

ESTHER:

GOD'S
HAND OF
PROVIDENCE
AT
WORK

PASTOR W. JACK CASEY

How to Study Your Bible

1. Begin in Prayer 1 Cor 2: 9-14
2. Read the Bible Neh. 8: 1-3
3. Study the Bible Neh. 8:8
4. Meditate upon it Deut. 6:6-9; Ps. 1
5. Pass the Bible on to others Heb. 5: 12

How to Study Each Chapter

1. The Theme
2. The most important verse
3. The most prominent word
4. The teaching about Christ
5. The command to obey
6. The promise to claim
7. The new truth learned Psalm 119:18

Also every verse or passage has at least 3 applications

1. Past: this is the historical application
2. Present: This is a devotional or spiritual application
3. Future: This is a doctrinal or prophetic application

INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER

This is God's providence displayed. It is an exciting story, a living illustration of God's unseen hand of providence.

On a cursory reading, there is one very noticeable thing that stands out, and that is the absence of the word "God" in any form. The absence of His name does not lessen the fact of His guiding hand in the lives of the both Jewish and pagan characters we will discover in this book.

This incident is the basis of the Jewish feast of Purim and is set during the time of dispersion in the Persian Empire.

There is no clear record of authorship, but some believe it was Mordecai, who was an eye witness of the entire story. As to the date, it is estimated to be sometime between 479-478 as the time of the beginning of these recorded events. King Xerxes died in 465 B.C.; this places the writing in the fifth century before Christ.

As we are dealing with providence, allow me to give you the definition. It is the means by which God directs all things, animate and inanimate, seen and unseen, good or evil, toward a worthy purpose, which means His will, must prevail.

David said "His kingdom ruleth over all" Paul added this in Eph. 1:11: "God worketh all things after the council of his own will."

This is the second of two books in the Bible about women. Ruth told of God's romance of redemption, and now we will look at His providential dealings with His people, and how His providence relates to Christians today.

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CHAPTER ONE

One Party too Many!

Verse 1: Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (*this is Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces* :)

The first statement in this verse sets for us the historical time for the events that follow. Ahasuerus (high father) is mentioned in Ezra 4:6 as Ezra was written at approximately the same time. Ahasuerus is the title for Xerxes the great. F.C. Kiel said “the statements concerning the extent of his kingdom as seen in 1:1 and 10:1. The manners, customs, and court actions along with the capricious and tyrannical character of Ahasuerus can only fit Xerxes.”

The size of the empire gives further evidence of the fact that this can only be Xerxes. His rule was over 127 provinces from Ethiopia to eastern India and from the black sea down to the Indian Ocean. From this vast empire he collected taxes and raised his armies.

Verse 2-3: *That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace, In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him:*

Shushan was the winter palace (Neh. 1:1). During his 3rd year on the throne, his pride over his vast empire caused him to throw a huge banquet for all his rulers. The other reason for this banquet was to so impress his governors with his wealth that they would agree to go to war against Greece. It was done with the best food and wine. He also brought out the best china, silverware, linens, etc.

Verse 4: When he shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, even an hundred and fourscore days.

He brought out the crown jewels, gold bars, and silver talents along with fine purple and white linen hangings. All of his glory just to show his provincial governors who had the power. For 180 days, there was feasting and drinking and displays of power and glory. Now amid all this debauchery God is going to use this to accomplish His purpose for His people Israel.

Verse 5: And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace;

After the 180 days of splendor Xerxes has a feast for 7 days non-stop and not just for nobles but for all the people, including the slaves that were in the palace. This takes place in the palace gardens which must have been immense.

Verse 6: *Where were white, green, and blue, hangings, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble: the beds were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black, marble.*

Out in the garden were huge canopies for shade; along the sides of these canopies were hangings of various colors of linen, no doubt decorated with beautiful designs, each tied to one of the marble pillars with fine linen cords to rings of silver. The beds were actually couches used in that day to recline upon while eating. There were several hundred brought out to be able to take care of all the guests, and each was of silver or gold and encrusted with jewels and art work and silk coverings to lie on. So it is obvious that no expense was spared.

Verse 7: And they gave *them* drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king.

Xerxes passes each of his princes his own cup with distinct designs to identify them. He also had all the wine one could possibly drink available, and it was from his personal stock not the common wine of slaves.

Verse 8: And the drinking was according to the law; none did compel: for so the king had appointed to

all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure.

Xerxes was a man of some morals (at least when sober) as he had a law that no one could be forced to drink at any point. You had liberty to drink or abstain at any time.

It is obvious from these verses that this was a huge drunken party. They drank to their hearts' content for this entire period, and the wine never ran out.

Now the problem with consuming this much alcohol or any alcohol is that it strips away any and all morals and allows the wickedness of the heart to come out in all of its ugliness and depravity as we shall see.

Verse 9: Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women *in* the royal house which *belonged* to king Ahasuerus.

Now the focus changes from all the men partying to the feast prepared by Vashti (here name means the best) the queen. Her party was for the concubines of Xerxes and also the wives and female attendants of all the princes that were with the king.

In the Persian Empire, and still to some degree even today, the men and women were kept separate when these types of events took place. Especially for the queen who was kept from public view, unless it was a matter of state that would require her presence with the king. This law or rule will become important now that all the men were drunk.

Verse 10: On 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 chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king,

On the last of the 187 days of banqueting and the feasting with all of the pomp and ceremony that went with it, the king will do something that in a sober state he would never do. However, in his drunken state of mind, and all of his morals abated, he calls for his 7 chief stewards to come to him. Now these men were probably eunuchs as they had access to the women, and he asks them to do something he would never do at any other time. We have here a King who rules one of the widest empires known to men. A man who was always in control of himself as head of this vast empire yet now he has allowed alcohol to strip away that control and turn him into a very base

individual. We must notice however that even here God is working out His providential will.

Verse 11-12. To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on. But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by *his* chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him.

He orders them to bring Queen Vashti -- with only her crown --before him to parade her around in front of these drunken princes, most of whom had never even seen her. He violates his own rules to show that not only was he wealthy but he also had the most beautiful of wives.

Not knowing what the moral implications might be, she refused the king's order. The spiritual application is this: the church is to show her beauty or rather the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ to a hell-bound world the question to us is this, are we doing so. There is an excellent picture of this in Song of Solomon chapter 5 verses 2 and 30.

One thing you did not do in that day was refuse the king anything he asked for; to do so would invite certain death. The queen was not allowed in the king's presence unless he called for her and after 187 days he wants her to put herself in a compromising situation. Her refusal drives the king into a drunken rage. What a sight to see this all powerful king go from drunken revelry to maddening rage that fast.

Verse 13: Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for so was the king's manner toward all that knew law and judgment:

The king never made a decision without consulting his Magi or wise men and these were also the religious leaders. Now these men had nothing to do with the God of the Hebrew's so do not think that these are Godly men. The king does this because whatever he says becomes law and cannot be changed by anyone including the King. So a rash statement could cause grievous consequences through out the kingdom. In this case it would not only affect his Queen but all the provincial leaders and their wives.

