

Esther Series

Revised – August 2010

Good News Bible Studies

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Esther's Plea

Esther 7

Esther's Secret is Exposed (Esther 7:1-4)

1. The narrative picks up with Ahasuerus and Haman attending the banquet that Esther had arranged.
 - This banquet was the result of an earlier meeting between Esther and King Ahasuerus. Let's recap those events from Esther 5:
 - 1) Esther (prompted by Mordecai) had approached the king with the intent of revealing the plan by Haman to destroy/kill all the Jews.
 - 2) Esther had entered the inner court of the king's and immediately the king recognized that something was troubling her.
 - 3) The king inquired of Esther as to what the issue was and let her know that no request was too big for him to provide – “even up to half the kingdom”.
 - 4) Esther made preparations for a banquet in which she would reveal to the king what was troubling her and she requested to also have Haman attend.
 - 5) The invitation by Esther fueled Haman's _____, and upon seeing Mordecai once again refuse to bow to him, it further _____ the anger of Haman.
 - 6) Haman was so **enraged** at Mordecai that he had a gallows (an impaling stake) built in which he planned to have Mordecai hanged upon it.
 - The abrupt turn of events in Esther 6 (a reversal of fortune for Haman) leads the king to honor Mordecai instead of Haman and sets the stage for Esther to reveal Haman's horrific plot to kill Mordecai, Esther and all the Jews in Persia.

2. The narrative continues with the king and Haman sitting together and drinking wine at this banquet prepared by Esther. (Esther 7:1-2)
- It is doubtful that Haman was aware of the nationality of Esther as everything we read up to this point indicates she had kept her secret well.
 - It would seem that if Haman knew that Esther was also a Jew, he would probably have not attended the banquet.
 - The king once again poses his question to Esther; “What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to half the kingdom, it shall be done? (Esther 7:2)
- 1) The king is still trying to find out the reason that Esther had come to him in the first place and what exactly was troubling her. (See Esther 5:1-3)
 - 2) The king’s patience with Esther evidenced that she held a special place in his heart, as this type of behavior and the offering of “half the kingdom” did not fit the normal character and emotional pattern of this king.
 - 3) The generous offer of “half the kingdom” may have been metaphorical, but in my mind it did represent the love the king had for Esther. There was no similar offer made to Vashti or any other women in the king’s court.
 - 4) There is also no evidence (at this point) that the king was aware of Esther’s Jewish nationality and has yet to connect the dots to Haman’s diabolical plan.
- Everything is about to come together as Esther will lay out for the king what has been planned for her and her people by this evil man Haman.
 - What is completely clear to me is how the Lord orchestrated all of these events including those of the king (his dream and subsequent honoring of Mordecai), and took a bad situation and turned it around for the good to accomplish His plan.
 - Can you think of a situation or situations in your life where the Lord has intervened and took a bad situation and turned it out for good? (Romans 8:28)

3. Esther reveals to the king what was causing her such distress:

- “Then Queen Esther replied, If I have found favor in your sight O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me as my petition, and my people as my request; for we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. Now if we had only been sold as slaves, men and women, I would have remained silent, for the trouble would not be commensurate with the annoyance to the king” (Esther 7:3-4)

1) Take note of how (even though she is the queen) Esther understands that her position and standing with the king is solely at his discretion.

2) Esther makes a _____ for her life and for the life of her people

3) The request that she makes of the king is to _____ her and her people from being killed and ultimately annihilated as this was the ultimate plan of that wicked man named Haman.

- This request by Esther was a _____ matter and she was well aware of that; “Now if we had only been sold as slaves, men and women, I would have remained silent, for the trouble would not be commensurate with the annoyance to the king”

1) Esther knew that for her and her people to be sold as slaves would have been a much smaller or trivial matter and certainly not worth bothering the king over.

2) Slavery of an oppressed class of people was common in the Persian Empire

3) Esther needed for the king to understand that he was being undermined by Haman and the very person that the king loved was at risk of herself being killed since she also was a _____.

- This left the king in a bit of a conundrum, as we will see that the decree was already issued to destroy the Jews throughout the Persian Empire and it carried the signature of the king. The king was bound by that edict and his authority to overturn it was limited, as the decree could not be altered or revoked.

- The king could however _____ the edict as we will see by his _____

Ahasuerus Shows His Anger (Esther 7:5-8)

1. The king probes a little further by asking; “who is he, where is he, who would presume to do this”
 - We can only assume, based on his response that the king has not yet put all of the pieces together in regard to Haman’s diabolical plan.
 - The evidence is pretty clear that the king held no ill will toward the Jews and since his beloved Queen was Jewish and in the cross hairs of death, he was going to get to the bottom of who was responsible for this dastardly act.
2. Esther’s response put Haman in the hot seat; “A foe and an enemy is this wicked Haman! Then Haman became terrified before the king and queen.”
 - Esther answers the king’s question and marks Haman as the one *responsible* for this act of hatred.
 - Haman probably recounted the words spoken to him by his family and friends which were now about to come true; “Then his wise men and Zeresh his wife said to him, If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish origin, you will not overcome him, but will surely fall before him.”
 - Haman was _____, for he knew that his actions were about to be exposed to the most powerful man on earth (at the time) and his death (execution) was pretty much a sure thing!
 - This is an interesting twist of events in which Haman went from being in complete control of the fate of Mordecai, Esther and the entire Jewish race to having his life in the hands of the very ones he intended to kill.
 - **In what ways do you see the Lord at work here?**

3. “The king arose in his anger from drinking wine and went into the palace garden”

