

Olivet Baptist Church

3500 Edmondson Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21229

Wednesday Night Bible Study (7:00 pm)

Book of Esther – Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Alex O. Stone

Classes Presented on “Zoom”

[MEETING ID: 395 133 283 * PASSCODE: 281215] Or, Call: 1-646-558-8656

Theme: “God’s Promise of Faithfulness to His People” (Esther 1:1–10:3)

- I. **Esther Placed in a Position of Prominence (1:1–2:20)**
 - A. Vashti deposed by Xerxes (**chap. 1**)
 - B. Esther elevated to queen (**chap. 2**)

- II. **The Jews Marked for Extermination (2:21–4:3)**
 - A. A feud and Haman’s hatred of the Jews (2:21–3:6)
 - B. King persuaded by Haman to destroy the Jews (**chap. 3**)
 - C. Mordecai mourned (4:1–3)

- III. **Calamity Averted by Esther (4:4–9:19)**
 - A. Communications between Esther and Mordecai (**chap. 4**)
 - B. Plot exposed by Esther (chaps. 5–7)
 1. 1st & 2nd Banquet Prepared / Haman Gloated (**chap. 5**)
 2. Mordecai honored by Xerxes (**chap. 6**)
 3. Xerxes told of Plot - Haman hanged (**chap. 7**)
 - C. Jews delivered, and took revenge (8:1–9:19)
 1. Mordecai Received Royal position (**chap. 8**)
 2. Jews Took Revenge (**chap. 9**)

- IV. **Feast of Purim Established (9:20–32)**
- V. **Greatness of Mordecai Described (**chap. 10**)**

The King Dethrones Queen Vashti

1 Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus (this *was* the Ahasuerus who reigned over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, from India to Ethiopia), ² in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which *was* in

Shushan the citadel,³ that in the third year of his reign he made a feast for all his officials and servants—the powers of Persia and Media, the nobles, and the princes of the provinces *being* before him—⁴ when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty for many days, one hundred and eighty days *in all*.

⁵ And when these days were completed, the king made a feast lasting seven days for all the people who were present in Shushan the citadel, from great to small, in the court of the garden of the king's palace. ⁶ There were white and blue linen *curtains* fastened with cords of fine linen and purple on silver rods and marble pillars; *and the couches were* of gold and silver on a *mosaic* pavement of alabaster, turquoise, and white and black marble. ⁷ And they served drinks in golden vessels, each vessel being different from the other, with royal wine in abundance, according to the generosity of the king. ⁸ In accordance with the law, the drinking was not compulsory; for so the king had ordered all the officers of his household, that they should do according to each man's pleasure. ⁹ Queen Vashti also made a feast for the women *in* the royal palace which *belonged* to King Ahasuerus.

¹⁰ On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus, ¹¹ to bring Queen Vashti before the king, *wearing* her royal crown, in order to show her beauty to the people and the officials, for she *was* beautiful to behold. ¹² But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command *brought* by *his* eunuchs; therefore the king was furious, and his anger burned within him.

¹³ Then the king said to the wise men who understood the times (for this *was* the king's manner toward all who knew law and justice, ¹⁴ those closest to him *being* Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, who had access to the king's presence, *and* who ranked highest in the kingdom): ¹⁵ "What *shall we* do to Queen Vashti, according to law, because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus *brought to her* by the eunuchs?" ¹⁶ And Memucan answered before the king and the princes: "Queen Vashti has not only wronged the king, but also all the princes, and all the people who *are* in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. ¹⁷ *For the queen's behavior will become known to all women, so that they will despise their husbands in their eyes, when they report, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in before him, but she did not come.'*

¹⁸ This very day the *noble* ladies of Persia and Media will say to all the king's officials that they have heard of the behavior of the queen. Thus *there will be* excessive contempt and wrath. ¹⁹ If it pleases the king, let a royal decree go out from him, and let it be recorded in the laws of the Persians and the Medes, so that it will not be altered, that Vashti shall come no more before King Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she. ²⁰ When the king's decree which he will make is proclaimed throughout all his empire (for it is great), all wives will honor their husbands, both great and small." ²¹ And the reply pleased the king and the princes, and the king did according to the word of Memucan. ²² Then he sent letters to all the king's provinces, to each province in its own script, and to every people in their own language, that each man should be master in his own house, and speak in the language of his own people.

Esther Becomes Queen

2 After these things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus subsided, he remembered Vashti, what she had done, and what had been decreed against her. ² Then the king's servants who attended him said: "Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king; ³ and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather all the beautiful young virgins to Shushan the citadel, into the women's quarters, under the custody of Hegai the king's eunuch, custodian of the women. And let beauty preparations be given *them*. ⁴ Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." This thing pleased the king, and he did so.

⁵ In Shushan the citadel there was a certain Jew whose name *was* Mordecai the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite. ⁶ *Kish* had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives who had been captured with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. ⁷ And *Mordecai* had brought up Hadassah, that *is*, Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman *was* lovely and beautiful. When her father and mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.

⁸ So it was, when the king's command and decree were heard, and when many young women were gathered at Shushan the citadel, *under* the custody of Hegai, that Esther also was taken to the king's palace, into the care of Hegai the custodian of the women. ⁹ Now the young woman pleased him, and she obtained his favor; so he readily gave beauty preparations to her, besides her allowance. Then seven choice maidservants were provided for her from the king's palace, and he moved

her and her maidservants to the best *place* in the house of the women. ¹⁰ Esther had not revealed her people or family, for Mordecai had charged her not to reveal *it*.

¹¹ And every day Mordecai paced in front of the court of the women's quarters, to learn of Esther's welfare and what was happening to her.

¹² Each young woman's turn came to go into King Ahasuerus after she had completed twelve months' preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women.

¹³ Thus *prepared, each* young woman went to the king, and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the women's quarters to the king's palace. ¹⁴ In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned to the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who kept the concubines. She would not go in to the king again unless the king delighted in her and called for her by name.

¹⁵ Now when the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his daughter, to go in to the king, she requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised. And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her. ¹⁶ So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which *is* the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. ¹⁷ The king loved Esther more than all the *other* women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. ¹⁸ Then the king made a great feast, the Feast of Esther, for all his officials and servants; and

he proclaimed a holiday in the provinces and gave gifts according to the generosity of a king.

Mordecai Discovers a Plot

¹⁹ When virgins were gathered together a second time, Mordecai sat within the king's gate. ²⁰ Now Esther had not revealed her family and her people, just as Mordecai had charged her, for Esther obeyed the command of Mordecai as when she was brought up by him. ²¹ In those days, while Mordecai sat within the king's gate, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, doorkeepers, became furious and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. ²² So the matter became known to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name. ²³ And when an inquiry was made into the matter, it was confirmed, and both were hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.

Haman's Conspiracy Against the Jews

3 After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above all the princes who *were* with him. ² And all the king's servants who *were* within the king's gate bowed and paid homage to Haman, for so the king had commanded concerning him. But Mordecai would not bow or pay homage. ³ Then the king's servants who *were* within the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why do you transgress the king's command?" ⁴ Now it happened, when they spoke to him daily and he would not listen to them, that they told *it* to Haman, to see whether Mordecai's words would stand; for *Mordecai* had told them that he *was* a Jew. ⁵ When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay

him homage, Haman was filled with wrath. ⁶ But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai. Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who *were* throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus—the people of Mordecai.

⁷ In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that *is*, the lot), before Haman to determine the day and the month, until *it fell on the twelfth month*, which *is* the month of Adar. ⁸ Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, “There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws *are* different from all *other* people’s, and they do not keep the king’s laws. Therefore it *is* not fitting for the king to let them remain. ⁹ If it pleases the king, let *a decree* be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who do the work, to bring *it* into the king’s treasuries.” ¹⁰ So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. ¹¹ And the king said to Haman, “The money and the people *are* given to you, to do with them as seems good to you.”

¹² Then the king’s scribes were called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and *a decree* was written according to all that Haman commanded—to the king’s satraps, to the governors who *were* over each province, to the officials of all people, to every province according to its script, and to every people in their language. In the name of King Ahasuerus it was written, and sealed with the king’s signet ring. ¹³ And the letters were sent by couriers into all the king’s provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, on the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth *month*, which *is* the month of Adar, and to plunder

their possessions. ¹⁴ A copy of the document was to be issued as law in every province, being published for all people, that they should be ready for that day.