Verse 14: And the next unto him was Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king's face, and which sat the first in the kingdom;)

Now he has called the top seven princes or governors and asked their advice as to what to do, seeing that they already knew the law and its penalties; so Xerxes consults both religion and lawyers. These seven men are quite probably the same seven that are mentioned here in Ezra 7:14 "Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand;

Verse 15-16. What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains? And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that are in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus.

There was only one question, and that was what to do with Vashti for refusing the king's order. Memucan now speaks for the rest of the seven; some believe he may well have been Haman who we will meet later.

His response is that what Vashti did in refusing the order would spread to all of their wives, and their lives would change from total dominance to something less. It could reach down to the lowest family and turn the kingdom upside down.

Verse 17-18. For *this* deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not. *Likewise* shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king's princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus *shall there arise* too much contempt and wrath.

The authority of a male dominant kingdom was threatened. He says the wives will hate all husbands of course that was not true as not all men treated their wives like the king and this Memucan. He refers to his wife when he mentions the princes. So this one instance of refusing a shameful command by the queen has put all the men in an uproar.

Let me illustrate, there was a henpecked husband who went to his office bragging that he had his wife on her knees. However one of his co-workers knew the life of this man and asked what the circumstances of this incident were. The husband replied that she was on her knees looking under the bed saying come out from under there you coward.

Verse 19: If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she.

Now Memucan tells the king to write a law to go out through the entire kingdom. It would be simple in that Vashti would be excommunicated from the court, her crown would be taken and all her property. She would just be another woman in the harem without any hope of regaining her throne.

Even if she recanted she could not be restored to the position of Queen. Without her position she had no avenue of revenge on these men who cost her, her position.

Verse 20-22: And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small. And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan: For he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that *it* should be published according to the language of every people.

This new law would again strengthen the men's position throughout the kingdom. Wives would continue to obey without recourse. Xerxes likes the idea so he has it written and sent to all 120 provinces. The letter emphasized the primary purpose and that was to give credence to the position of the man. Notice that Vashti and her refusal to obey are not mentioned at all as it was secondary to upholding the authority of each husband. Now this is a pagan law written by a pagan king, not God, and should not be used for us today. Paul gives the order for today in Ephesians 5 and other places.

CHAPTER TWO

A Royal Beauty Pageant

Intro: In this country our society we have been holding beauty pageants for at least 50 years to decide who the most beautiful woman in the country is. Later the miss universe pageant was added to see who the most beautiful woman in the world is; that was not enough so they added the Mrs. America pageant to see who the most beautiful married woman in this country is and to add to this they added the Miss Teen USA pageant. It seems to me that we have become obsessed with the idea of beauty. We will see in this chapter that king Xerxes enjoys beauty pageants as he orders one to be held after dethroning Vashti. Let's see how he does his pageant.

Verse 1: After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her.

“after these things”-- this phrase covers the time between the removal of Vashti and Xerxes' attempt to conquer Greece (which failed miserably). Xerxes had, without doubt, the largest army and navy the world had seen. However, their victories had come because of massive numbers: some reports state that his army contained 200,000 foot soldiers. He also had 300 naval vessels which were destroyed at Salamis by the Greeks. At the same time, the Greeks were also highly trained for combat at the rate of one Greek soldier to ten Persians. They devastated Xerxes' army at Thermopylae; it is said he was so infuriated that he went to the sea and beat it with his sash for destroying his fleet. The time covered here is about 3 years. He has returned to the palace at Shushan very despondent; he, like most great leaders, suffered from a condition called megalomania, that is, the feeling that you are far superior to all around you, even to the point of being God.

Now in a mood of depression, his mind goes back to his lovely queen Vashti. He wanted her back, but the law could not be changed, even by the King.

Verses 2-4: Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king: And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the

palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hege the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given *them*: And let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so.

His faithful servants suggest that he hold a beauty contest with young women from all 127 provinces. They were to be assembled at the palace in a special area reserved for the women. Imagine soldiers coming to your door, demanding your teenage daughter for the king. You must give her up or die, and in giving her up you know you will never see her again. How difficult this must have been.

Once in the palace they were placed under a eunuch by the name of Hege to be prepared for the king's judging. This was done by washing and anointing with oils and perfumes, and then when the time was right, they would be brought before the king, one at a time, to see who would be the new queen; all the rest would spend their lives in the harem. You see there were no swimsuit competitions, or evening gowns, just one night with the King and if he was not satisfied then you went to the harem to serve as a secondary wife.

We the church are so much more blessed in that Jesus is already satisfied with us not because we are beautiful but because he first loved us when we were unlovely. We are washed by His blood and anointed with the Holy Spirit's indwelling us and empowering us to live for Jesus.

Verse 5: Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite;

Shushan- means "lily of the testimony". Here we are introduced to another main character and probable writer of the book, one Mordecai – "little man". He was of the tribe of Benjamin, a third generation Jew of the deportation, and by divine providence, this little man will be greatly used by God. This is a good picture of the fact that even the smallest of persons can be used of God for great things. We see also that God places us where he wants us and that for good reason sometimes know only to Him.

Verse 6: Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah,

whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.

Some say this is the Mordecai that Nebuchadnezzar carried away; however, this would make him nearly 130 years old, so it is not likely. The plain simple reading says Kish, a son of Benjamin, was carried away, making him Mordecai's grandfather. Mordecai is also mentioned in Ezra 2:2 and Nehemiah 7:7. This is probably the same person who came back from Jerusalem to the palace to resume his duties there.

Verse 7: And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter.

Now we are introduced to the true heroine of the story: a young girl by the name of Hadasseh-(myrtle), a sweet fragrance. There is in Israel today a hospital named in honor of her. We see that she is Mordecai's cousin, yet her parents have died, and he has adopted her as his own daughter, just as Jesus adopts us as his own brothers and sisters. From this point on, she will go by her Persian name of Esther-(star); she will be guided by providence to become the heroine. Her only asset will be her beauty; you see beauty is God's handiwork, and yet today the devil gets so much of the beauty distorts it twists and perverts it so that one's real beauty cannot be seen only the marred face of sin. When someone like this allows Jesus to come in this marred face is restored to its real beauty that comes from inside.

Verse 8-9: So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women. And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, *which* were meet to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best *place* of the house of the women.

As the decree is being taken to all the provinces, the young women are brought in as they are found, and then falling under the care of Hege who was to see to their needs. Now notice that as soon as Esther is brought in, Hege sees her beauty and assigns seven slave girls to take care of her every need!

She so impresses him that he began to show her very special treatment. He provides all of the oils, ointments and clothing she will need and then some. He also provides her with a separate apartment away from the other girls who stayed in one of the harem areas. This again is God's providence at work as this special treatment will be to her advantage when her turn comes to go before the king.

