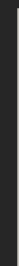




For Such A Time As This

THE STORY OF ESTHER AND MORDECAI



Part V – The Tale of Two Edicts
Esther 8-10



“That same day King Xerxes gave Queen Esther the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came into the presence of the king, for Esther had told how he was related to her. The king took off his signet ring, which he had reclaimed from Haman, and presented it to Mordecai. And Esther appointed him over Haman’s estate. Esther again pleaded with the king, falling at his feet and weeping. She begged him to put an end to the evil plan of Haman the Agagite, which he had devised against the Jews. Then the king extended the gold scepter to Esther, and she arose and stood before him” (Esther 8:1-4)

On the very same day that Haman was hanged, the king will do two significant things:

- ✓ He **gives** all of Haman's property and possessions to Esther
- ✓ He will **promote** Mordecai to Haman's position



Things change for not just Haman but also his family and co-conspirators

- ✓ Haman (though now dead) was considered a criminal and Persian law (according to the Greek historian Herodotus) allowed for the property and possessions of the criminal to be handed over to the crown (the king)
- ✓ We are not told what happens to Haman's wife and his wise men, but we do know that Haman's sons are later killed. (Esther 9:7-10)
- ✓ This makes me think of the passage in Proverbs that reads; "A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, and the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous" (Proverbs 13:22)



Mordecai now had full access to the king in the same manner that Haman did:

- ✓ The “signet ring” carried the full legal authority of the king and the one to whom it was given would be capable of shaping the events of Persian history
- ✓ The fact that the signet ring was given to Mordecai (a Jew) was no accident and it was more than likely the result of the Lord’s divine intervention in the king’s life and a means to protect the Jews (including Esther) from being exterminated under the law that Haman introduced
- ✓ It put everyone in the Persian Empire on notice that the king had regained control and those who intended harm towards the Jews would meet the same fate as Haman



The edict to exterminate the Jews was still in effect so there was still a sense of urgency on Esther's part to avert this pending crisis:

- ✓ The edict had provided the means for Haman to carry out a mass execution of the Jews throughout the Persian Empire in one day

“Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews—young and old, women and children—on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods”

(Esther 3:13)

- ✓ The date of this mass execution was just on the horizon and in order to avert this disaster, Esther had to move quickly, or her people would face devastating harm



The edict to exterminate the Jews was still in effect so there was still a sense of urgency on Esther's part to avert this pending crisis:

- ✓ Esther's appeal to the king was made with humility and she begged for mercy to stop this potential massacre of her people
- ✓ Esther reminded the king that Haman was evil, and his scheme affected more lives than just her own
- ✓ After listening to Esther's appeal, the king was unable to refuse to hear her request (though it was unsolicited this time), and he extended the golden scepter towards her which signified his willingness to allow her to speak further. This was a delicate matter for the king and although he wielded a great deal of power, he still had to stay within the confines of Persian Law





“If it pleases the king,” she said, “and if he regards me with favor and thinks it the right thing to do, and if he is pleased with me, let an order be written overruling the dispatches that Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king’s provinces. For how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family?” (Esther 8:5-6)

Working within the confines of Persian Law:

- ✓ Persian law (at the time) didn't really allow for decrees to be altered or revoked, so for the king to grant Esther's request, it would require some political maneuvering and creativity
- ✓ Some scholars conclude that Esther is somehow differentiating between the edict itself and the "letters" written by Haman so as to create a loophole in the Persian legal system and open the door for a second edict to be drafted that would counter/negate the first edict.
- ✓ The One directing the affairs of the king and the events surrounding this decree is The Lord Himself. We should always remember that "With God all things are possible" even when things seem impossible to us





“King Xerxes replied to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, “Because Haman attacked the Jews, I have given his estate to Esther, and they have impaled him on the pole he set up. Now write another decree in the king’s name on behalf of the Jews as seems best to you, and seal it with the king’s signet ring—for no document written in the king’s name and sealed with his ring can be revoked.” (Esther 8:7-8)

There is a new sheriff in town:

- ✓ The king understands that even he could not revoke the decree written to destroy the Jews, but by empowering Esther and Mordecai to draft their own instructions to the Jews (in essence to protect/defend themselves); they could make the evil plot crafted by Haman to be of no effect to the Jews
- ✓ In the end, this move by the king would save his beloved queen and the Jews from death and destruction while at the same time maintain the rule of law within the Persian Kingdom and keep his own power and control intact