- We are not given the reason as to why King Ahasuerus left the palace to go outside into the garden, but here are some possibilities:
 - 1) He may have been so angry that he just went outside to cool off – after all the man (Haman) whom he trusted has created a real problem for the king.
 - 2) He may have left to ponder how he would spare Esther and her people and work within the confines of the edict that he signed that effectively put their very lives in jeopardy.
 - 3) He may have left to figure out a legal way to have Haman executed
- The king was clearly bound by the law of the land and his ability to change or alter that law was _____ and he knew it – this clearly frustrated him.
 - 1) The king’s dictatorial rule had its limitations and to protect the queen and her people from this edict meant possibly going against the law that he signed and with Haman alive he was at risk of being overthrown.
 - 2) In addition, his love for the queen was strong and that love no doubt drove him to make a choice.
- Clearly, the Lord has entire situation under control and the actions of Haman and King Ahasuerus were under Divine providence and intervention!

4. “But Haman stayed to beg for his life from Queen Esther, for he saw that harm had been determined against him by the king”

- It is rather ironic that the man who hated the Jews so much was now forced to beg for mercy from the Queen, who was a Jew herself.
- It is noted here that Haman knew full well the fate that awaited him and his only chance (as slim as it was) to have his life spared lay in the hands of Esther.
- Haman’s then makes a foolish mistake as we will see in the verse to follow...

5. “Now when the king returned from the palace garden into the place where they were drinking wine, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was”

- The king returns to find Haman acting in an unacceptable manner toward Esther
 - 1) The writer records that Haman was “falling on the couch where Esther was” and this would have been considered offensive no matter what the intentions of Haman were.
 - 2) Any of the women in the king’s harem were off limits to any other man and Haman’s actions, no matter how innocent it **might** have been, provided the king with a way to deal with the person responsible for the plan to have his wife and the entire Jewish race killed.
- It is more likely that Haman knew that he stood no chance in finding mercy with the king and what he was doing here was pleading for his life to the only other person capable of sparing his eventual doom. Unfortunately that is not how it was perceived by King Ahasuerus when he returned.

6. “Then the kings said, will he even assault the queen with me in the house? As the word went out of the king’s mouth, they covered Haman’s face.”

- The king immediately concluded that Haman was attempting to assault the queen and he provided no means for Haman to defend himself or his actions.
 - 1) There should have been others in the banquet hall where Esther would have been reclining on here couch (customary for the culture of that time) so it is doubtful that Haman was actually attempting to assault her.
 - 2) More than likely the king was so full of rage that his reaction to the scene just made the assumption that Haman’s intentions were to assault the queen.
- The guards quickly jumped into action, seized Haman and covered his face which was more than likely done to signify that he was condemned to death.
- Swift punishment with no trial was common in Persian culture

Haman is Hanged (Esther 7:9-10)

1. “Then Harbona, one of the eunuch’s before the king said, behold indeed, the gallows standing at Haman’s house 50 cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke good on behalf of the king! And the king said, hang him on it” (Esther 7:9)
 - Harbona (if you recall) was one of the king’s seven eunuch (Esther 1:10) and was no doubt aware of Haman’s plot to kill the Jews.
 - It was Harbona who made the king aware of the gallows that Haman had built to hang Mordecai.
 - We are not sure if Harbona is showing favor to Mordecai by his statement that it was Mordecai “who spoke good on behalf of the king” but it does turn the tables on Haman by making him to be the bad guy and the punishment that he intended for Mordecai was now to be his own fate.
 - The king’s response to Harbona; “hang him on it” was very telling as to the king’s sudden change of heart toward Haman.
 - 1) This swift action to hang Haman would help the king remove the one responsible for the plot to kill the Jews which would in turn save his beloved queen and satisfy her request of the king.
 - 2) By removing Haman (killing him) who was the driving force (the leader) behind the plot to kill the Jews, the king would further be helped in staying within the confines of that edict that he himself signed. This advantage will become more obvious as the story continues to unfold in the next chapter.
 - What we don’t want to miss is the continued Divine intervention and the way in which the Lord is directing not only the affairs of Esther, Mordecai and the Jews, but also how He is directing the king himself. *Do you have any thoughts on this?*

2. "So the hanged Haman on the gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai, and the king's anger subsided" (Esther 7:10)
 - Haman was subsequently hanged (impaled) on the gallows he had built with the intention of hanging Mordecai.
 - This action to have Haman impaled on the gallows was given by the official order of the king.
 - This was a complete turn of events and a reversal of fortune for Haman
 - We are also told that it also helped to alleviate the anger of the king
3. The killing of Haman and removing him from his position of influence still left the Jews and the king with a significant _____:
 - The edict to annihilate the Jews throughout the Persian Empire was still in effect
 - Without a change or removal of the decree (which was impossible in Persian culture), there would be a great slaughter of many innocent people.
 - The king's dilemma in trying to protect the life of his queen and the lives of the Jewish people was about to be put to the test as the king was bound by this edict that he himself signed into law.
4. The remaining 3 chapters of the book of Esther reveal how the Lord will intervene and save the lives of Esther, Mordecai and the entire Jewish race from extinction.
 - Had the edict/decreed been fully carried out as planned by Haman then the Jews would not have continued as a people, the Temple would not have been rebuilt, and ultimately the Messiah would never have been born.
 - This turn of events shows how the Lord is the dispenser of justice and we need but to trust Him. (Psalm 37, Psalm 145:20, Isaiah 13:11, Deut. 32:4, Psalm 89:14)
5. **What examples can you give on God's protection and providence in your life?**