Here Esther is a good type of a Christian who is taken by the Holy Spirit out and apart from the rest of the religion and given the oil of the Spirit and the robe of righteousness given by Christ so we will be presentable to Him. It is important to see that none of this was on her part and even her lineage was no help and would have been a detriment if it had come out. You see if our old life was brought out before the Father it would mean death but our Hege the Holy Spirit sees to it that we are clothed in Christ so the Father sees Him and not ourselves.

Verse 10-11: Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew *it*. And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her.

Had Hegai found out she was a Jew, she would not have been so well treated -- quite the contrary. Anti-Semitism was strong then, and it still is today, including America, as sad as that is to say. The Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and killed thousands of civilians.

Mordecai, knowing this, warns her to be silent about this, which in essence would be a denial of her religion (Jonah had done the same on board ship). Mordecai and Esther should not be in Shushan, and by being here, they are out of the will of God and had no witness. Now even today when anyone gets out of the will of God, they have little to say about faith in Christ.

Verse 12-14: Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, *to wit*, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with *other*

things for the purifying of the women;) Then thus came every maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house. In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name.

Twelve months of menstrual cycles had to pass and during this time they were to spend six months bathing daily in oils and then the last six months bathing in perfumes. The reason for the year was to make absolutely sure not one of them was pregnant.

At the end of the year each of the girls were given the opportunity to pick out their clothes and accessories to wear to try and be as beautiful as possible as they were taken before the king and to spend the night with him in his chambers returning to the house the next morning if not selected to spend the rest of their lives in the harem as secondary wives. They were joined to the king as a wife after a night of sexual union which is what God said when flesh joins flesh. They would spend their days waiting for him to call their name and he may never do that the rest of their lives.

Verse 15-16: Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her. So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

Esther's turn comes and instead of picking her own item's Hege the eunuch, who knew the king well, picked everything for her; again, God has moved behind the scenes to make sure she becomes queen. When she comes out of her quarters, all the women and the other eunuchs were taken aback by her beauty! Christians adorned with Christ should also take the world aback with His beauty. Now, it has been 4 years since Vashti was put away.

Verse 17-18: And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti. Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king.

Esther is so stunning in her physical beauty and humility that Xerxes cancels the rest of the beauty contest and declares Esther as the new Queen. In the royal court, Xerxes brings her in before the courtiers and place on her the crown which consisted of a woven band of purple and white. Immediately, there was a huge banquet and as a gesture of kindness, he called for a holiday from taxes for a year.

Verse 19: And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king's gate.

Xerxes, in his lust and power, had more young girls brought in for his pleasure even after making Esther Queen. Why you may ask? One answer may be found in the fact that a Kings power was measured by the size of his harem. Now sometime during this, Esther has had her cousin placed in a position of some importance. Sitting at the gate is where all petty matters of law were dealt with, and where everyone came to during the day. God is at work with these two (Esther & Mordecai) who are out of his will to accomplish His purpose toward Israel.

Verse 20-22: Esther had not yet shewed her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him. In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hands on the king Ahasuerus. And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told *it* unto Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king *thereof* in Mordecai's name.

Esther keeps her nationality hidden as Mordecai told her to. This too is God at work, as she needs to stay in her place as Queen. Someone said that “God swings big doors on little hinges”.

While doing his job as a petty judge, the grapevine lets Mordecai know that these two men mentioned here were hatching a plot to assassinate the king. Why, you ask? Most likely, it was over Vashti and her removal.

He takes the matter to Esther; how he gained audience is not known -- however, it is still God working in the background to accomplish His purpose. Esther takes the plot to the king at her next audience, or by way of one of the chamberlains. The king has it investigated, it's proved true, and the king acts in typical fashion of the day.

Verse 23: And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out; therefore they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king.

These two are arrested and summarily hanged, which was the favored means of execution for Persians, as with all matters related to the king, Mordecai and his report are entered into the chronicles, yet he was not rewarded at that time (providence). There is today those who say “if the circumstances are not favorable, then God is not in them”. I do not believe this to be true as God takes all circumstances and uses them as he sees fit to accomplish His will. We may not see it as such while it is unfolding especially when it is something that is bad but we must always remember God is in ultimate control. Paul told the Ephesians that he has fore ordained us to be conformed to His image and He will use whatever means HE sees fit to do this we need only trust Him. Now in the next four chapters or so, the focus is going to be on one man, a fellow by the name of Haman.

CHAPTER THREE

Pride and Prejudice

Intro: It is an all too familiar story in human history, someone is given some award or prize money or position in a company and then someone who thought it should have been theirs has their ego bubble busted and they allow pride to step in and take over their action. It is at this point that the prideful individual will begin to find all the reasons that they should have had it and the other should not have been given it. Here in chapter three and the following chapters we see it played out in this man named Haman. He is a petty man who thinks he is something and will step on anyone to prove it.

Verse 1: After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him.

Looking at verse 7, we see that nearly five years have passed from chapter 2:16 to 3:7. We have met the king, the heroine, and the hero and like every good whodunit. We now need a villain, and here he makes his debut onto the stage of God's dealings with the Jews -- who are still out of the will of God! We must not forget they are in Persia because of disobedience and even more so since they have been allowed to return years ago.

Haman will become the enemy of Mordecai in particular and all the Jews in general. He was an Agagite, which means he is a descendant of king Agag, who was king of the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15:8, 33). This is the king that King Saul was supposed to utterly annihilate and did not do so in direct disobedience to God's will. Now the interesting thing to note here is that Haman is a direct descendant of Agag, and Mordecai is a direct descendant of Saul, and he, like Saul, is also out of the will of God by not returning to the Promised Land as he should have. The ensuing conflict of this story was thus started several hundred years earlier.

Haman, for whatever reason, has found a way to be promoted by Xerxes to the position of second in the kingdom. Even above the seven princes who gave Xerxes counsel. It would have taken some act way beyond the ordinary for this to happen. It would be like winning the Medal of Honor in our military or something similar. Having this position sets the stage for his pride to get in the way and cause all the problems between him and Mordecai.

Verse 2: And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded

concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did *him* reverence.

The custom in Persia was for people to prostrate themselves before the king. Haman expected and received this adoration not because he was worthy but because Xerxes ordered it. Well, all but one bowed his face to the ground. Mordecai, fulfilling his role as judge, was there, but he would not bow. He is doing this because of religious conviction as we will see. Bowing in that fashion was a religious act of worship for a god. He respected the position but he knew God's law: "thou shalt have no other gods before me".

Verse 3-4: Then the king's servants, which were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment? Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand: for he had told them that he was a Jew.

His acquaintances, his fellow judges question him as to his refusal to bow, and they did this for some time before he responded that he was a Jew and worshipped only the living God Jehovah.

They go straight to Haman to see if Mordecai's reason would get him out of bowing. Mordecai did not and could not have known the far-reaching consequences of his decision. He was willing to lose his job or die rather than break the first commandment, but I doubt he wanted or even considered that the nation also might suffer for his action. We today as Christians need to think before we jump into some rash action about the consequences to others.

Verse 5-6: And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath. And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai.

