

OPENING QUESTIONS:

1. Are you easily distracted by the glitz and glamour of the world? Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you missed out on what the Lord had for you to do because your eyes were on what you could gain?
2. Think of a time when you looked to someone in your life to “rescue” you from a difficult situation. Did they come through for you?
3. Do you think the saying, “All’s well that ends well” is true? Please explain.
4. In what ways have your families’ way of celebrating the holidays brought you to a place of remembrance of the holiday’s original intention or veered away from the holiday’s original intention?

EXPLORE

[Esther 8](#) – A Proclamation to Help the Jews

A. The appeal to the king.

1. (1-2) *Haman’s home is given to Esther; his position is given to Mordecai.*

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. 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.

a. **On that day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman:** Haman, the disturbed man who had seemingly achieved everything, ended with nothing – nothing even to pass on to his family. One might say that he had climbed the ladder of success, but it was leaning against the wrong building.

b. **So the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai:** Think of how hard Haman had to work to achieve all he did. Yet it was all for nothing; it was all a waste.

i. He should have lived his life after the conclusion of Solomon, who carefully considered these things: *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.* ([Ecclesiastes 12:13-14](#))

2. (3-6) *Esther’s request for the salvation of her people.*

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

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Jews. And the king held out the golden scepter toward Esther. So Esther arose and stood before the king, 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. 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?”

a. **Implored him with tears to counteract the evil of Haman the Agagite, and the scheme which he had devised against the Jews:** Esther asked that the previous decree requiring the extermination of the Jews be revoked.

b. **Let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman:** This was the request we might have expected to come back at [Esther 5:4](#), where Esther was first invited to make her request to king Ahasuerus. Yet God’s wisdom operating in her life gave her the tact and ability to approach this great request in stages.

i. Even though Haman was defeated, the decree of the king still stood against the Jews. How could God’s people be preserved when a decree of the king cannot be revoked (according to [Esther 1:19](#))?

3. (7-14) King Ahasuerus makes a counter-decree, allowing the Jews to protect themselves on the day they were scheduled for annihilation.

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*. 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.*” 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. 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. 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, on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar. 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. 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.*

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a. **You yourselves write a decree concerning the Jews, as you please:** The king could not revoke the previous decree, so he simply made another decree giving support to the Jews against their attackers.

i. We might think of Haman as in the place of our enemy, Satan, and joyfully await the day God puts him away. But we still must deal with the righteous decree of God that demands our death: *The soul who sins shall die* ([Ezekiel 18:4](#)). In our sins, we not only have an enemy (Satan), but we also have a legal decree from a righteous God against us.

i. God solves the problem, not by compromising His decree for eternal justice, but by fulfilling justice in taking the punishment we deserved – His counter-decree saves us; *that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus* ([Romans 3:26](#)).

b. **The couriers who rode on royal horses went out, hastened and pressed on by the king's command:** There was an urgency to get the word out about this important decree of the king. Christians should show a similar urgency when it comes to being heralds of the decree that the justice of God has been satisfied for us in Jesus Christ.

B. Mordecai's advancement.

1. (15) Mordecai's promotion.

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.

a. **So Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel:** God's purpose in all these matters goes farther than the sparing of the Jews from destruction; He also purposed to raise up Mordecai as the prime minister – as a replacement of Haman.

2. (16) Joy for the people of God.

The Jews had light and gladness, joy and honor.

a. **The Jews had light and gladness:** This joy came *before* the actual day appointed when the Jews would be attacked, yet able to defend themselves. Nevertheless, because of the decree of the king, they can be assured of victory and rejoice in it ahead of time.

b. **Light and gladness, joy and honor:** In the same way, our course is not yet run; our salvation is not yet complete – yet we can rejoice, because of our confidence in our king – *being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.* ([Philippians 1:6](#))

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3. (17) Salvation for the Gentiles.

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.

a. **Then many of the people of the land became Jews:** As they saw God working on behalf of His people, they wanted the same relationship with God.

[Esther 9](#) – Victory for the Jews

A. They defeat their enemies.

1. (1-5) Victory, with the help of the king.