¹⁵ The couriers went out, hastened by the king's command; and the decree was proclaimed in Shushan the citadel. So the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Shushan was perplexed.

Esther Agrees to Help the Jews

4 When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city. He cried out with a loud and bitter cry. ² He went as far as the front of the king's gate, for no one *might* enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. ³ And in every province where the king's command and decree arrived, *there was* great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

⁴ So Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her, and the queen was deeply distressed. Then she sent garments to clothe Mordecai and take his sackcloth away from him, but he would not accept *them*. ⁵ Then Esther called Hathach, *one* of the king's eunuchs whom he had appointed to attend her, and she gave him a command concerning Mordecai, to learn what and why this *was*. ⁶ So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square that *was* in front of the king's gate. ⁷ And Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries to destroy the Jews. ⁸ He also gave him a copy of the written decree for their destruction, which was given at Shushan, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her, and that he might command her to go in to

the king to make supplication to him and plead before him for her people. ⁹ So Hathach returned and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

¹⁰ Then Esther spoke to Hathach, and gave him a command for Mordecai: ¹¹ “All the king’s servants and the people of the king’s provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, *he has* but one law: put *all* to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days.” ¹² So they told Mordecai Esther’s words.

¹³ And Mordecai told *them* to answer Esther: “Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king’s palace any more than all the other Jews. ¹⁴ For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?” ¹⁵ Then Esther told *them* to reply to Mordecai: ¹⁶ “Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which *is* against the law; and if I perish, I perish!” ¹⁷ So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded him.

Esther’s Banquet

5 Now it happened on the third day that Esther put on *her* royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king’s palace, across from the king’s house, while the king sat on his royal throne in the royal house, facing the entrance of the house. ² So it was,

when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, *that* she found favor in his sight, and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that *was* in his hand. Then Esther went near and touched the top of the scepter. ³ And the king said to her, “What do you wish, Queen Esther? What *is* your request? It shall be given to you—up to half the kingdom!” ⁴ So Esther answered, “If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared for him.” ⁵ Then the king said, “Bring Haman quickly, that he may do as Esther has said.” So, the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

⁶ At the banquet of wine the king said to Esther, “What *is* your petition? It shall be granted you. What *is* your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!” ⁷ Then Esther answered and said, “My petition and request *is this*: ⁸ If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, then let the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said.”

Haman’s Plot Against Mordecai

⁹ So Haman went out that day joyful and with a glad heart; but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king’s gate, and that he did not stand or tremble before him, he was filled with indignation against Mordecai. ¹⁰ Nevertheless Haman restrained himself and went home, and he sent and called for his friends and his wife Zeresh. ¹¹ Then Haman told them of his great riches, the multitude of his children, everything in which the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the officials and servants of the king. ¹² Moreover Haman said, “Besides, Queen Esther invited no one but me to come in with the king to the banquet that she prepared; and tomorrow I am again invited by her, along with the king. ¹³ Yet all this avails me

nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." ¹⁴ Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Let a gallows be made, fifty cubits high, and in the morning suggest to the king that Mordecai be hanged on it; then go merrily with the king to the banquet." And the thing pleased Haman; so he had the gallows made.

The King Honors Mordecai

6 That night the king could not sleep. So one was commanded to bring the book of the records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. ² And it was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, the doorkeepers who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. ³ Then the king said, "What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" And the king's servants who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him."

⁴ So the king said, "Who *is* in the court?" Now Haman had *just* entered the outer court of the king's palace to suggest that the king hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him. ⁵ The king's servants said to him, "Haman is there, standing in the court." And the king said, "Let him come in." ⁶ So Haman came in, and the king asked him, "What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?" Now Haman thought in his heart, "Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?" ⁷ And Haman answered the king, "*For* the man whom the king delights to honor, ⁸ let a royal robe be brought which the king has worn, and a horse on which the king has ridden, which has a royal crest placed on its head. ⁹ Then let this robe and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that he may array the man whom the king delights to honor. Then parade him on horseback

through the city square, and proclaim before him: 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!' "

¹⁰ Then the king said to Haman, "Hurry, take the robe and the horse, as you have suggested, and do so for Mordecai the Jew who sits within the king's gate! Leave nothing undone of all that you have spoken." ¹¹ So Haman took the robe and the horse, arrayed Mordecai and led him on horseback through the city square, and proclaimed before him, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!" ¹² Afterward Mordecai went back to the king's gate. But Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered. ¹³ When Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him, his wise men and his wife Zeresh said to him, "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish descent, you will not prevail against him but will surely fall before him." ¹⁴ While they *were* still talking with him, the king's eunuchs came, and hastened to bring Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared.

Haman Hanged Instead of Mordecai

7 So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther. ² And on the second day, at the banquet of wine, the king again said to Esther, "What *is* your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what *is* your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!" ³ *Then Queen Esther answered and said, "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request.* ⁴ For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. Had we been sold as male and female slaves, I would have held my tongue, although the enemy could never compensate for the

king's loss." ⁵ So King Ahasuerus answered and said to Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who would dare presume in his heart to do such a thing?" ⁶ And Esther said, "The adversary and enemy *is* this wicked Haman!" So, Haman was terrified before the king and queen.

⁷ Then the king arose in his wrath from the banquet of wine *and went* into the palace garden; but Haman stood before Queen Esther, pleading for his life, for he saw that evil was determined against him by the king. ⁸ When the king returned from the palace garden to the place of the banquet of wine, Haman had fallen across the couch where Esther *was*. Then the king said, "Will he also assault the queen while I *am* in the house?" As the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.

⁹ Now Harbonah, one of the eunuchs, said to the king, "Look! The gallows, fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke good on the king's behalf, is standing at the house of Haman." Then the king said, "Hang him on it!" ¹⁰ So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's wrath subsided.

Esther Saves the Jews

8 On that day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told how he *was related* to her. ² So the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai; and Esther appointed Mordecai over the house of Haman. ³ Now Esther spoke again to the king, fell down at his feet, and implored him with tears to counteract the evil of Haman the Agagite, and the scheme which he had devised against the Jews. ⁴ And the king held out the golden scepter toward Esther.

So Esther arose and stood before the king,⁵ and said, “If it pleases the king, and if I have found favor in his sight and the thing *seems* right to the king and I am pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to annihilate the Jews who *are* in all the king’s provinces.⁶ For how can I endure to see the evil that will come to my people? Or how can I endure to see the destruction of my countrymen?”

⁷ Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, “Indeed, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows because he *tried to* lay his hand on the Jews.⁸ You yourselves write *a decree* concerning the Jews, as you please, in the king’s name, and seal *it* with the king’s signet ring; for whatever is written in the king’s name and sealed with the king’s signet ring no one can revoke.”

⁹ So the king’s scribes were called at that time, in the third month, which *is* the month of Sivan, on the twenty-third *day*; and it was written, according to all that Mordecai commanded, to the Jews, the satraps, the governors, and the princes of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, one hundred and twenty-seven provinces *in all*, to every province in its own script, to every people in their own language, and to the Jews in their own script and language.¹⁰ And he wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, sealed *it* with the king’s signet ring, and sent letters by couriers on horseback, riding on royal horses bred from swift steeds.

¹¹ By these letters the king permitted the Jews who *were* in every city to gather together and protect their lives—to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the forces of any people or province that would assault them, *both* little children and women, and to

plunder their possessions, ¹² on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month, which *is* the month of Adar. ¹³ A copy of the document was to be issued as a decree in every province and published for all people, so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies. ¹⁴ The couriers who rode on royal horses went out, hastened and pressed on by the king's command. And the decree was issued in Shushan the citadel.

¹⁵ So Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, with a great crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple; and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. ¹⁶ The Jews had light and gladness, joy and honor. ¹⁷ And in every province and city, wherever the king's command and decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a holiday. Then many of the people of the land became Jews, because fear of the Jews fell upon them.