Their answer was swift in coming as Haman flew into a rage; so furious and full of pride was he that he decides to not only deal with Mordecai but also all the Jews. Now a large-scale extermination of a group of people was not uncommon in eastern history. But Haman did not know of God's promises to His people in Genesis 12:2-3. George Rawlinson in the Pulpit

Commentary said this “The caprices of absolute monarchs determine the course of history and in the least human life is not held in much regard”

If one will look into the pages of history and see that the Jew has attended the funeral of every nation that has tried to eliminate them as the Lord told Isaiah in Isaiah 54:17. “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.”

Verse 7: In the first month, that *is*, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, 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.

Haman and his aides cast lots every day for a year, trying to find the right day to bring his plan to bear. Lots were bones or dice of some sort cast out of a cup and were most often used by astrologers. Take a moment to think about this, here are these powerful men casting dice, voting if you will on the best day to go to Xerxes to present Haman’s plan to eradicate the Jews. Everyday they do this and every day the omen is bad and so they wait and try again and again for one whole year, can you imagine how frustrated Haman must have been. God caused it to be a year so that his people would have time to change the law.

Verse 8: And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws *are* diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it *is* not for the king's profit to suffer them.

To gain permission to destroy the Jews, Haman stretches, bends and exaggerates the truth and the point. Only Mordecai refused to bow, yet Haman says all the Jews will not bow and that they totally disregard all of Xerxes’ laws, thereby playing on Xerxes’ megalomania to get his way. I imagine Xerxes thinking, “I am Ahasuerus, high father; how dare anyone not obey my law -- I am god! Haman suggests the best remedy is to just wipe them out -- then they cannot cause others to be so disrespectful towards Xerxes!!”

Verse 9: If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten

thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring *it* into the king's treasuries.

Haman urges total destruction, and that all those involved in the work be well rewarded. He is so intent on having this done, he even offers to pay 10,000 talents of silver (talent 50-75 lb each). He is either extremely rich or is willing to sell all he has to have his way. There are many today that are willing to sell all, including their soul, just to have their way now!

Verse 10-11: And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy. And the king said unto Haman, The silver *is* given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee.

Xerxes is so unimpressed that he has Haman keep his money and in turn gave him his signet ring. This was done to show everyone that the king's authority had been granted to Haman for this awful act. How we see our governments around the world putting there seals upon laws that bring affliction and death upon Christians by the thousands. The word "enemy" here means persecutor. Now Haman has what he needs to get his revenge.

Verse 12: Then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that were over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring.

Still in the first month Haman calls the scribes (lawyers) to write the decree. He starts early enough to make sure the law goes to all 127 provinces in plenty of time to be read and to be seen with the royal seal. Once this was done the decree becomes immutable law just like the one in chapter one. Haman worked as fast as possible so that the king would not have time to discover his plot and stop the law from being enacted.

This is the way the Devil likes to work swift and in as much secrecy as possible so untrained and gullible Christians will not catch on to the heresy or false doctrine until they are already trapped.

Verses 13-14: And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey. The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, that they should be ready against that day.

The letters were sent by runners and riders to all 127 provincial governors; the plan was to be carried out in the 12th month. To encourage the neighbors to turn on the Jews, everyone who destroyed a Jewish family could have their lands and property. This could be a substantial amount as the Jew is always profitable wherever he is.

Let me make an application here for Christians today. Jesus said in John 10 that the Devil came not but for to steal, kill and to destroy. What Haman has devised as a means to eradicate the Jews sounds very familiar. This proves that Satan has not changed his tactics in all these centuries.

Verse 15: The posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed.

While Haman gloats over his seemingly foolproof plan, the city's residents were beginning to wonder if it's the Jews this time, what group would be next in line to be destroyed by Haman's pride and prejudice? All one needs do is look back at the years preceding WWII and see how Hitler began to outlaw one ethnic or religious group after the other in pursuit of his Arian super race. While doing this he conveniently kept secret the fact that he was a Jew from Austria.

CHAPTER FOUR

For Such A Time As This

Intro: There are times when we are in a place and circumstance and we do not know why until much later when we have time to look back and assess the matter. In this chapter we will find that Mordecai is going to tell Esther that she may well have been made queen just to save her people at this time.

VERSE 1: When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry;

Once word came to Mordecai of the enormity of the crime that was going to be enacted upon all of his kinsmen he puts off his judges robes and puts on the robes of mourning and as he did so did the rest of the Jews in the kingdom as they found out what was to happen. Wearing sackcloth and ashes was signs of great sorrow and grief (Dan. 9:3; Job 2:12). Mordecai went about crying aloud with grief in his voice! He has realized what his zeal has done, it has caused every Jews life to be in jeopardy and he is powerless it seemed to stop the execution of Israel.

Verses 2-3: And came even before the king's gate: for none *might* enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, *there was* great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

Mordecai could only come up to the gate and stand crying as he was not allowed to sit in the gate while in mourning. Many sinners come to the door of salvation crying, but they will not allow the sackcloth of sin and sorrow to be removed so that they might go in. All over the empire, Jews put on their funeral clothes and began fasting and praying, even lying down in the dirt to seek relief as we read in Isaiah 58:5 Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD?

Verses 4-6: So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told *it* her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him: but he received *it* not. Then called Esther for Hatach, one of the king's chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and gave him a commandment to Mordecai, to know what it was, and why it was. So Hatach went forth to Mordecai unto the street of the city, which was before the king's gate.

Eventually the news of the Jews' mourning reaches into the queen's palace. When Esther hears of Mordecai's sadness she sends him a gift of brightly colored robes, thinking this will help cheer him up, not knowing the reason for his sadness. How like some today who think that by applying something to the outside you can solve someone's troubles. This is what religion thinks if you can add some ritual or some liturgy to your life that will make you acceptable to the Lord. Jesus said this is what the Pharisees did they washed the outside of the cup but the inside was filthy (sinful).

Mordecai sends the clothes back to the queen; she then becomes even more concerned and sends one of her chamberlains to personally find out why Mordecai was so sad! You see the church is not to look to externals we are to go out to where the people are and find out what is the real problem.

Verses 7-8: And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and of the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them. Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to shew *it* unto Esther, and to declare *it* unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her people.

When Hatach asks why the mourning, Mordecai begins to outline all that happened, and that the king was going to pay people to kill the Jews all over the empire.

Mordecai even places in his hands a copy of the decree for the queen to read. Mordecai takes a final desperate step and that is to ask Esther to seek an audience with the king and intercede for the Jewish people.

Verses 9-12: And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai. Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai; All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or women, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, *there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.* And they told to Mordecai Esther's words.

Hatach relays all that he has been told and hands over the decree. After reading it and considering it, she has some questions raised within her. There were some problems with her going to the king. She lived in the queen's palace, and the king lived in a separate inner palace, and it was unlawful for anyone to just go in before the king without being summoned for an audience. The penalty was certain death, even for her, unless he acknowledged them.

Now Xerxes had not asked for her for a month, and she was confident it would be some time before he asked for her to come to him. She sends these problems back to Mordecai for his consideration.