“At once the royal secretaries were summoned—on the twenty-third day of the third month, the month of Sivan. They wrote out all Mordecai’s orders to the Jews, and to the satraps, governors and nobles of the **127 provinces** stretching from **India** to **Cush**. These orders were written in the script of each province and the language of each people and also to the Jews in their own script and language. Mordecai wrote in the name of King Xerxes, sealed the dispatches with the king’s signet ring, and sent them by mounted couriers, who rode fast horses especially bred for the king” (Esther 8:9-10)



“The king’s edict granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves; to destroy, kill and annihilate the armed men of any nationality or province who might attack them and their women and children, and to plunder the property of their enemies. The day appointed for the Jews to do this in all the provinces of King Xerxes was the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar. A copy of the text of the edict was to be issued as law in every province and made known to the people of every nationality so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies. The couriers, riding the royal horses, went out, spurred on by the king’s command, and the edict was issued in the citadel of Susa ” (Esther 8:11-14)



“When Mordecai left the king’s presence, he was wearing royal garments of blue and white, a large crown of gold and a purple robe of fine linen. And the city of Susa held a joyous celebration. For the Jews it was a time of happiness and joy, gladness and honor. In every province and in every city to which the edict of the king came, there was joy and gladness among the Jews, with feasting and celebrating. And many people of other nationalities became Jews because fear of the Jews had seized them” (Esther 8:15-17)

Details of the Counter Edict:

- ✓ Take note of how quickly Mordecai's authority was accepted (no doubt because of his outstanding character) and how careful he was to include everyone to ensure that this edict was received with the full authority of the king and understood in their own language
- ✓ The Persian Pony Express was used once again to get the message out quickly to completely negate the previous edict issued by Haman
- ✓ Since the plan put forth by Haman was an all-out attack against Jews for the purpose of annihilating them, the edict that was drafted by Mordecai and authorized by the king was a full on counter measure to completely defend themselves from attack even against women and children if needed



Details of the Counter Edict:

- ✓ This gave the Jews about nine months to prepare for the impending conflict
- ✓ This new edict (drafted by Mordecai) allowed King Xerxes to loosely keep from violating Persian Law that didn't permit an actual edict from being altered or revoked. The edict drafted by Haman was still in play, but they lost the edge and certainly could not now attack the Jews without retaliation.
- ✓ Mordecai made it a point to identify the specific threat, referencing the "day" that was planned by Haman and his conspirators to kill the Jews. He readied the people for that threat and granted permission to defend themselves, even to the extent of total destruction of those who might attack them



Turning Trajedy into Triumph:

- ✓ The clothes that Mordecai wore represented his position of authority
 - ❖ Royal garments of blue and white (Persian royal colors)
 - ❖ A large gold crown
 - ❖ A purple linen robe
- ✓ The people in the city of Susa who were once bewildered and confused under the edict written by Haman to kill the Jews – now rejoice that things are about to change



Turning Trajedy into Triumph:

- ✓ The news of Mordecai's edict brought much joy and gladness to all the peoples of the provinces of the Persian Empire
- ✓ The people of the city of Susa can now celebrate with the Jews who lived among them rather than sit by and watch them be slaughtered
- ✓ This change of events caused many Gentiles to become "Jewish proselytes" (converts) as they now witnessed the Lord's protection over the Jewish people and embraced their same belief and trust in Jehovah



The Lords Protection






“On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of **Adar**, the edict commanded by the king was to be carried out. On this day the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, but now the tables were turned and the Jews got the upper hand over those who hated them. The Jews assembled in their cities in all the provinces of King Xerxes to attack those determined to destroy them. No one could stand against them, because the people of all the other nationalities were afraid of them. And all the nobles of the provinces, the satraps, the governors and the king’s administrators helped the Jews, because fear of Mordecai had seized them.

Mordecai was prominent in the palace; his reputation spread throughout the provinces, and he became more and more powerful.” (Esther 9:1-4)

A Day of Reversal (Esther 9:1-4)

- ✓ The date for the attack against the Jews was the exact date of the original edict introduced by Haman and signed by the king – the 13th day of the 12th month. (Esther 3:13)
- ✓ The Jews gathered themselves together in each city throughout the Persian Empire just as Mordecai had instructed them. The purpose was to defend themselves against all attacks and kill those who intended them harm
- ✓ The results were that no one could stand against the Jews as the Persians not only feared them but they no doubt also feared the God of the Jews





“The Jews struck down all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them, and they did what they pleased to those who hated them. In the citadel of Susa, the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men. They also killed Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, ⁸ Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai and Vaizatha, the ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. **But they did not lay their hands on the plunder**” (Esther 9:5-10)

- Other enemies of the Jews were killed, and this was fully sanctioned as a means of self defense (Vs 15, 16)
- This resulted in a day of celebration for the Jews in the Persian Empire (Vs 17-19)

A Day of Reckoning (Esther 9:5-19)