The Jews Destroy Their Tormentors

9 Now in the twelfth month, that *is*, the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day, *the time* came for the king's command and his decree to be executed. On the day that the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, the opposite occurred, in that the Jews themselves overpowered those who hated them. ² The Jews gathered together in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm. And no one could withstand them, because fear of them fell upon all people. ³ And all the officials of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, and all those doing the king's work, helped the Jews, because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them. ⁴ For Mordecai *was* great in the king's palace, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces; for this man Mordecai became increasingly

prominent. ⁵ Thus the Jews defeated all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, with slaughter and destruction, and did what they pleased with those who hated them. ⁶ And in Shushan the citadel the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men. ⁷ Also Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, ⁸ Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, ⁹ Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vajezatha—¹⁰ the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews—they killed; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder.

¹¹ On that day the number of those who were killed in Shushan the citadel was brought to the king. ¹² And the king said to Queen Esther, “The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the citadel, and the ten sons of Haman. What have they done in the rest of the king’s provinces? Now what *is* your petition? It shall be granted to you. Or what *is* your further request? It shall be done.” ¹³ Then Esther said, “If it pleases the king, let it be granted to the Jews who *are* in Shushan to do again tomorrow according to today’s decree, and let Haman’s ten sons be hanged on the gallows.” ¹⁴ So the king commanded this to be done; the decree was issued in Shushan, and they hanged Haman’s ten sons.

¹⁵ And the Jews who *were* in Shushan gathered together again on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and killed three hundred men at Shushan; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder. ¹⁶ The remainder of the Jews in the king’s provinces gathered together and protected their lives, had rest from their enemies, and killed seventy-five thousand of their enemies; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder. ¹⁷ This was on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar. And on the fourteenth of *the month* they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

The Feast of Purim

¹⁸ But the Jews who *were* at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth *day*, as well as on the fourteenth; and on the fifteenth of *the month* they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. ¹⁹ Therefore the Jews of the villages who dwelt in the unwallied towns celebrated the fourteenth day of the month of Adar *with* gladness and feasting, as a holiday, and for sending presents to one another. ²⁰ And Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all the Jews, near and far, who *were* in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, ²¹ to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar, ²² as the days on which the Jews had rest from their enemies, as the month which was turned from sorrow to joy for them, and from mourning to a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and joy, of sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor.

²³ So the Jews accepted the custom which they had begun, as Mordecai had written to them, ²⁴ because Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to annihilate them, and had cast Pur (that *is*, the lot), to consume them and destroy them; ²⁵ but when *Esther* came before the king, he commanded by letter that this wicked plot which *Haman* had devised against the Jews should return on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. ²⁶ So they called these days Purim, after the name Pur. Therefore, because of all the words of this letter, what they had seen concerning this matter, and what had happened to them, ²⁷ the Jews established and imposed it upon themselves and their descendants and all who would join them, that without fail they should celebrate these two days every year, according to the written *instructions* and according to the *prescribed* time, ²⁸ that these days *should be*

remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city, that these days of Purim should not fail *to be observed* among the Jews, and *that* the memory of them should not perish among their descendants.

²⁹ Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim. ³⁰ And *Mordecai* sent letters to all the Jews, to the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, *with* words of peace and truth, ³¹ to confirm these days of Purim at their *appointed* time, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had prescribed for them, and as they had decreed for themselves and their descendants concerning matters of their fasting and lamenting. ³² So the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim, and it was written in the book.

Mordecai's Advancement

10 And King Ahasuerus imposed tribute on the land and *on* the islands of the sea.

² Now all the acts of his power and his might, and the account of the greatness of Mordecai, to which the king advanced him, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia? ³ For Mordecai the Jew *was* second to King Ahasuerus, and was great among the Jews and well received by the multitude of his brethren, seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his countrymen.

Commentary: Israel's First "King" (CHAP. 8:1-15:35)

I. Esther Placed in a Position of Prominence (1:1–2:20)

This first major section of the book describes the need for God's deliverance of His people, and the background of that deliverance. Undoubtedly many of the original readers, like readers today, would be helped by knowing the background of the story. The author described in some detail the setting of the Persian banquet and the reasons Esther came into a prominent position. Besides carefully conveying historical facts, the author was also a good narrator.

A. Vashti deposed by Xerxes (chap. 1)

1. THE KING'S 187-DAY CELEBRATION (1:1–9)

Esther 1:1. The account opens with the mention of **Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces ... from India to Cush** (cf. 8:9). Xerxes, called Ahasuerus throughout the Hebrew text of Esther (cf. NIV marg.), ruled the Persian Empire for 21 years from 485 to 465 B.C. He is mentioned elsewhere in the Bible only in Ezra 4:6 and Daniel 9:1. The vast extent of his empire has been confirmed by several outside sources which state the size of that empire in similar words (see the map "The Persian Empire," near Ezra 1:1). *Judah was one of the provinces over which the king ruled* (cf. Neh. 1:2). "India" corresponds to present-day West Pakistan; "Cush" was a term for the upper Nile region which included present-day southern Egypt, all of Sudan, and northern Ethiopia.

Esther 1:2. King Xerxes had an elaborate palace in Persepolis as well as a winter citadel (palace) in Susa (cf. Neh. 1:1). Persepolis and Ecbatana (Ezra 6:2) were other major cities in the Persian Empire (see the map “The Persian Empire”, near Ezra 1:1). An inscription from the time of Xerxes’ son Artaxerxes noted that the palace was destroyed by fire sometime in Artaxerxes’ reign. Reference in Esther 1:2 to this citadel has been confirmed by archeological work at Susa. An author from a later period probably would not have known about the palace so it can be inferred that the author of this book was someone who was close to the events chronologically.

Esther 1:3–4. In the third year of his reign (483 B.C.) Xerxes gave a banquet to which he invited his nobles and officials as well as military leaders ... princes, and nobles of the provinces. Mention of these leaders fits the known fact that the Persian Empire had a large administrative system. Though not stated, this banquet probably corresponds to the great feast Xerxes gave when he was planning to invade Greece. According to Herodotus it took Xerxes four years to get ready for the invasion he launched in 481. (Herodotus’ four years would extend from the beginning of Xerxes’ reign in 485.) No doubt the 180 days involved planning sessions in which all the provinces’ leaders were being prepared for the war effort, as well as being impressed with Xerxes’ wealth and splendor. The campaign was to be a costly affair.¹

The Book of Esther says nothing about Xerxes’ invasion of Greece, but other sources state that he wanted to avenge his father’s defeat at Marathon near Athens. Xerxes’

¹ Martin, J. A. (1985). [Esther](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 701–702). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

immense fleet defeated the Greeks at Thermopylae but was defeated at the famous Battle of Salamis in 480 B.C. and the Battle of Plataea in 479. He had to retreat home. Esther gained the favor of the king in, 479 B.C. the seventh year of his reign (2:16). This would have been after his defeat by Greece. Thus these events recorded in Esther fit the facts known from secular sources.

Esther 1:5–9. At the end of the 180 days Xerxes gave another **banquet**; this one lasted **seven days** for **people** in **Susa**. Both great and small were invited. The descriptions of the decor of the king's palace **garden** (vv. 6–7) add to the feeling that the writer had firsthand knowledge of the setting and the occasion. Perhaps Mordecai was among the guests at the seven-day banquet. **Linen ... silver**, and **marble**, and **other costly stones** are known to have been used in Persia, and Persian **couches** (cf. 7:8) **of gold and silver** were referred to by Herodotus. **Blue** and **white** were the royal colors (cf. 8:15). Drinking vessels (**goblets**) of expensive material were a Persian luxury. The feast was livened by the fact that any **guest** could **drink in his own way**, that is, he could drink as much or as little as he desired. In other words the king was liberal with the **wine**. Meanwhile **Queen Vashti** was giving a separate **banquet for the women**. Separate banquets were not unusual in that culture.

2. VASHTI DEPOSED (1:10–22)

Esther 1:10–12. Xerxes told his **seven eunuchs** (cf. 6:14) **to bring ... Vashti** into his banquet hall so that **her beauty** could be admired by the male guests. **But** she **refused to come**. One of the eunuchs named here is referred to later (**Harbona** in 7:9). This order was given **on the seventh day**, that is, the last day of the feast which had turned into a drunken party. The mention of “seven eunuchs” serving the king fits the era in which the account took place. It was a well-known practice then for

young men who served the **king** to be castrated so they would have no illusions of starting their own dynasties.