Verse 13: Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.

Mordecai makes it very clear to Esther, almost as a threat, that when the decree is carried out she would not escape death, even as queen, as the law was binding on everyone who was a Jew, without exception. Esther could chose to remain quite like so many Christians today and never stand boldly and yet she would at some time still be found out and be killed.

Verse 14: For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, *then* shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who

knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?

Mordecai, even in his disobedience (remember he is out of the will of God), tells Esther if she will not go into the King and intercede for her people, God would bring deliverance another way. He was right, God would have risen up another to preserve His people, but he knew that would not be necessary.

Mordecai applies a little extra pressure by adding if God uses another means to deliver the Jews, surely she and her family, including Mordecai, would be destroyed by God. He goes so far as to tell her that God has placed her as queen for just this time.

Verses 15-16: Then Esther bade *them* return Mordecai *this answer*, Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which *is* not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.

Esther sends her reply to Mordecai to have everyone in the city to fast. Now God is not mentioned, but certainly it is implied in the fasting that prayer of intercession will be made for Esther for 72 hours. Now Esther was going to have her hand servants fast also and intercede on her behalf that God would be with her when she goes to the king. This last phrase is one of implicit trust in her God, that live or die she would go to the king for her people. It would be good if all of us would have that same attitude of implicit trust or faith in God and go get the lost.

Verse 17: So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

Mordecai goes to tell all the Jews in Shushan to begin fasting, for in 3 days Esther will go in before the King to try and save her people live or die.

CHAPTER FIVE

Going to see the King

Intro: It would be an exciting opportunity to be invited to a meeting with the President of the United States or some other leader of a foreign country. There would be a good deal of nervous apprehension on ones part to not say or do something embarrassing. Now think about barging into say a presidential cabinet meeting to talk to the President about something personal you want him to do for you. The worst you could expect from this would be arrested and held for a while. Esther on the other hand faces something far worse she could be forfeiting her life before she ever is able to utter the first word of her request.

Verse 1-2: Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on *her royal apparel*, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house. And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, *that* 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 top of the sceptre.

At the end of the three days of fasting, Esther puts on all of her royal attire and leaves her quarters for the throne room where Xerxes is holding court. Remember, her life is on the line if he does not extend the scepter. As she enters the court area, from a side entrance, not from the main gate where everyone else would come in at. As she steps out of the shadows Xerxes sees her and his love for her causes him to extend the scepter. God, in His great love for us, extended His own sceptre toward us, and that sceptre was not a gold covered staff like the one Xerxes held, but one of rugged wood covered by His own Son. As Esther approaches the out-stretched staff, she bows her head and touches it with her forehead, or maybe even actually kisses it in submission. Again, God has moved behind the scene to make sure she finds favor.

Verses 3-4: Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what *is* thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom. And Esther answered, *If it seem good unto the king*, let the king and

Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him.

Once acknowledged and accepted, she is asked what it is she wants from Him. He loved her enough to offer her up to half the kingdom. Xerxes loved Esther and would not have her die just as God loved us and would not have us die -- "For God so loved the world that He sent His only Son"..... Half the kingdom is a sizeable sum, and God is no less generous to us, making us heirs and joint heirs with Christ not just of an earthly kingdom but of the universe.

Esther has what seems like a very simple request: a private meal with just the King, Haman and herself. Here is more intrigue as she plans to use the dinner to expose Haman for the villain that he is.

Verse 5-6: Then the king said, Cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther hath said. So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared. And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine, What *is* thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: and what *is* thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed.

The King has Haman summoned to the Queen's dining area for this private party. This was a great honor for anyone to be able to eat and drink with both the King and the Queen, which plays greatly to Haman's pride. This pride will lead to his downfall. Once seated around the table on their dining couches, the King, out of his love, asks Esther again "what is thy petition?" We might say, "What is bothering you?" seeing her slightly pallid condition after three days of fasting. He offers up to half the kingdom for the second time to try and help lift his Queens spirit thinking as all pagans do that money can solve all problems when it really only adds to it. (Phil. 4:9: Pr. 21:1).

Verse 7-8: Then answered Esther, and said, My petition and my request *is*; If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do to morrow as the king hath said.

Esther starts to reveal what she knows about Haman's evil plot, and then suddenly she stops as God providentially changes her mind and has her ask something different. If she has found favor with the King, then would he come to another banquet tomorrow evening, and then she would give her full request and desire to him and to Haman. One would be saddened and one would be dead.

Verse 9: Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai.

By now Haman is just full of himself, and who wouldn't be. He has been promoted to second in the kingdom, and now he has had one dinner with the King and Queen and been invited for a second one. This was truly from Haman's point of view a great day dining with Xerxes and Esther and then being invited back for a second private dinner. For a man with a good deal of pride already this was just over the top for the ego. So as he is leaving the palace, he is no doubt walking two feet off the ground, until he comes to the gate and there is Mordecai who will not bow to him, which puts him in a rage. (Pr. 16:18).

Verse 10-11: Nevertheless Haman refrained himself: and when he came home, he sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife. And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all *the things* wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king.

Haman bites his tongue, knowing that soon enough Mordecai would get his just desserts. Once he arrives home, he is so upset he calls for his friends and his wife so he can tell them about the money and the position the King had given to him. And also that he was even invited to a private dinner with the King and Queen not once but twice. My, what a great man he has become, or so he thinks

Verse 12-13: Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and to morrow am I invited unto her also with the king. Yet all this

availeth me nothing, so long as I see
Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.

He just keeps adding to his fame and self esteem; to some of our modern liberal preachers, he is living his best life now. He had it made, except for one thing: there was this little Jew named Mordecai, who simply ruined everyday for him. Ever had a fly just keep buzzing around you, bothering you and ruining whatever it is you are doing? Well, Mordecai was Haman's fly.

Verse 14: Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and to morrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon: then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman; and he caused the gallows to be made.

After whining about Mordecai, his wife Zeresh tells him what to do. He should build a gallows, a very large gallows, about 75 feet high, this way everyone could see Mordecai swinging. Then all he had to do was arrange to have Mordecai hanged in the morning and then go have dinner, and life will go on its merry way. This hanging would be convincing evidence to show everyone not mess with Haman.

CHAPTER SIX

Patience is rewarded

Intro: Up until now, everything has gone against the Jews and most especially against Mordecai. From here to the end of the book the tide turns as God in His providence works out the circumstances to save His people being destroyed even in their backslidden condition.

Verses 1-2: On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.

In this chapter we will see God's hand clearly moving in these people's lives. After the food and wine the King is having a little trouble sleeping not realizing that it is God who is causing the sleeplessness. Now the common remedy in the Palace was to have the record books brought out and read. These books recorded everything done by the King during each days sitting at court. The book they brought (guided by God) contained the record of the plot to assassinate the King by these two men. There is one glaring fact that stands out in this reading and that is there is no reward been given for this great act of kindness and protection toward the King.

Verses 3-4: And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him. And the king said, Who is in the court? Now Haman was come into the outward court of the king's house, to speak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.

