, and in every city where the king's command and decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a holiday. And many of the people of the land became Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell on them.

9 Now in the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar, on the thirteenth day, when the king's command and decree were about to be carried out, on the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, the reverse happened; the Jews gained the ascendancy over those who hated them. ²The Jews gathered together in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, to seize those who sought to harm them. And no man could withstand them, for the fear of them fell on all people. ³And all the rulers of the provinces and the officials and the deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews, because the fear of Mordecai fell on them. ⁴For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces, for this man Mordecai became greater and greater.

⁵Thus the Jews struck down all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, with slaughter and destruction, and did what they wished to those who hated them. ⁶And in Shushan the palace the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men. ⁷And they killed Parshandatha and Dalphon and Aspatha ⁸and Poratha and Adalia and Aridatha ⁹and Parmashta and Arisai and Aridai and Vajezatha, ¹⁰the ten sons of Haman the son

8:9 3:6,12.

"India"— Xerxes did not rule India but his kingdom extended to its borders.

8:10 3:12-13.

8:11-12 3:7,13. A just decree which saved the Jews. Prov 21:1.

8:15 "*Rejoiced and was glad*"— compare the bewilderment of 3:15. Injustice produces dismay, justice is cause for joy.

8:17 "*Fear of the Jews*"— compare Gen 35:5; Ex 15:16; 23:27; Deut 2:25; 11:25; Josh 2:11. Their motive in adopting the religion of the Jews was mere fear of the rising power of the Jews in the kingdom. This was, of course, an unworthy motive. In these days no one should convert to Christianity because of fear or self-interest or possible material gain. True Christianity does not

need, does not want such converts. Conversion from such motives will bring no spiritual benefits, and spiritual benefits are by far the most important benefits (Matt 16:26).

9:1 "*Adar*"— 8:12.

"*The ascendancy*"— God is the sovereign ruler of the universe, and can turn upside down any condition or circumstance among men. See 1 Sam 2:4-10.

9:2 Compare Ps 71:13,24.

9:4 "*Greater*"— compare Gen 41:41-44; Dan 2:48; 6:1-2. See Ps 75:6-7. Among God's people there are never many who are wise and influential (1 Cor 1:26-29). But to fulfill His purposes God raises some to high positions.

9:7-10 This was the final blow at all in which Haman boasted(5:11).

of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, but did not lay their hands on the plunder.

¹¹On that day the number of those who were killed in Shushan the citadel was brought before the king. ¹²And the king said to Esther the queen, “The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men in the citadel of Shushan, and the ten sons of Haman. What have they done in the rest of the king’s provinces? Now what *is* your petition? It will be granted you. Or what further request *do you have*? It will be done”.

¹³Then said Esther, “If it pleases the king, let it be granted to the Jews who *are* in Shushan to act tomorrow also in accordance with today’s decree, and let Haman’s ten sons be hanged on the gallows”.

¹⁴And the king commanded this to be done, and the decree was given at Shushan; and they hanged Haman’s ten sons. ¹⁵For the Jews who *were* in Shushan gathered together also on the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and killed three hundred men at Shushan, but they did not lay their hands on the plunder.

¹⁶But the other Jews who *were* in the king’s provinces gathered together, and stood up for their lives and to get relief from their enemies, and killed seventy five thousand of their enemies, but they did not lay their hands on the plunder. ¹⁷*This occurred on* the thirteenth day of the month Adar, and on the fourteenth day of the *month* they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

¹⁸But the Jews who were at Shushan had assembled on the thirteenth and on the fourteenth *day* of the *month*, and on the fifteenth day of the *month* they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

¹⁹Therefore the Jews in the villages, who lived in the unwalled towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar a *day of* gladness and feasting and a holiday, and of

sending portions to one another.

²⁰And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters to all the Jews who *were* in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, *both* near and far, ²¹to establish among them that annually they should keep the fourteenth day and the fifteenth day of the month Adar, ²²as the days in which the Jews got relief from their enemies, and the month when sorrow was turned to joy for them, and mourning to a holiday, that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions to one another and gifts to the poor.

²³And the Jews continued to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written to them, ²⁴because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised a *scheme* against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that *is*, the lot, to consume them and to destroy them; ²⁵but when *Esther* came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked scheme, which he devised against the Jews, should return on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. ²⁶So they called these days Purim from the name of Pur. Therefore, because of all the words of this letter, and what they had seen concerning this matter and what had happened to them, ²⁷the Jews established and imposed it on themselves and on their descendants, and on all those who joined them, that without fail they would keep these two days according to their writing, and according to their *appointed* time every year, ²⁸and that these days *should be* remembered and kept in every generation, every family, every province, and every city, and *that* these days of Purim should not cease among the Jews, nor the memory of them perish from their descendants.

²⁹Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with

9:10 “*Plunder*”— compare Gen 14:23; 1 Sam 15:3,18,19.

9:12 5:3,6; 7:2.

9:13 “*Hanged*”— this was to display their dead bodies (vs 7-10). In other words, a public display of justice at work, and a warning to all who would attack the Jews.

9:18-19 Verses 26-28.

9:22 “*Gifts to the poor*”— Deut 15:7-11. In all our feasts and celebrations let us, as they, remember the poor and needy.

9:24 3:6-7. Haman had cast lots to determine an auspicious day for his attack on the Jews, but

to no avail. Actually there is no such thing as “auspicious” days. The whole idea is a superstition which should have no place in the lives of God’s people. Every day we trust and obey the true God is good, every day we fail to do so is bad.

9:25 7:4-10.

9:26-28 In these modern times the Jews around the world still observe this festival of Purim. Those in Jerusalem celebrate it on the 15th of the month, but everyone else on the 14th (vs 18,19). The festival is in remembrance of this great deliverance from Haman which was one of the greatest deliverances of the Jews in history.

all authority to confirm this second letter of Purim. ³⁰And he sent the letters to all the Jews, to the hundred and twenty seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, *with* words of peace and truth, ³¹to confirm these days of Purim in their *appointed* times, just as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had established for them, and as they had decreed for themselves and for their descendants, concerning their fasting and lamentation. ³²And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim, and it was written in the book.

9:31 "*Fasting*"— see 4:3,16. In modern times the Jews observe the day before Purim as a day of fasting—a remembrance of the great danger they faced from Haman.

10:1-2 Xerxes was a very powerful and wealthy king whose exploits are recorded in secular history.

10:3 "*Great*"— note at 9:4.

"*Good of his people*"— as far as we can see, Mordecai's actions all through this story

10 And King Ahasuerus imposed a tax on the land and on the islands of the sea. ²And all the acts of his power and of his might, and the account of the greatness of Mordecai, to which the king advanced him, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia? ³For Mordecai the Jew *was* second to King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews and accepted by the multitude of his brethren, *and* sought the good of his people and spoke up for the peace of all his race.

were for the same reason. It does not appear that he was selfishly seeking power for either himself or for Esther. And when by God's grace he came into power, he did not use it for his own ends or for material gain. See notes also at Neh 5:14-18; 2 Sam 8:15. In the whole of Israel's long history was there any person who was able to do any more than Mordecai and Esther for the preservation of that people?