Vashti's refusal is not explained by the author. There is no implication that the king wanted her to do anything immoral or to expose herself. Perhaps she simply did not wish to be in mixed company at that time. It has been suggested that if this queen was Amestris, perhaps she refused to go to the banquet because she was pregnant with Artaxerxes, who was born in 483. Regardless of the reason for her refusal, her action was a breach of etiquette. **The king** was used to getting whatever he desired whenever he desired it. Therefore her response made him **furious** (cf. 7:7).

Esther 1:13–15. The king consulted **wise men** about what he should do. These **seven** men **had special access to the king** and were the ones who knew the **law** well.

Herodotus has confirmed the fact that this use of wise men was a feature of ancient Near Eastern courts. Throughout the ancient Near East wise men played important roles in governments (e.g., Daniel's position in the Babylonian and Persian Empires).

The crime the **queen** had committed was that she disobeyed a **command** of the king. *Obviously, the king and queen did not share an emotionally intimate*

relationship. This was true of **Xerxes** and the women in his harem. This is again apparent later when Esther noted to Mordecai that she had not even seen the king for a month and was afraid to ask to see him (4:11).

Esther 1:16–22. **Memucan**, one of Xerxes' wise men, suggested that he have the **queen** deposed (v. 19) so that other noble **women** (v. 18) of the empire (and in fact **all the women**, v. 20) would not follow Vashti's example and **despise their husbands**

(v. 17) and the empire be filled with female **disrespect and** marital **discord** (v. 18). It is difficult to see how this punishment would cause the women of the empire to **respect their husbands** but that was the idea behind the decree. This is partially explained by the fact that the men had been drinking heavily (v. 10). (The words “if it pleases the king” occur nine times in the OT, seven of them in the Book of Es.: Neh. 2:5, 7; Es. 1:19; 3:9; 5:4, 8; 7:3 [“your majesty” is lit., “the king”] 8:5; 9:13.)

The idea **pleased** the **king and his nobles** so an edict was sent throughout the empire in various languages (cf. 3:12), stating **that every man should be ruler over his own household**. A vast relay communications system, something like an ancient pony express, made it possible to spread news throughout the empire quickly (cf. 3:13; 8:10). This bit of information helps set the stage for the rise of Esther.

B. Esther elevated to queen (2:1–20)

Esther, a Jewess, was placed in a position in which she could help the nation Israel. Her being elevated to queen happened even before Israel needed help. The original readers would realize that this was another instance of God protecting His covenant people.

1. SOLUTION PROPOSED FOR A NEW QUEEN (2:1–4)

Esther 2:1–4. After **the anger** of the king **subsided**, apparently sometime later, he realized that he had been foolish in his actions. *Throughout the book it is evident that the king was led along by his officials.* It appears that he was somewhat provincial in his outlook. Like all men of power he had to rely on others to be his eyes and ears on the outside, and did not always receive the best information.

In this case it was suggested to **the king** that **beautiful young virgins** (unmarried women) be brought to **Susa**, placed under **Hegai** (the **eunuch ... in charge of the harem**) and given **beauty treatments** (cf. v. 9), and that **the king** be allowed to pick from them a woman to replace **Vashti**. His **personal attendants** (probably “the wise men who understood the laws ... seven nobles,” 1:13–14) had suggested that Vashti be deposed. *So now they certainly did not want Xerxes to reinstate her for fear that she would turn against them.* The suggestion **appealed to the king and he followed it**. The fact that he had a harem in Susa is known from other sources. New women were constantly being brought into the Persian harem to replace the older women.

2. ESTHER TAKEN INTO THE HAREM (2:5–11)

Esther 2:5–7. **Mordecai** is a Babylonian name taken from the god Marduk. The name *mrđk* is attested in fifth-century Aramaic documents. **Mordecai was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin.** He had tried to hide the fact that he and his cousin were Jews (vv. 10, 20). Verse 6 may mean that Mordecai was deported by **Nebuchadnezzar** along with **Jehoiachin** (597 B.C.). But *this would mean that Mordecai would have been about 115 years old by the time of Xerxes’ third year and Esther would have been 80.* It is better to understand that **Kish**, Mordecai’s great-grandfather, was the one who was carried away in the 597 deportation.

Mordecai’s **cousin**, Esther, also a Benjamite, had been raised by him, apparently because her parents died when she was young. Her father was Abihail (v. 15; 9:29). The name **Esther** (“star”) is Persian. Her Hebrew name, **Hadassah**, means myrtle. She was beautiful, **lovely in form and features.**

Esther 2:8–11. Esther was taken into Xerxes' harem to await **the king's** choice, along with **many** other young women of the kingdom who were summoned to **Susa**.

Esther immediately pleased **Hegai**, the eunuch (cf. v. 3) and as a result was given a favorable position **in the harem**. He saw that she had **beauty treatments** (cf. v. 3) **and special food**, apparently food of a better-than-ordinary quality. Esther was even given **seven maids** to serve her. The wait in the harem was at least 12 months (v. 12) so Esther must have appreciated her favored position.

Esther kept her Jewish nationality a secret (cf. v. 20), not telling Hegai, her maids, or anyone else **because Mordecai had told her** not to. From this and other statements in the book it is clear the author was making the point that God protected and used Esther and Mordecai *in spite of* the fact that they were not living according to the Law commanded by God to the people of Israel. By Law Esther was not to marry a pagan (Deut. 7:1–4) or have sexual relations with a man who was not her husband (Ex. 20:14), and yet this was the purpose of her being included in the harem. **Esther** could be contrasted with Daniel who refused to eat the things from the king's table (Dan. 1:5) because the food would include items considered unclean by the Jewish Law. Apparently Esther had no qualms about the food she ate (Es. 2:9). She certainly did not set herself apart as Daniel had done.

3. ESTHER CHOSEN TO BE QUEEN (2:12–20)

Esther 2:12–15. Esther became extremely popular during her year of preparation for her night with the king. Each girl's **beauty treatments** were designed to enhance her attractiveness. **Myrrh**, a gum from a small tree, gives a fragrant smell.

Esther was not in a beauty contest simply to win the king's affections; the women were being prepared to have sexual relations with **the king**. This is suggested by the words **in the evening she would go there and in the morning return**. After that they would be transferred to another harem, under **Shaash gaz**, which consisted of **the concubines**. Most of the women were relegated to living the rest of their lives in the harem of the concubines, many probably never again seeing **the king**. When **Esther** went to **the king** she followed the instructions of **Hegai** the **eunuch**.

Esther 2:16–20. Esther **was taken to King Xerxes** in 479 B.C., his **seventh year**, the **10th month** (**Tebeth** was the Babylonian name for December–January). **The king was attracted to Esther** and therefore **made her queen** in place of **Vashti**. Then a big **banquet** was prepared and **he proclaimed a holiday** and gave away many **gifts**. Throughout all this, Esther had still not revealed that she belonged to the Jewish nation (cf. v. 10). Apparently there was a gathering of another harem of **virgins** during the time **Mordecai was ... at the king's gate** (cf. v. 21; 3:2). His being at the king's gate probably meant that Mordecai held an official position in the empire's judicial system. His position thus helped set the stage for the following events. This fact about Mordecai shows how he could have uncovered an assassination plot and how a feud started that threatened the entire Jewish nation.

II. The Jews Marked for Extermination (2:21–4:3)

Many have noted that the Book of Esther is a great short story. Like Ruth, another little book in the Bible about a woman, Esther has all the earmarks of great literature, including a conflict, an antagonist, tension, and irony. The antagonist, Haman, is introduced here and his conflict with Mordecai began.

A. A feud and Haman's hatred of the Jews (2:21–3:6)

1. KING SAVED BY MORDECAI (2:21–23)

Esther 2:21–23. Again a reference to Mordecai's position **at the king's gate** (cf. v. 19) as a judiciary official points to God's sovereign control over these events. Learning about a plot by **Bigthana and Teresh**, royal guards, **to assassinate the king**, Mordecai **told Queen Esther**, who **reported this to the king**. She gave **credit to Mordecai** for uncovering the scheme. **The two** men involved in the plot **were hanged on a gallows** (or "post," NIV marg.; cf. 5:14). Rather than being hanged by the neck on a modern-type gallows, the men were probably impaled on a stake or post (cf. Ezra 6:11). This was not an unusual method of execution in the Persian Empire. Darius, Xerxes' father, was known to have once impaled 3,000 men. A record of this assassination attempt was written in **the annals**, the official royal record (cf. Es. 6:1–2).