The King notices right away the glaring omission of any reward being made to Mordecai for his great deed. Anxious to remedy this oversight and reward this loyal servant the King wants to know what official was on duty. There was always an official nearby to be in attendance of the King. They were there for advice and the King wanted to know who it was. Turns out it is no

other than Haman who was coming into the court area early that morning just as God wanted him to, knowing what the King was going to do.

Haman is coming to tell the King something about Mordecai that would gain his permission to hang him. I can tell you he is in for a real surprise and an ego busting early in the morning. Let's watch what happens.

Verses 5-6: And the king's servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in. So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?

Once the King knows who it is he sends for him in hast. Once Haman is in the Kings presence he is asked what should be done for the man who brings happiness to the King. Now Haman in his pride could think of no one else who delighted the King more than himself and who would be more deserving of royal favor than himself. My look what pride will do to a person, this is the same thing Satan used on Eve her pride in her own wisdom to bring the downfall of the human race. He is in for a huge let down to his ego that the Lord has in the works for him; God does have a sense of humor!

Verses 7-9: And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour, Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head: And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man *withal* whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

Haman is so infatuated with himself that he really wants the best for himself. He starts by desiring the royal apparel and the crown to wear that alone was asking a lot. Next he wants the royal horse in all its royal trappings to ride upon. Then he wants a prince a little lower than himself to dress him in the robes and put him on the horse and parade him through Shushan proclaiming that this is how the King treats those who he favors.

Haman wants the royal treatment yet God is going to give him just the opposite.

Verses 10-11: Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, *and* take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken. Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

This impresses Xerxes so much that he says it is to be so. Now comes the let down as he orders Haman to make it happen only not to Haman but to Mordecai. I said God had a sense of humor can you picture his face at that moment when the King mentions who it is that is to wear the royal robes. Haman came to have Mordecai hung and now he is going to parade him through the streets in clothes he thought only he deserved. The King orders it to be done down to the last detail. How humiliated ole Haman the anti-Semite was during that walk! No one can attack God's chosen people and expect to get by Haman should have stopped while he was ahead.

Verses 12-13: And Mordecai came again to the king's gate. But Haman hastened to his house mourning, and having his head covered. And Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends every *thing* that had befallen him. Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto him, If Mordecai *be* of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him.

Once Haman returns Mordecai to his job post at the city gate and returns the robes, crown, and horse to the King he starts a long lonely walk home. He is beside himself in sorrow as evidenced by his head being covered. He has had a huge blow to his ego; this has to happen a lot to sinners so they can see their need of Jesus.

Once home he pours out his sad story of disgrace in having to pay homage to the very one that wouldn't pay it to him. He was hoping for support and what he received was a prophecy of ill fate to befall him.

Now that he has begun his fall he would not be able to overcome Mordecai. And would lose all he has including his life in the end.

Verse 14: And while they were yet talking with him, came the king's chamberlains, and hasted to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared.

Just as these advisors are warning Haman of his fate the Kings chamberlains knock on the door. They have come to announce to Haman that the banquet is ready and he needs to come at once. This probably made him feel a little better as this was still a singular honor that even Mordecai did not receive. He has no idea that God has planned this to be Haman's last banquet ever. In these 14 verses Haman has went from the top of the world to falling off a ledge and sliding down an ever slippery slope of destruction. Jesus said "what would it do to gain the whole world and to lose your soul". It is easy to see the hand of God working unseen but working nonetheless.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A Meal gone Sour!

The evening banquet is ready; Haman sees one more honor befitting his high estate. God sees an evil man who is going to pay a high price for his arrogance and his desire to destroy God's chosen people. Let's continue to watch God move and know He is just as interested in our lives as He was in Esther's.

Verses 1-3: So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen. And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, *What is thy petition, queen Esther?* and it shall be granted thee: and *what is thy request?* and it shall be performed, *even to the half of the kingdom.* Then Esther the queen answered and said, *If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request:*

Now two banquets in two days with the King and Queen is quite an accomplishment for this man Haman. He undoubtedly is enamored with himself as no one else had had this great compliment. As a rule, the King always ate by himself and the officials in an adjoining room. So it is easy to see the prestige attached to this meal.

Again, the King offers Esther a blank check so to speak to take care of whatever is bothering her. Just so, God the Father has given us the Holy Spirit to take care of what is troubling us. It is true, however, that far too many try to use money to fix the problems when it would be better to put God back in the picture, as money usually creates more problems. Esther's response is not for the money but for something far more serious: her life, and not only hers, but all of her people as well.

Verses 4: *For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage.*

Esther is going to actually use money in her favor and against Haman. She tells Xerxes that they were sold to be totally eliminated from his

kingdom. However, if they had been sold as slaves, she would not had said anything because the King would have profited in the money received, but now he would lose that and the taxes he would have received from their labors.

Now an empire as large as this would need a considerable amount of taxes to operate, not to mention recovering from the devastating war with Greece. So it is easy to see how this would cause some serious concern for the King.

Verses 5-6: Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so? And Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen.

Xerxes is now in a growing rage for several reasons: first, and I think most important, is the fact that Esther is going to die. Second, would be the monetary losses of future taxes caused by the total elimination of this people group. And third, the money loss of having at least sold an entire nation into slavery would be gone and that also would have been substantial.

With his growing rage, Xerxes wanted to know who would presume to do such an evil thing towards him. Who could have that kind of evil in their heart? What he and most others do not realize is that most of man's evil actions come from an evil heart as seen in Matthew 15:19 and Ecc. 8:11. Jeremiah said that "the heart was deceitfully wicked and who could know it". Esther, buoyed by the King's response to her plea, now reveals the man behind it all this man who would eat at the Kings hand this Haman.

Haman's fear level goes through the roof as he realizes that the law he caused Xerxes to enact now would not only affect one of the King's favorites (Mordecai) which was bad, but now he knows it will also affect the Queen to.

Let me make a brief application here. The devil has been trying to destroy Israel from the beginning as a people, but now has also brought attack after attack on the bride of Christ, the real Queen of heaven.

I can picture Haman's face and reaction as he looks at Esther and then at the growing rage in Xerxes' face, he probably is about to choke on the fig he was biting into at the moment. In his heart he must have been thinking that in the next breath Xerxes would call for his guards to take him out and execute him. That beloved no doubt drained the color out of his face. Instead of that the King does something different.

Verses 7-9: And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath went into the

palace garden: and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king. Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther was. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? As the word went out of king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon.

Now let's set this scene because of its importance. This private banquet would have a low table in the middle with the food and three low couch's around it on which they would recline while they ate.

So Xerxes jumps up and goes out into the outer court of the women. Now the importance of this is not that he can cool down and then make a reasonable judgment; no, the import of this act is lost to us today, but it would not have been lost on Haman. When the King did this while dealing with someone, it meant a sentence of death without mercy. There could be no plea, no clemency; Haman is going to die and he knows it.