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. 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. 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. For Mordecai was great in the king's palace, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces; for this man Mordecai became increasingly prominent. 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.

a. **On the day that the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, the opposite occurred:** The Jews definitely had their enemies, those who wished to destroy them. Yet they had someone great on their side: the king, with all his resources. With the king for them, it didn't matter who was against them.

b. **Thus the Jews defeated all their enemies:** We have our own enemies to deal with; but with the King of Kings on our side, we have no reason to fear – *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?* ([Romans 8:31](#))

2. (6-10) Cities where they fought their enemies.

And in Shushan the citadel the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men. Also Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vajezatha; 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.

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3. (11-17) At the king's invitation, Esther asks for the complete defeat of all the enemies of the Jews.

On that day the number of those who were killed in Shushan the citadel was brought to the king. 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." 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." So the king commanded this to be done; the decree was issued in Shushan, and they hanged Haman's ten sons. 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. 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. *This was* on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar. And on the fourteenth day of *the month* they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

a. **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:** Many have criticized Esther for this, saying it showed a lack of love towards her enemies. Yet she displays the same principle found so often in Joshua – she would not settle for less than total victory.

b. **And they hanged Haman's ten sons:** Haman and his sons were descendants of the ancient Amalekites (comparing [Esther 3:1](#) and [1 Samuel 15:8-33](#)). God commanded Saul, the son of Kish, to execute the full extent of God's judgment against the Amalekites ([1 Samuel 15:2-3](#)). Saul failed; but this later descendent of the tribe of Benjamin and a son of Kish named Mordecai ([Esther 2:5-6](#)) completed God's judgment against the Amalekites.

i. "Now it was God's intent that a last conflict should take place between Israel and Amalek: the conflict which began with Joshua in the desert was to be finished by Mordecai in the king's palace." (Spurgeon)

B. The feast of Purim established.

1. (18-19) A great celebration among the Jews of the Persian Empire.

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. Therefore the Jews of the villages who dwelt in the unwalled towns celebrated the fourteenth day of the month of Adar *with* gladness and feasting, as a holiday, and for sending presents to one another.

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2. (20-32) *The institution of the feast of Purim.*

And Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all the Jews, near and far, who *were* in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar, 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. So the Jews accepted the custom which they had begun, as Mordecai had written to them, 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; 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. 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, 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, *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. Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim. 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, 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. So the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim, and it was written in the book.

a. Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all the Jews, near and far, who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly: The principle of remembering God's great deliverance is good; we too often forget His great works.

b. So the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim: Today, Purim is one of the more popular Jewish feasts, with costumes, games and noise.

[Esther 10](#) – Mordecai's Promotion

A. Epilogue.

1. (1-2) *The glory of the reign of King Ahasuerus.*

And King Ahasuerus imposed tribute on the land and *on* the islands of the sea. Now all the acts of his power and his might, and the account of the greatness of Mordecai, to which the

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king advanced him, *are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia?*

2. (3) Mordecai is promoted to the position of second in the kingdom.

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.

B. Observations on the Book of Esther.

1. The Book of Esther shows how the hand of God can move in a supernaturally-natural way.

a. “It has been well said that the Book of Esther is a record of wonders without a miracle, and therefore, though equally revealing the glory of the Lord, it sets it forth in another fashion from that which is displayed in the overthrow of Pharaoh by miraculous power.” (Spurgeon)

b. Think of all that God arranged in the story of Esther:

- God arranged for the noble Queen Vashti to lose her place.
- God arranged for a competition to replace Queen Vashti.
- God arranged for Esther to enter the competition.
- God arranged special favor for Esther among the other women.
- God arranged for Mordecai to have access to both Esther and the affairs of the kingdom.
- God arranged the lot that was cast to give 11 months warning before the evil event ([Esther 3:12-13](#)).
- God arranged that the decree command that the Jews be killed by private hands, instead of by the army of Persia – which would have been much more difficult to stop.
- God arranged that Haman restrain his anger and not kill Mordecai immediately ([Esther 5:10](#)).
- God arranged for Esther to delay her request; first asking for a banquet with the king and then *another* banquet.
- God arranged for Haman’s anger to come to a peak on one particular day.
- God arranged for Ahasuerus to have a sleepless night.
- God arranged for Ahasuerus to pick up a certain book in his sleepless night.
- God arranged for Ahasuerus to read the passage about Mordecai in that particular book.