2. HAMAN PROMOTED (3:1–6)

Esther 3:1. **Haman was promoted to the highest position by Xerxes**. This occurred **after these events** (i.e., after Mordecai saved the king from the assassination and the two men were executed). It is reasonable to suppose that Mordecai expected a reward for his work on behalf of the king. But no reward was given then, possibly because of some bureaucratic bungle. Later this neglect appalled and surprised the king (cf. 6:1–3).

Because Haman was an **Agagite**, some have supposed that he was descended from Agag, king of the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15:8). However, it seems unlikely that a high-ranking Persian official would be related to a west Semite who lived 600 years

earlier. Archeologists have uncovered an inscription which indicates that Agag was also the name of a province in the Persian Empire. This probably explains why Haman was called an Agagite.

Esther 3:2–4. Haman’s promotion meant that the other nobles had to kneel **down** to him, that is, they had to pay him special respect. This was not an act of worship, such as that commanded of the three Hebrew young men in Daniel 3:8–15. Since the **officials at the king’s gate** had to kneel before **Haman**, the people probably also had to bow before the king himself. **Mordecai** said he would not bow to **Haman** (cf. Es. 5:9) because **he** (Mordecai) **was a Jew**. Probably this persistent (**day after day**) refusal stemmed more from pride than from religious scruples. For several years **Mordecai** had not let Esther tell the king she was a Jewess (2:10, 20), but now Mordecai was using their national heritage as an excuse for not giving honor to a high Persian official.

Esther 3:5–6. Haman ... **enraged** by Mordecai’s refusal (cf. 5:9), set out to find a **way to kill all ... the Jews**, not just **Mordecai**. This was an early case of anti-Semitism. In this literary plot, a climax is now reached in the tension. (Later a second climax was reached when Haman was revealed to be the plotter against the Jews; 7:6.) If the Jews were killed **throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes**, this would include those in the land of Palestine. These latter Jews were faithful to the Lord, worshiping in the rebuilt temple and living according to the stipulations of the Law (cf. comments on Ezra 1–6). A massive execution of thousands of Jews would thwart God’s program. However, God cannot be thwarted (Job 42:2). He can overturn man’s diabolical efforts, sometimes by miraculous acts, and sometimes through seeming acts of

happenstance as in the following sequence. God is always working on behalf of His people.

B. King persuaded by Haman to destroy the Jews (3:7–15)

1. LOT CAST BY HAMAN (3:7–9)

Esther 3:7. The author included a seemingly obscure part of the account by recording that Haman used a *pur*, a Babylonian word for **the lot**, to decide when the Jews should be killed. The original readers of this book would have understood that God was working to protect His people even in the timing of events. As things worked out, the Jews had almost a year in which to prepare themselves for the conflict with their enemies.

A little more than four years had gone by since Esther had become queen, in 478 B.C. (2:16). On the first day of the year, in **Nisan** (April–May) 474 B.C., at the beginning of Xerxes' **12th year**, the *pur* was cast **to select a day and month**. *Pur* is the basis of the name of the Feast of Purim (9:26). Presumably *the day selected was when the execution of the Jews was to begin*. **Haman**, along with many people in the Persian Empire, was extremely superstitious (cf. 6:13). The Persian religious system stressed fate and chance. Haman was allowing fate, by the casting of the lot, to dictate his move against the Jewish nation. Little did he then realize that the God who created all things and controls all events was in control of that situation, the lot-casting (Prov. 16:33; cf. comments on Acts 1:26). God had already prepared a means of delivering His people from Haman's plot. The month chosen by the lot was **the 12th**

month (February–March)—almost a year later. The day, stated later (Es. 3:13), was the 13th of the month (cf. 8:12; 9:1).

Esther 3:8–9. Haman went in to the **king** to present his plan. Falsely accusing all Jews of refusing to **obey the king's laws**, he suggested that **the king** would be better off if the Jews, **scattered** throughout the empire, were exterminated. Haman said he himself was willing to bear the costs involved in carrying out this **decree**. Haman must have been a man of immense wealth. As the highest official he undoubtedly had many opportunities to add to his personal fortune. **Ten thousand talents of silver** weighed about 750,000 pounds, an enormous amount worth millions of dollars in present-day currency. That was the staggering sum which Haman was willing to pay. Possibly this huge sum made the king suspicious of Haman. Surely he could not have acquired so much money without being crooked. (Interestingly, however, the king did not make him pay the money; v. 11.) At that time Persia used silver as its monetary standard.

2. KING'S PERMISSION GIVEN (3:10–11)

Esther 3:10–11. Xerxes, as before, was easily influenced by his officials (cf. 1:16–22; 2:2–4). He accepted Haman's advice and acquiesced. By giving his **signet ring** to **Haman**, Xerxes was allowing **the enemy of the Jews**, as Haman was now called, to send out a proclamation to the empire in the king's name. Five times in the Book of Esther, **Haman** is called the Jews' enemy (cf. 7:6; 8:1; 9:10, 24). The signet ring, when impressed on clay, made a special imprint, which, like a signature, represented the king's authority (cf. 3:12; 8:2, 8; Gen. 41:42; Dan 6:17; Hag. 2:23). The king noted that Haman could **do with the people** as he pleased. Little did **the**

king realize that his queen, Esther, was a Jewess and would be included in this hideous plan.

3. PROCLAMATIONS SENT OUT (3:12–15)

Esther 3:12–15. Haman's proclamation, sent out under **the king's** name to all the **provinces** and in various languages (cf. 1:22), called for the death of **all** Jewish people including **women and little children**. Haman intended to rid the world of God's covenant people. Also the executioners were ordered to confiscate property owned by **Jews**. The day the decree was dispatched was in March 474 B.C. (On the quick dispatching of this edict see comments on 1:22.)

The edict ... bewildered the people in **the city of Susa** (cf. 8:15). Apparently such a decree had never before come from the royal court. Haman's bloodthirstiness, along with Xerxes' seeming indifference to such atrocities, was incredible even to a sophisticated society which was used to cruel behavior. Perhaps other minority populations wondered if they would be the next to be annihilated.

C. Mordecai mourned (4:1–3)

Esther 4:1–3. Whatever had been Mordecai's reasons for not bowing to Haman, he was now in great mourning. His feud with Haman, whether legitimate or not, had caused a great crisis for his whole nation. He feared that God's Chosen People would be destroyed and God's program thwarted. He knew the amount of money Haman had agreed to spend on this vast project as he had a copy of the edict (vv. 7–8). Wearing **sackcloth and ashes** and crying publicly signified **mourning** (cf. Gen. 37:34; Jer. 49:3; Dan. 9:3; Joel 1:13; Jonah 3:6). **Mordecai** was identifying himself to the

public as one in great distress. Perhaps he was remorseful for having revealed his nationality (Es. 3:4) and thus having endangered the lives of thousands of his people. Everywhere **Jews** heard of the edict, and they had the same response. Certainly many Jewish people must have prayed fervently, though the Book of Esther does not mention it. Meanwhile God was working behind the scenes to deliver His people.

III. Calamity Averted by Esther (4:4–9:19)

Nothing has been said so far in the Book of Esther to suggest Esther and Mordecai were people of great faith in Yahweh. But here it is revealed that they at least believed that God was concerned for the welfare of His Chosen People. In this climactic section the interworking's of various events reveal God's sovereignty in working on behalf of His own. Though God's name is not mentioned, the abundance of "happenstances" surely point to God's control.

A. Communications between Esther and Mordecai (4:4–17)

Esther 4:4–8. The action in this section centers around **Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs assigned to Esther**. Though **Esther** had not been in the **presence** of the king for a month (v. 11), this did not mean that she had fallen from his favor. As his queen she had many luxuries and was waited on by **maids and eunuchs**, who told her about Mordecai's mourning. She assigned **Hathach ... to find out** why **Mordecai** was carrying on that way in public places. Esther may have been embarrassed about him. Or perhaps she was concerned for his welfare since she sent out new **clothes for him** to wear so he would not be seen in **sackcloth** and ashes. Esther's unique

position in the harem apparently shut her off from normal lines of communication. She did not seem to be aware of **the edict** about the execution **of the Jews**.