That doesn't stop him from begging for his life. He starts by standing before the Queen and speaking every platitude he can think of to win her favor and hopefully his life. The Queen all the while is still reclining on her couch listening. Isn't it odd that he was not going to allow any mercy for the Jewish people, and now he is begging a Jew for his life? So desperate is he that he falls on her, begging, and in God's providence Xerxes walks back in the room, no doubt to have Haman removed to the prison until sentence is executed. There, before his eyes, is Haman on his wife, apparently either trying to sexually assault her or kill her; in either case, Haman is finished in this life. It is true, sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you can pay.

Xerxes orders Haman's face covered, which was an action showing that the individual was no longer to look on the King. Down through history, people who are going to the gallows have been blindfolded or hooded, you see, you cannot get away from the Bible.

Harbonah, the chamberlain, then just for good measure and because he loves his Queen and her uncle Mordecai, tells the King of Haman's desire to have Mordecai hung. Haman even went so far as to build this huge gallows

at his home without the King's permission. So Xerxes orders Haman executed and then hung on Mordecai's gallows.

Verse 10: So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.

The execution is carried out, and Haman's lifeless body is hanging for all to see what happens to anyone who crosses the King or attacks his Queen. Just as Haman intended to show what happened to anyone who crossed him, the tables are turned, and oh how the mighty have fallen.

You can run against God, but you will never defeat Him or His purpose for you, and the devil will not defeat either the Jewish people or the bride of Christ. (Ps 9: 15; Ps 37: 35-36)

CHAPTER EIGHT

REWARD AND DELIVERANCE

Haman has been disposed of; however. There is still the matter of the unbreakable law he engineered ordering all Jews be put to death. Xerxes cannot undo this, yet he cannot allow it to be carried out. For us, God wrote the Mosaic Laws, and they are unchangeable, and they declare death to all who fail to keep them. God cannot change this, yet for his great love's sake, He must do something to save us and He did, He put His son on the cross.

Verse 1: On that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman the Jews' enemy unto Esther the queen. And Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he was unto her.

In the day after the banquet, Xerxes decrees that all of Haman's property, money, and family now belong to Queen Esther. This would be quite a present to give and certainly well appreciated by the Queen.

In the Bible, the prophets tell us that this world that the devil has had control of by his deceit will be taken from him and given to the Jewish people forever.

Next, Esther arranges for Mordecai to have an audience with the King, whereupon she explains that Mordecai is her foster father, which makes him Xerxes father-in-law.

Verse 2: And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

Now the King has retrieved his ring from Haman, and after all that has happened, he is giving it to Mordecai -- elevating him to the position of prime minister, or second in the land to Xerxes -- the very place Haman had when jealousy and pride got in his way.

Mordecai is also made overseer of Esther's new property and possessions. One day in the not too distant future, God the Father is going to exalt the Israelites and give them authority over this world. Jesus is going to raise the church up to rule at his side and reign over this universe.

Verse 3: And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the

mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews.

Now all of the aforementioned honor, reward and the promotion were good, except for the fact that Haman's law was still out there to negate the King's generosity. So Esther goes to the King's feet to bring it back to his attention.

He is a busy King and had moved on with daily business; before you misunderstand, think back, if you will, to chapter 3. Xerxes had Haman write the law and seal it with the ring he had given him and send it out, not ever reading it. So he does not know how or when Haman was going to carry this evil deed out. This explains why he became so infuriated when he realized it was going to be an entire population group and not just a clan or a family. Now he is going to have this law brought to his attention once again this time by the Queen.

Esther intercedes with tears for her kinsmen, she is a good example for us in that we should go to the throne of God at His feet and intercede on our loved ones' behalf.

Verses 4-6: Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king, And said, If it please the king, and if I have favour in his sight, and the thing seem *right* before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in *all* the king's provinces: For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?

Again Xerxes in his love holds out the scepter in acceptance toward Esther. Upon arising she begins by asking if she has found favor and if she is pleasing to him, then here is her plan and that is, Xerxes would just write a memo reversing the law that Haman wrote. Now that sounds very easy and it is, just too easy. Esther being a Jew may well not have known the Persian law that once the King signed laws with his ring not even he could reverse it. This will not deter Esther from her task of interceding for her fellow Jews. She reminds the King that she could not live with all her kinsmen dead, and she would not live that way. This jars the King back to the serious nature of the law. He loves her and does not want to see her in pain, so he is in need of a way to resolve this situation and he will.

Verses 7-9: Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews. Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal *it* with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse. Then were the king's scribes called at that time in the third month, that *is*, the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth *day* thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which *are* from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language.

Xerxes quickly reminds Esther of all the favors he has already shown not only to her, but to Mordecai also. For him to reverse the law was just not possible, even for him.

However there is another way, the king suggests that Esther and Mordecai write a decree that will provide for the deliverance of the Jews, and once this is done, take his ring and seal it and then send it out.

So just as Haman had done in Chapter 3, now Mordecai calls all the scribes and dictates a new law and has it copied enough times to reach all 127 provinces and every language including Hebrew.

Verse 10: And he wrote in the king Ahasuerus' name, and sealed *it* with the king's ring, and sent letters by posts on horseback, *and* riders on mules, camels, *and* young dromedaries:

To insure that this law arrives in time to protect all the Jews, Mordecai uses every means of rapid transit at his disposal. My, how we as Christians should do likewise and use every means at our disposal to get the law of the new covenant out to the entire world. Jesus said “go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel”!

Verse 11-12: Wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey, Upon one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, *namely*, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar.

These two verses give a summary of the law Mordecai had written. Basically the Jews in every town, village, and city were ordered to form militia groups to protect their homes, property and families with deadly force. Then, who ever came against them, when they were defeated, the winning Jew could have their property and possessions. I believe when this was read, it would have some what of an impact on the rest of the kingdom. This law would no doubt stop a large number of Persians from rising up against the Jews knowing that their families could lose everything if the man died!

Verses 13-14: The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, and that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies. So the posts that rode upon mules *and* camels went out, being hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment. And the decree was given at Shushan the palace.

All the copies were ready and out went the riders to carry the decree all over the kingdom to have the new law read before every citizen. Even there in Shushan it was declared to all.

Verses 15: And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel 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.

Mordecai now leaves the King's presence, no longer a Jew under a death warrant, but a free man elevated to honor and power. He is dressed in the robes of the prime minister, the same kind Haman wore; the difference is Haman wore them in pride, and Mordecai wore them in humility. God the Father has robed us in royal attire, and each of us needs to daily decide which way we will walk. The news replaces the weeping and sorrow with praising and rejoicing.

Verses 16-17: The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour. And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

The Jews throughout the land hold a great feast of thanksgiving for their deliverance. Because of all that has happened many of the empire become Jewish proselytes. May I say there should be such feasting and rejoicing in our lives, such a change from sadness to gladness that others will want what we now have!

Esther 9

A New Feast Instituted

The old law is out there and the new law is out there also, now everyone must wait and see what will actually transpire when the day of execution comes. You see everyone must decide to either live under the old law of death or the new law of life.

1-2: Now in the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them;) The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon all people.