- ✓ The day of battle was set in motion by the two edicts – March 13, 473
- ✓ The casualties were very high for those who chose to attack the Jews
- ✓ No casualties among the Jews are mentioned
- ✓ It is also made clear that the Jews were not the aggressors as we are told that they did not lay their hands on the plunder (the wealth of the attackers) even though it was their right to do so as the victors



A Day of Reckoning (Esther 9:5-19)

- ✓ This reminds me of what the Lord said to Abraham; “And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Genesis 12:3)
- ✓ The people of the Persian Empire at the time retained a healthy fear and respect of the Jews living throughout the provinces
- ✓ These victories brought about the establishment and celebration of the Feast of Purim – something the Jews still celebrate in their synagogues in our present day





“Mordecai recorded these events, and he sent letters to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Xerxes, near and far, to have them celebrate annually the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar as the time when the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month when their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a day of celebration. He wrote them to observe the days as days of feasting and joy and giving presents of food to one another and gifts to the poor. So the Jews agreed to continue the celebration they had begun, doing what Mordecai had written to them” (Esther 9:20-23)



“(Therefore, these days were called Purim, from the word *pur*.) Because of everything written in this letter and because of what they had seen and what had happened to them, the Jews took it on themselves to establish the custom that they and their descendants and all who join them should without fail observe these two days every year, in the way prescribed and at the time appointed. These days should be remembered and observed in every generation by every family, and in every province and in every city. And these days of Purim should never fail to be celebrated by the Jews—nor should the memory of these days die out among their descendants.” (Esther 9:26-28)



So Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail, along with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter concerning Purim. And Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews in the 127 provinces of Xerxes' kingdom—words of goodwill and assurance—to establish these days of Purim at their designated times, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had decreed for them, and as they had established for themselves and their descendants in regard to their times of fasting and lamentation. Esther's decree confirmed these regulations about Purim, and it was written down in the records" (Esther 9:29-32)

A Day of Remembrance (Esther 9:20-32)

- ✓ The Feast of Purim was a fitting celebration designed to remind the people of the miraculous preservation of the Jewish people who the Lord protected and turned them from victims to victors
- ✓ This was not one of the established and required feasts of the **Mosaic Law**
- ✓ This feast was instituted by Mordecai and Esther and they commanded the Jews to celebrate this day each year as a memorial of what the Lord did to protect them. It is still celebrated as a holiday by the Jews even today



A Day of Remembrance (Esther 9:20-32)

- ✓ This was to be a two-day celebration
- ✓ The festival was intended to serve as a reminder to the Jews of the goodness of God and how He protected them from possible extinction
- ✓ This feast was to designed to be a celebration in which their sorrow and mourning was turned to gladness and joy
- ✓ They were to send food to one another and share with the poor by sending them gifts



This festival is still practiced in modern day Jewish culture

- ✓ In present day it is celebrated in late February or early March (Adar) of each year
- ✓ It is considered an additional feast to those established in the book of Leviticus but may well be the best-known Jewish holiday added since the time of Moses
- ✓ It is a late winter feast and occurs one month before the Passover celebration
- ✓ The Feast of Purim is considered a “minor holiday” which means there are no restrictions on work



The modern-day celebration of the Feast of Purim involves:

- ✓ Reading the Book of Esther in the Synagogue
- ✓ Each time Haman's name is read the people in the audience will make all sorts of noise to drown out his name. Some people will put Haman's name on the bottom of their shoe to stomp on his name
- ✓ Money is collected to meet the needs of the poor
- ✓ All sorts of food that has special meaning will be made and eaten together and they will send presents to one another and to the poor






“King Xerxes imposed tribute throughout the empire, to its distant shores. And all his acts of power and might, together with a full account of the greatness of Mordecai, whom the king had promoted, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Media and Persia? Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Xerxes, preeminent among the Jews, and held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews.”
(Esther 10:1-3)

The Lord Provides

- ✓ Although King Xerxes never appeared to fully submit to the Lord, he was clearly used as an instrument of the Lord to preserve the Jewish people
- ✓ Esther did her part by putting her life on the line to be an instrument of God's will and although she didn't know the outcome at the time, she was prepared to trust the Lord to do His will and that is what faith is all about!!!
- ✓ Though not mentioned at the end of the book, Esther was clearly **chosen for an unexpected calling** in which she was to be used by the Lord to gain the attention of a pagan king and turn his heart in favor of the Jews





Concluding Thoughts

- This book is not just about the Lord's protection for His people (The Jews), but it also makes it possible for the Lord to provide full **redemption** through the promised Messiah
- “But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law so that He might redeem those who are under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons” (Galatians 4:4-5)