In response to Hathach's inquiry to Mordecai **in the open square**, Mordecai **gave him a copy of the edict to show to Esther**. He also told Hathach to tell her all the details of how the edict came about and **to urge her to go** to the king on behalf of **her people** to beg for their lives. The words "her people" revealed to the eunuch Hathach, if he did not know it before, that Esther was a Jewess. Without some reprieve from the king, Esther and Mordecai and all their people would die.

Esther 4:9–11. Esther's response to **Mordecai** was not encouraging. Persian monarchs (like those in most ancient nations) were protected against unwanted visitors. **Esther** reminded **Mordecai** that she could not simply enter the king's **inner chambers** unannounced or she might **be put to death**. **The king** had the power to execute anyone who disturbed him without an appointment. **For the king to extend the golden scepter** to someone showed that he approved of the visit and that the person was welcome and not in danger of death (cf. 5:2). Since Esther had not been **summoned** by him for a month she did not know whether his attitude toward her would be favorable.

Esther 4:12–14. Mordecai's response to Esther has often been taken as a great confession of faith. Actually, though, **Mordecai** apparently was expecting help from the Persian monarch. However, Mordecai did believe God in some way would protect His people: **deliverance would arise from another place** if Esther would not approach Xerxes about the Jews' plight. Though Mordecai is not pictured as a pious

man who was righteous in his dealings before God, he at least had a sense of the covenantal relationship between God and Israel. He was aware that the promises to Abraham, Moses, and David would not be fulfilled if the entire nation was wiped out. Therefore he was confident that God would act on their behalf. He hoped that God would work through Esther because of her unique **position**.

Mordecai reminded Esther that if she did not attempt to avert this terrible calamity she would surely die, even though she was a member of the royal household. Whether Haman's power was great enough to reach to the palace and execute the queen is not stated. Mordecai simply planted the idea in Esther's mind that she would die if she did not act. Therefore death by order of the king for entering into his presence would be no worse than waiting and meeting death at the hands of Haman.

Esther 4:15–17. Esther understood the situation well. In concluding her **reply to Mordecai** she noted, **If I perish, I perish**. She resolved to carry out the wishes of Mordecai and **go to the king** even if it meant her death. In this section, as elsewhere in the book, Esther and Mordecai are seen as great patriots on behalf of the Jewish nation, but are not presented as righteous people, like others in the Old Testament who fully trusted the Lord. Nothing is said about Esther praying (though many commentators say that her fasting meant she also prayed). She simply instructed Mordecai to **fast.... for three days** (with **the Jews ... in Susa**) as she and her **maids** would also **do**.

B. Plot exposed by Esther (chaps. 5–7)

These chapters mark the climax of the book. Here the tables are turned and evil is overcome by good. God's people are preserved through an unlikely set of circumstances. It is obvious to readers who trust the Lord that He was sovereignly at work, accomplishing His purposes. The original readers in postexilic Palestine would also be reminded that God would protect them against anything that might come their way. Even the forgetfulness of a pagan king could be used by God to preserve and protect His people.

1. BANQUET PREPARED (5:1–4)

Esther 5:1–4. After the three days of fasting in which **Esther** participated (cf. 4:16) she was ready to go to **the king** with her request. Actually she went **on the third day** because part of a day was counted as a whole day (cf. comments on Matt. 12:40). Even though she had not been with the king in over a month (Es. 4:11), **he was pleased** that she came (though she had been apprehensive) and **he held out ... the gold scepter toward her** (cf. 4:11; 8:4). He sensed that she had come to request something so he asked her for her **request**. And he even offered to give her whatever she wanted **even up to half the kingdom** (cf. 5:6; 7:2; Mark 6:23). This apparently was an idiom to express the point that **Esther** could request whatever she desired and that her wish would be fulfilled. Esther's request was simple: she asked that Xerxes and **Haman come ... to a banquet** she had **prepared**.

2. SECOND BANQUET PREPARED (5:5–8)

Esther 5:5–8. The **banquet** was readied and **Haman** was told to come as **Esther** had requested. It was an unusual honor to be invited to a banquet with the queen, for

Persian officials were protective of their wives. When **the king** asked what she wanted and again promised to fulfill her wish (cf. v. 3; 7:2), **Esther replied** that she would tell him the next day at a second **banquet**. Why **Esther** did not relate Haman's plot at the first banquet is not stated. Perhaps **Esther** was afraid to voice her complaint to **the king**. Perhaps she had second thoughts about telling him at all. Or perhaps she sensed that he was not in the right frame of mind for her to tell him on that day. From a literary standpoint, this delay raises the tension level as the story moves to its climax. A person reading Esther for the first time would be in a high state of agitation as the tension increased. Xerxes' response to Esther's suggestion is not given here, but Haman's later boasting (5:12) shows that **the king** was in obvious agreement with the idea.

3. HAMAN GLOATED, AND BUILT GALLOWS (5:9–14)

Esther 5:9–14. Haman was euphoric (**happy and in high spirits**) about his sudden good fortune with **the king** and the queen (v. 12) but, in contrast, he was enraged about **Mordecai**, the **Jew**, who still refused to bow down to him (cf. 3:2, 5). Haman was so overwrought about Mordecai that he could not enjoy his good position. On this occasion, to relieve himself of his rage and anxiety about **Mordecai**, he gathered his family and **friends** and spent time boasting about the **wealth** he had amassed and the family he had raised (he had 10 **sons**; 9:7–10, 12). As a social braggart (cf. 6:6) he also reminded them of his promotions in rank in the government, capping it off by telling them that on two successive days he was to be the guest of honor at a private **banquet** with only **the king** and **queen** present. However, he admitted that all his money and fame did not satisfy him because of **Mordecai**.

Haman's **wife, Zeresh, and all his friends** were no better than he was. They suggested that Haman **have a gallows built** that would be **75 feet high** and that he **have Mordecai hanged on it** before the banquet so he would have nothing bothering him when he went to the feast. **The gallows** probably was an impaling stake, a common method of execution in the ancient world (cf. comments on 2:23). The purpose in suggesting such a tall stake was so it would be a lesson to all who saw it. The person on the stake would be visible from all directions, since he would be higher than all the trees. This spectacle would solemnly emphasize that Haman was in control (cf. 3:1) and that no one should try to stand in his way.

Haman undoubtedly felt that with Mordecai gone there would be no organized opposition from the Jewish camp. He would be freed from his enemy forever. Here the tension in the Haman-Mordecai conflict reached its peak. From this point on it was relieved little by little through circumstances that had already been set in motion. As the events unfold, the reader is reminded of seemingly insignificant or forgotten events that the skillful narrator had previously mentioned but had not highlighted. God was sovereignly at work behind even such a hateful act as building a gallows (cf. Acts 2:23; 4:27–28).

4. MORDECAI HONORED BY XERXES (CHAP. 6)

The tension which had been building throughout the account now began to dissipate. Previously understated facts take on new meanings. Almost incredible circumstances point to ² God's hand guiding the course of events. The entire course

² Martin, J. A. (1985). [Esther](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 708–709). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

of history for the Jewish nation was changed because a pagan king, hundreds of miles from the center of God's activities in Jerusalem, could not sleep. Jewish people all over the Persian Empire, and especially in Palestine itself, were unaware of God's dealings till long after the fact. But read in the light of God's covenants to Abraham, Moses, and David, the readers could well appreciate the sovereign action of God.

Esther 6:1–3. During the **night** before Esther's second banquet, **Xerxes** was unable to **sleep** (cf. Dan. 6:18). The author had not written why Esther asked for a delay before telling the king her request (Es. 5:7), but the reason was now made clear. God was going to elevate **Mordecai**, to prepare **the king** to react unfavorably to Haman. Because of the king's sleeplessness he asked for some **of the chronicles** (court annals; cf. 2:23) to be **read to him**. Sometimes, as is known by many people with insomnia, reading can help put a person to sleep! Through Xerxes' insomnia God caused him to learn about Mordecai's deed. Of all the texts that could have been selected by the librarian (from the records of Xerxes' 12 years of rule up to that time), the one that contained the account of Mordecai's uncovering the assassination plot (2:21–23) was read to **the king**.