The day is at hand as Haman wanted the decree carried out in the 12th month. The Jews band together all over the kingdom "to lay hands" this means to reach out to kill. In verse 2c we see again the implied action of divine intervention of God's providence. God had changed all the circumstances so that no one could stand against the Jewish people.

3 And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews; because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them. For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater.

All of Xerxes provincial officers go over to the Jews side, why you ask? Because they feared the power of Mordecai knowing what had happened to their friend Haman. Today each believer is protected by the throne of God. Look at Romans 8:33-34 "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?"

It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us". Notice closely how God justifies in 4 ways 1st Christ died 2nd He arose 3rd He is at God's right hand (seat of power) 4th Jesus intercedes for us. These are the reasons no man can condemn a believer look also at Heb. 4: 14-16 "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

If an Israelite in Esther's day had not believed the kings decree then he would have died for his lack of faith. We to must have faith in the gospel message 1 Cor. 15:3-4 "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:"

5-9 Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them. And in Shushan the palace the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men. And Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and Aspatha, And Poratha, and Adalia, and Aridatha, And Parmashta, and Arisai, and Aridai, and Vajezatha,

These five verses give us a picture of the Jews able defense of themselves across the empire. There are 10 provinces mentioned, ten being the number of the gentiles. At the end of the tribulation the gentiles of the world will be trodden down as Jesus puts them under His footstool.

10-11: The ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, slew they; but on the spoil laid they not their hand. On that day the number of those that were slain in Shushan the palace was brought before the king.

Not only did they kill 500 in Shushan but also the 10 sons of Haman. Not only will the gentiles be put down but Satan's children also as the 10 sons of Haman represent those 10 kings of revelation. At the end of the day the number of dead is brought to Xerxes to be recorded in the official records.

12 And the king said unto Esther the queen, The Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace, and the ten sons of Haman; what have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? now what is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: or what is thy request further? and it shall be done.

The King asks Esther to give account of the total killed through out the kingdom because if 500 Anti – Semites were in Shushan then there must be a large number in the kingdom. He is concerned that if all are not killed then Esther and her people would still be at risk. So he naturally asks of Esther what more can he do to insure their safety.

13 Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan to do to morrow also according unto this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows. And the king commanded it so to be done: and the decree was given at Shushan; and they hanged Haman's ten sons.

Esther asks for one more day to root out the men who would do harm to the Jews and also to hang Haman's 10 sons dead bodies for all Shushan to see. No doubt the hanging was to be a public warning to any one else who might set their sight on destroying the Jew. The King agrees to her request. When we pray for the Lord's intervention in faith he will do that for us.

15-19: For the Jews that were in Shushan gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day also of the month Adar, and slew three hundred men at Shushan; but on the prey they laid not their hand. But the other Jews that were in the king's provinces gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives, and had rest from their enemies, and slew of their foes seventy and five thousand, but they laid not their hands on the prey, On the thirteenth day of the month Adar; and on the fourteenth day of the same rested they, and made it a day of

feasting and gladness. But the Jews that were at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth day thereof, and on the fourteenth thereof; and on the fifteenth day of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwelt in the unwalled towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar a day of gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another.

So on the 14th of Adar the killing begins again and 300 more men die in Shushan making a total of 810 men and Haman put to death for attempting to hurt God's anointed.

Through out the rest of the empire another 75,000 men were killed in one day for the same crime. So while the Jews of Shushan were still killing the rest of the Jews started feasting and proclaimed throughout the land a day of feast and gladness for their deliverance. The excitement and festivities were so that they exchanged gifts. We as Christians though not told to have taken a day to celebrate not our freedom per se but the birth of the one who brought freedom to our lives!

Notice in all the killing they did not take anything of those they killed even though they were given permission to do so by the king. They did this to the rest of the people that it was self defense not a desire for money that prompted the killing.

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

Mordecai sends a proclamation out to all 127 provinces that from that day on the 14th and 15th of Adar would be a feast to celebrate their having found rest from their enemies.

23-28: And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them; Because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that is, the lot, to consume them, and to destroy them; But when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. Wherefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur. Therefore for all the words of this letter, and of that which they had seen concerning this matter, and which had come unto them, The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing, and according to their appointed time every year; And that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed.

Now the Jews had already had the celebration this is just the official notice that it is now a national holy day of feasting and giving to the poor.

The 13th of Adar was the feast of Esther, the 14th Purim and the 15th Shushan pure. There were 3 prayers offered 1st was thank Jehovah that they are counted worthy 2nd Thank Him for preserving ancestors 3rd thank him they lived to see another festival.

They give it the name Purim because Haman cast Pur or lots on when to destroy the Jews. This feast is still kept today by orthodox Jews on the first day of the feast, at the end of the dinner the book of Esther is read and every time Haman's name is mentioned they spit on the ground and say "may his name be accursed" and when Mordecai's name is read they clap and cheer. At this point the Jewish community once again agrees to keep the covenant with God.

29-32: Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all authority, to confirm this second letter of Purim. And he sent the letters unto all the Jews, to the hundred twenty and seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, with words of peace and truth, To confirm these days of Purim in their times appointed, according as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had enjoined them, and as they had decreed for themselves and for their seed, the matters of the fastings and their cry. And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim; and it was written in the book.

Esther writes a second letter concerning further instructions for the feast. In this letter Esther adds that a time of fasting and mourning would come first and then that would be followed by the time of feasting. The book it was written in was the chronicles of the kings.

Esther 10

LIFE AT COURT SAME AS ALWAYS

This episode between Haman and Mordecai was a small thing in Xerxes huge kingdom, and life returns to normal very quickly. Esther returns to the Queens palace and the harem. Xerxes goes back to his grand designing schemes and raising taxes to pay for the work. This sounds a lot like our government today except they over spend and then tax everyone for wasting money.

1 And the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea.

This wonderful book draws to an end with Xerxes and the kingdom returning to normal life as he institutes another tax on the people. To restart his vast building program would require a large amount of money. History records that Xerxes built a number of cities and even built onto Shushan.

2 And all the acts of his power and of his might, and the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai, whereunto the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia?

Along with all the deeds of Xerxes the authority and influence of Mordecai is written into the official history books. This would be a great honor in itself to be a Jew and be listed in a book reserved for Kings.

Well every believer has just that as we who were slaves to sin are raised to the place of joint heir and royal priest and our names are in the Lambs book of life and our deeds in God's great history book of man.

3 For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.

Mordecai was 2nd in the land and this status did not change this man as he remained kind and generous in helping others. The book ends with this statement and reminds us of the contrast between Mordecai and Haman.

This should also remind us as Christians that no matter what station in life we might obtain we have an obligation and an opportunity to do good to all those around us not only in bringing them to Jesus but in helping them through the rough times in life. Let us not forget the guiding hand of providence when we think the Lord is not there we can rest assured He is

always in the background working the circumstances of our lives to obtain that which He desires for us and that is to be conformed to His image. I pray that all who read the words of this book will find something to edify the soul and praise the Lord for. Amen!