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2. God's hand in history never rules out our actions. The actions of Esther and Mordecai were critical to the preservation of the people of God.

a. God's will is accomplished, and yet men are perfectly free agents; Haman did as he pleased, Ahasuerus did what he wanted, so did Mordecai and Esther. We see no interference, no coercion – they all do their will, and bear full responsibility, yet God works out His eternal plan for the ages through it all.

b. "There it is; man is a free agent in what he does, responsible for his actions, and verily guilty when he does wrong, and he will be justly punished too, and if he be lost the blame will rest with himself alone: but yet there is One who ruleth over all, who, without complicity in their sin, makes even the actions of wicked men to subserve his holy and righteous purposes. Believe these two truths and you will see them in practical agreement in daily life, though you will not be able to devise a theory for harmonizing them on paper." (Spurgeon)

3. God, in His wise and Providential plan, allows His people to be tested – sometimes severely so. We must not suppose that the servants of God will be protected from every trial, because the trials are part of God's design.

· It was a great trial for Mordecai; he refused to bow to Haman and *others* would suffer for his refusal to pay homage to Haman.

· It was a great trial for Esther; she heard the news of the coming slaughter of her people and had to boldly approach the king to make an appeal.

Text Questions:

1. Look at verses one and two of chapter eight. Describe the emotions of Esther and Mordecai as the king tells them what he is going to do with Haman's estate and his old position as second-in-command.
2. Verses three and four are a poignant picture of desperation. Think about all the emotions that Esther has managed to keep under control until now. How do you think you would have reacted in her place? Would you have been distracted by the king's generosity? Would you have been willing to risk your life again?
3. How does Xerxes' response to Esther's request show his emotional removal from the queen's desperation?
4. Go back and reread Esther 3:13-15, 4:1-3. How do the emotions and actions in these passages compare with what we see in Esther 8:15-17?
5. What are a few reasons Esther may have asked for a second day to avenge their enemies?

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6. Read Esther 9:16-19, why did the Jews in Susa celebrate and have their day of feasting on a different day than the Jews outside the citadel?
7. In what ways were the “tables turned” for the Jews in Chapter nine? Esther 9:22
8. If you could surmise the book of Esther in one sentence what would you say?
9. What are the last things we read about Esther and Mordecai in these chapters?

Application Questions:

1. Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-9. How does this passage apply to this scene in the book of Esther? Can you feel the extreme contrasting emotions Esther was probably experiencing? Have you ever been in a situation where you felt crushed, persecuted, or struck down?

2. Have you ever made someone other than God your hero? Why did you put that person on a pedestal, or lift them up in your life? Why is that dangerous? Did God allow him or her to fail you? If so, did God reveal Himself to you in a new way through your disappointment?

3. Are you facing an enormous obstacle today that seems immovable? Have you asked God to step in? 1 John 5:14 says “This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.” Talk with your prayer partner about any obstacle you might be facing, whether it is an internal struggle or an external circumstance. Read Matthew 18:20 together and pray together that God would reveal Himself as your Savior and Hero in that situation.

4. Jesus came with the power to reverse the curse on your life and make you a new woman. Have you had the opportunity to share that with someone who does not know Him? Is there such a dramatic difference that someone might ask you why? If you haven't had this opportunity lately, how can you and your small group create one?

5. Dr. Jon Levenson says the key is not that the Jews destroyed the enemy but that they assumed a new status of honor and dominion. The Jews gained mastery over

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those who hated them. How have you grown in your God-given power and authority in Christ as a daughter of the King in the past nine weeks?

6. Three times in Chapter nine we read that the Jews refused to plunder the property of their enemies even though the edict permitted them to. This practice originated with Abraham. Read Genesis 14:17-23, why wouldn't he receive from the king of Sodom? Compare with the most probable reason why the Jews didn't plunder their enemies property in Susa.

7. Read Isaiah 28:5-6, do you see any connection to these scriptures and our Esther narrative? (A divine work through ordinary means, he is the spirit of Justice in Esther. Awesome). How has God, "The Spirit of Justice" brought justice in your life or the life of your loved ones through ordinary people, places, and things?

8. "The Jews did not commemorate the day of their victorious battle, but the day on which they rested from their enemies." The Jews did not make an anniversary of their war but of their rest. Do you have a day set aside where you rest and focus on the Lord? If so, how does this day make a difference in your week? If not, what are some practical steps that can be taken to have a "Sabbath?"

9. What have you learned about God's providence through the book of Esther? What are the three things you are going to never forget and take away from this study that will encourage your heart forever?

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