Extrabiblical sources confirm that the Persian kings maintained an elaborate recording system (cf. Ezra 6:1–2). Herodotus noted that the king kept especially clear records of those who served him well. Once again God's sovereignty is evident. When Xerxes asked **what honor** Mordecai had been given for saving the king's life (about five years before; cf. Es. 2:16 with 3:7), the king found that he had not been rewarded. Undoubtedly a bureaucratic oversight had occurred. However, if

Mordecai had been immediately rewarded for his saving the king there would have been no need for the elaborate plan which would soon be carried out by the king through the mouth of Haman (6:6–10). Once ³ again unusual circumstances worked to preserve God's people.

Esther 6:4–6. In the morning (cf. 5:14) **Haman ... entered the palace outer court** to ask that **Mordecai** be hanged. **The king** asked **who** was **in the court** and **Haman** “just happened” to be there. Obviously the tables were being turned. Everything that was meant for evil against the Jews was turning out for good for them. What a comfort this must have been to the original Jewish readers in postexilic Palestine as they observed their tenuous position among the nations. They could rejoice in the fact that God cared about them and that He would continue to preserve them as He had under Xerxes.

When Haman was ushered into the king's presence, he must have felt honored. And when **the king** asked ... **What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?** The egotistical **Haman** was beside **himself** with joy and enthusiasm. He thought that **the king** was speaking about him.

Esther 6:7–9. Haman responded to **the king** by mentioning several things that should be done for the person **the king** wished to honor:

(1) Haman recommended that such a man should have the appearance of royalty, by wearing a kingly **robe** and riding a **royal** steed, one **the king** had already **ridden**.

³ Martin, J. A. (1985). [Esther](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 709). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Some have suggested that the Bible is in error when it speaks of a horse wearing a **royal crest ... on its head**. They think that the man, not the horse, should have worn the crown. However, a relief actually shows a horse with a crown on its head, signifying that it was a royal horse.

(2) Haman said that the honored man should be served by one of the **most noble princes**.

(3) The princes were to take the man **through the city** on this **horse**, clearing the way before him and pointing out to all who watched that this **man** was honored by **the king** (cf. Gen. 41:42–43).

Haman did not need money (cf. Es. 3:9). He craved respect from his peers and from the population at large (cf. 5:11). Even though he was fabulously wealthy ⁴ and had more power than anyone outside the royal family (3:1), he wanted even more respect from the people of the city. Haman's lust for respect (from Mordecai) is what got him into trouble in the first place (cf. 3:2, 5; 5:9, 13).

Esther 6:10–13. Haman's ideas apparently appealed to **the king**; he **commanded Haman** to carry them out **for Mordecai the Jew**. This is the first of five times Mordecai is called "the Jew" (cf. 8:7; 9:29, 31; 10:3), apparently to highlight the fact that a Jew, though opposed by **Haman**, was given a prominent position in Susa in the Persian Empire. What a turn of events; what irony for Haman! **Mordecai**, whom he hated, had to be honored by **Haman**. He who wanted respect *from* Mordecai had to give respect *to* Mordecai. Haman had to carry out the king's order even though it embarrassed and angered him greatly. **Afterward** he **rushed home**, had **his head covered in grief**, and **told Zeresh his wife** and **friends** the reversal of his fortunes.

⁴ Martin, J. A. (1985). [Esther](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 709). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Earlier Mordecai had publicly grieved over his people (4:1); now Haman privately grieved over his own humiliation. When Haman had left his wife in the morning he had been elated. Now the bottom had fallen out from under him. To make matters worse, **his advisers and his wife** all saw nothing but trouble for him in the future. They noted that Mordecai's **Jewish origin** meant that Haman was doomed. Exactly what they meant by that statement is difficult to determine. It is known that in the Persian religions much was made of omens and signs. Fate, chance, and luck were considered important in everyday life. The Book of Esther stands as a polemic against such a fatalistic view of the world. To many who are not of the covenant community, Israel, the world's events appear to be fatalistic and to happen by chance. But those who are the people of God's covenant know that God overrules fate. He moves events and circumstances for His good pleasure. Pagan advisers and the pagan wife of an evil man unknowingly stated the central thrust of this book: neither ⁵ Haman nor any other human can possibly **stand against** God's Chosen People, the Jewish nation (many of whom were then back in the Promised Land with a rebuilt temple, offering sacrifices to God at Jerusalem).

Esther 6:14. Now, with his world crashing down around his head, **Haman** was hustled off to Esther's second **banquet**, which once he desired but now dreaded. He may have well wondered what the king would say to him at the banquet.

Haman stands as a prototype of all anti-God activists who oppose God's people. Like authors of many short stories, God led the author of the Book of Esther to make his

⁵ Martin, J. A. (1985). [Esther](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 709–710). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

historical figures into symbols of much larger proportions. As the regathered nation read this account, they could have looked back over their history and noted other times when men had tried to set aside God's promises to their nation and had failed. They could therefore rest assured that in the future God would do the same. Even though God's people often disobeyed Him, even though they were often not spiritually or even physically where God wanted them to be, deliverance would come. God would so work in history that He would be vindicated and His people delivered.

5. XERXES TOLD OF PLOT, HAMAN HANGED (CHAP. 7)

Esther 7:1–4. What **Haman** knew about **Esther** is not stated. If he knew of the connection between Mordecai and Esther he may have been even more terrified at the prospect of attending this second banquet given by Esther. This was the fifth banquet mentioned in the Book of Esther: two were given by **the king** (1:3, 5), one by Queen Vashti (1:9), and two by **Queen Esther** (5:4, 8). During the banquet **the king** again asked Esther her **request**, and again he promised that he would grant it to her (cf. 5:3, 6). This time Esther got right to the point and gave her **petition** and **request ... life** for her and her **people**. It was now clear to Xerxes what her nationality was (cf. 2:10, 20). She explained that all her **people** had been **sold** (i.e., the king was ⁶ offered a bribe by Haman; cf. 3:9; 4:7) into extinction (cf. 3:13). Showing her subservient position to the king, she added that if they had merely been **sold** into slavery she certainly would not have bothered **the king**. Esther's statement not only shows the unbelievable power of the king, but also the condition

⁶ Martin, J. A. (1985). [Esther](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 710). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

to which she was reduced. **Esther** may have been apprehensive, not knowing if the king would grant her request. It was quite possible that he would fly into a rage, as he had done with Vashti (1:12).

Esther 7:5–6. However, this time **the king** did not become furious. He requested more information about who was doing **such a thing** to **Esther** and her people. Undoubtedly a look of terror was on Haman’s face as he realized that he was about to be exposed before the most powerful man on the face of the earth. **Haman** must have known that his execution was assured now that “fate” was working against him. **Esther** revealed that **vile Haman** was the **enemy** (cf. 3:10; 8:1; 9:10, 24).

Esther 7:7–8. *Now the king* was filled with **rage** (cf. 1:12 and cf. Haman’s anger on two occasions, 3:5; 5:9). The reason why the king left the palace to go outside to his **palace garden** is not given. It has been suggested that he went out to control his anger, but that is unlikely in view of his other behavior. Others have suggested that he was thinking up a way to execute Haman legally, but that is unlikely because any word of the king was law. Others have said that Xerxes was trying to figure out a way to spare Esther and her nation. Whatever the reason, Esther and **Haman** were left together in the banquet hall.

While begging **Esther** to spare **his life**—though he realized **that the king had already decided his fate**—Haman fell **on the couch** (cf. 1:6) on which **Esther was reclining**. Persians (and later Greeks, Romans, and Jews) reclined on couches when they ate. At just that moment (another so-called “happenstance” in the sovereignty of God)

the king returned and ⁷ accused **Haman** of assaulting **the queen**. However, Haman was not assaulting her but **was** merely **falling** on her couch. It is highly unlikely that Haman and Esther were alone in that banquet hall. No doubt people who were serving the meal and the guards were also present. The word **they** (7:8) suggests that several people were there. What is meant by their covering **Haman's face** is uncertain. Probably they did this because Haman was now a doomed man, condemned to death.

Esther 7:9–10. Harbona, one of the king's seven **eunuchs** (cf. 1:10), told **the king** about the **gallows** which Haman had built during the previous night to kill **Mordecai** (5:14). Possibly Haman was hated by many people in the city of Susa, especially in government circles. Many might have been glad to see Haman killed. Harbona obviously knew of Haman's plot to kill Mordecai. At the king's orders, **Haman** was taken and **hanged ... on** his own **gallows** (i.e., impaled; cf. comments on 2:23). The tables had now been turned, but the Jews were still left with a major problem. **The king's** edict to eradicate them was still in effect. Per a Persian decree there would still be a great slaughter of many innocent people because of the wicked actions of a now-dead man.

C. Jews delivered, and took revenge (8:1–9:19)

God had sovereignly worked in various circumstances so that the Jews could be delivered. Now it was the Jews' turn. They would have to fight to retain what was theirs. They had to take part actively in their own deliverance. The Jewish people

⁷ Martin, J. A. (1985). [Esther](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 710–711). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

back in the land would also be encouraged to work hard and carry out their responsibilities before God in His sovereign plan.

1. MORDECAI RECEIVED ROYAL POSITION (8:1–2)

Esther 8:1–2. Apparently **Haman** was considered a criminal, for his property was confiscated. The king's **signet ring**, which had been given **Haman** to authorize the edict against the Jews (3:10), was now given to **Mordecai**. Again the tables turned against Haman, even after his death. For one thing **Mordecai** now had the power that Haman previously had. For another, Haman, who had hoped to confiscate the Jews' property (3:13), now had his own property removed and given to, of all people, **Esther**, who in turn **appointed** Mordecai to oversee it.

2. SECOND PROCLAMATION SENT OUT (8:3–14)

Esther 8:3–6. Since the edict to exterminate the Jews (3:13) was still in effect, something had to be done. So **Esther** appeared before **the king** a second time without an invitation (cf. 5:1–2). This time **she begged him to put an end to the evil plan** which was in effect because of **Haman**. **The king** was favorable toward her and once again held out **the gold scepter to** her (cf. 4:11; 5:2).

Esther's request was simple. She wanted a second decree written and sent out which would override the first decree. Again she was willing to be known as a Jewess for she spoke of **my people** and **my family** (cf. 7:3).

Esther 8:7–8. The **king** noted that **Esther** and **Mordecai** now had the power and resources that previously belonged to **Haman** and therefore they should use that

power to their advantage. Though Haman's decree could not be revoked, a second one could supersede it. Xerxes even gave Mordecai authority to **write** the **decree** any way he wished and to stamp it with **the king's** authority by using his **signet ring** (cf. 3:10, 12; 8:2).

Esther 8:9–14. The decree Mordecai wrote was **sent** out in ⁸ **the third month ... Sivan** (June–July) 474. Since this was a little over two months after Haman's decree (3:12) the Jews had about nine months to prepare themselves for the conflict (up to the 13th day of the 12th month, the date Haman had chosen by lot; cf. 3:7, 13; 9:1). As was the case with the previous decree (cf. 3:12), this one too was dispatched (cf. 1:22; 3:15) by horsemen throughout the whole empire **from India to Cush** (cf. 1:1) and was **written in the** appropriate languages for **each province**. The edict gave **the Jews ... the right to protect themselves** and the right to **annihilate** (cf. 3:13; 7:4) and **plunder** any group that fought against them. **The Jews** could take away the property of **their enemies** as Mordecai had "taken away" the property of Haman.

3. JEWS REJOICED (8:15–17)

Esther 8:15–17. **Mordecai** wore clothes which told of his royal position—**royal garments ... a large crown**, and a **purple** linen **robe**. **Blue and white** were the Persian royal colors (cf. 1:6). He now held the position and status Haman had held (3:1). Previously under Haman's edict the city of Susa had been "bewildered" (3:15). Now under the edict of Mordecai **the city of Susa held a joyous celebration**. And obviously **the Jews** were elated. Their rise to power caused **many** Gentiles to

⁸ Martin, J. A. (1985). [Esther](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 711–712). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

become Jewish proselytes. God's good hand was then becoming obvious to the world at large. No longer were these events being viewed simply as happenstance; now people were beginning to realize that the God of **the Jews** was protecting them.

4. JEWS TOOK REVENGE (9:1–19)

Esther 9:1–4. When the appointed **day** of the battle came, **the tables were turned on the enemies of the Jews**. As **the Jews assembled** in various **cities** to face their attackers, the Gentiles became **afraid of them**. In fact even the government authorities **helped the Jews**. The people who attacked the Jews may have seen this as an opportunity to get rich at someone else's expense. However, since they had no backing from others they were in a cause which they could not win. Only by God's sovereign intervention was **Mordecai** now in a position of authority. **He became more ... powerful** and enjoyed a good **reputation**.

Esther 9:5–15. On the day of the battle (13th day of the 12th month, i.e., in March 473) **in the⁹ citadel of Susa the Jews killed ... 500 men** plus Haman's **10 sons**. When **the king** asked **Esther** what she wanted, she requested that **the Jews in Susa** be given one more day to carry out the task of rooting out the ones who were trying to destroy them and that **Haman's 10 slain sons be hanged on gallows** (i.e., impaled; cf. 2:23; 7:10). On the second day the Jews killed an additional **300 men**. **The Jews** were not doing this for money, as Haman had hoped to do (cf. 3:13), for three times it is stated that the Jews **did not lay their hands on the plunder** (9:10, 15–16). Many have questioned why the Jews wanted to impale the already dead bodies of

⁹ Martin, J. A. (1985). [Esther](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 712). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Haman's 10 sons. This was not an unusual practice in the ancient Near East. It was a visual warning that others better not commit the same crime as the punished ones.

Esther 9:16–19. In the outlying **provinces ... 75,000** individuals were **killed by the Jews** in one day, but there, as well as in Susa, **they did not** take any **plunder** from the victims. Only in Susa did the fighting last for two days. For that reason **Jews in Susa** celebrated **on the 15th** day of the 12th month (after the slaughters on **the 13th and 14th**), whereas Jews in the villages celebrated **on the 14th** (after the slaughter on **the 13th**).

IV. Feast of Purim Established (9:20–32)

Esther 9:20–22. The Feast of Purim was not established by the Mosaic Law. It was commanded by **Mordecai** (vv. 20–28) and by Esther (vv. 29–32). The two-day feast was for remembering the goodness of God working through a number of circumstances to protect His people from extinction. Mordecai wrote a proclamation that **the Jews** were to **celebrate** the event **annually** with eating, rejoicing (cf. 8:17), **giving ... food**, and sharing with **the poor**.

Esther 9:23–32. The feast was **called Purim** (v. 26) **because of** Haman's use of **the pur ... the lot** to determine the time of the execution (3:7). **The pur** became a symbol of God's using circumstances to deliver His own.¹⁰ **Esther ... along with Mordecai**, wrote a **second letter** confirming that **the Jews** were to celebrate the feast (9:29–32). Unlike Haman's decree her **words**, sent to the Jews (her "people")

¹⁰ Martin, J. A. (1985). [Esther](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 712–713). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

throughout the vast empire, were for **good will and assurance**. A copy of her letter was also included in the royal archives (cf. 2:23; 6:1; 10:2).¹¹

V. Greatness of Mordecai Described (chap. 10)

Esther 10:1–3. The book closes by speaking of **King Xerxes'** power; but more importantly the closing verses extol **Mordecai**, once a hated Jew in the Persian **Empire**. He was promoted by **Xerxes** and revered by **the Jews**. He was their great patriot **because he worked** hard for them **and spoke up** on their behalf to Xerxes. However, it is noteworthy that the Book of Esther nowhere states that Mordecai was a righteous individual or that he was careful to follow the Law. Many have doubted that a Jew could have such a high rank in the Persian Empire. However, it is known that many foreign people were fully assimilated into the mainstream of life in the empire (e.g., Daniel; Dan. 5:29; 6:1–2, 28).

As the original Jewish readers read this account they would have been struck by the way God was sovereignly protecting them, often when they did not even know it. Many things in the Book of Esther happened that were beyond anyone's control except that of God, who oversees history. And the Book of Esther is filled with irony, with ways in which events turned out unexpectedly and in favor of God's people. Queen Vashti, a Persian, was deposed so that Esther, a Jewess, could become queen and save her people. Haman, once exalted, was brought low, and **Mordecai** and **the Jews**, once hated, were exalted and honored. A decree that would have wiped out the Jews was overruled by one which led to the destruction of nearly 76,000

¹¹ Martin, J. A. (1985). [Esther](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 713). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

enemies of the Jews. No wonder Purim was celebrated yearly with such rejoicing: to help the Jews remember that God is in control and that people should faithfully worship and serve their great God.