

SIMPLE STUDIES IN SCRIPTURE

THE BOOK OF ESTHER

LEADER'S STUDY GUIDE



Edwin Long, 1878

DR. STANFORD E. MURRELL

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Human Author: Unknown

Divine Author: God the Holy Spirit

Date of Writing: c. 486-465 BC

Theme: The Providence of God

Introduction and Outline

Matthew Henry

The Providence of God

How the providence of God watched over the Jews that had returned out of captivity to their own land, and what great and kind things were done for them, we read in the two foregoing books [Ezra and Nehemiah]; but there were many who stayed behind [in exile], having not zeal enough for God's house, and the holy land and city, to carry them through the difficulties of a removal thither. These, one would think, should have been excluded the special protection of Providence, as unworthy the name of Israelites; but our God deals not with us according to our folly and weakness.

The Human Author

We find in this book [of Esther] that even those Jews who were scattered in the provinces of the heathen [throughout the Persian empire] were taken care of, as well as those who were gathered in the land of Judea, and were wonderfully preserved, when doomed to destruction and appointed as sheep for the slaughter. Who drew up this story is uncertain.

A Man Named Mordecai

Mordecai was as able as any man to relate, on his own knowledge, the several passages of it; for he bore a conspicuous part in it; and that he wrote such an account of them as was necessary to inform his people of the grounds of their observing the feast of Purim [lit. lots] we are told (Est 9:20, Mordecai wrote these things, and sent them enclosed in letters to all the Jews), and therefore we have reason to think he was the penman of the whole book.

The Proposal of Genocide

It is the narrative of a plot laid against the Jews to cut them all off, and which was wonderfully disappointed by a concurrence of providences. The most compendious exposition of it will be to read it deliberately all together at one time, for the latter events expound the former and show what providence intended in them.

The Not so Silent God

The name of God is not found in this book; but the apocryphal addition to it (which is not in the Hebrew, nor was ever received by the Jews into the canon), containing six chapters, begins thus, Then Mordecai said, God has done these things. But, though the name of God be not in it, the finger of God is, directing many minute events for the bringing about of his people's deliverance.

The Preservation of God's People

The particulars are not only surprising and very entertaining, but edifying and very encouraging to the faith and hope of God's people in the most difficult and dangerous times. We cannot now expect such miracles to be wrought for us as were for Israel when they were brought out of Egypt, but we may expect that in such ways as God here took to defeat Haman's plot he will still protect his people. We are told,

A Simply Outline

I. How Esther came to be queen and Mordecai to be great at court, who were to be the instruments of the intended deliverance, chapters. 1, 2.

II. Upon what provocation, and by what arts, Haman the Amalekite obtained an order for the destruction of all the Jews, chapter. 3.

III. The great distress the Jews, and their patriots especially, were in thereupon, chapter. 4.

IV. The defeating of Haman's particular plot against Mordecai's life, chapters. 5-7.

V. The defeating of his general plot against the Jews, chapter. 8.

VI. The care that was taken to perpetuate the remembrance of this, chapters. 9, 10.

The Laughter of the Lord

The whole story confirms the Psalmist's observation. *Ps 37:12 The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him; he sees that his day is coming.*

ESTHER 1

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

1:1 AHASUERUS (a-has-u-e'-rus), is identified with the Persian king Xerxes (486-465 BC), the son of Darius I the Great.

1:1 INDIA (in'-de-ah), refers to the country which was the E boundary of the empire of King Ahasuerus.

1:1 ETHIOPIA (e-the-o'-pe-ah; burnt), CUSH, refers to the country in Africa, S of Egypt. Ethiopia was controlled by Egypt until after the days of David (1000 BC).

2 That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace,

1:2 SHUSHAN (shu-shan; lily), SUSA, refers to a city in Elam which was the capital of Persia (Neh. 1:1; Esth. 2:3; 9:11; Dan. 8:2). Nehemiah lived here (Neh. 1:1). It was captured by Alexander the Great in 331 BC. It was located by the river Shapar, east of the Persian Gulf.

3 In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him:

1:3 THIRD YEAR. The Egyptian historian Herodotus (vii.8) states that about the third year of his reign (483 BC) Xerxes held a great council of war with his princes to plan his war with the Greeks.

1:3 PERSIA (per'-she-ah), refers to a land bordered by Media on the N, the Persian Gulf on the S, Elam on the W, and Carmania on the E. It followed Babylon as the second world empire. During the reign of Cyrus the Great, Persia defeated Babylon in 539 BC. Following the conquest the Jews in the land were allowed to return home to Palestine (Ezra 1:1-3). Susa or Shushan was the place of the royal palace (Neh. 1:1; Esther 1:2).

1:3 MEDIA (me'-de-ah), refers to a country of Asia located W of Parthia, N of the Persian Gulf, E of Assyria and Armenia, and S of the Caspian Sea (modern Iran, Iraq, and Turkey).

4 When he shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, even an hundred and fourscore days. [180 days]

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

1:5 SEVEN DAYS.

Four Groups of Seven in Esther

- | | |
|--------------------------|------|
| 1. Seven days of fasting | 1:5 |
| 2. Seven chamberlains | 1:10 |
| 3. Seven princes | 1:14 |
| 4. Seven maidens | 2:9 |

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

1:6 BEDS. Rather, "*couches*" on which the guests would recline during their meals.

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

8 And the drinking was according to the law; none did compel: for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house that they should do according to every man's pleasure.

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

1:9 VASHTI (vash'-ti; from the Persian meaning beautiful woman), was the subordinate queen or royal favorite of the Persian king Xerxes. The principal wife of Xerxes was his cousin Amestris, who survived him.

10 On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king,

1:10 MEHUMAN (me-hu'-man; faithful), was one of the seven eunuchs of Ahasuerus of Persia. He was commanded to bring Queen Vashti to the royal court for exhibition, c. 478 BC.

1:10 BIZTHA (biz'-thah; eunuch, double gift), was one of the seven eunuch chamberlains of King Xerxes (486-465 BC). He was instructed to bring Queen Vashti before the court for a shameful exhibition.

1:10 HARBONA, HARBONAH (har-bo'-nah; the bald man; ass driver), was one of the seven chamberlains of King Ahasuerus who encouraged the hanging of Haman.

1:10 BIGTHA (big'-thah; gift of God), was one of seven chamberlains who served King Xerxes (486-465 BC) and was instructed to bring Queen Vashti to a particular banquet for shameful display.

1:10 ABAGTHA (a-bag'tha; Heb. 'avaghetha'; father of the winepress), was one of the seven eunuchs who ministered as a chamberlain in the court of King Ahasuerus. One of his duties was to supervise the king's harem.

1:10 ZETHAR (ze'-thar; smiter, slayer), was the chamberlain of the King Ahasuerus of Persia, c. 480 BC.

1:10 CARCAS (car'-cas; vulture), was the seventh of seven chamberlains or eunuchs who ministered to King Ahasuerus and was told to bring the queen before the court for shameful purposes, c. 483 BC.

11 To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on.

1:11 CROWN ROYAL. This was a high turban terminating in a point.

1:11 VASHTI (vash'-ti; beautiful woman), queen of the Persian king Xerxes, refused to display herself before the guests of the king when commanded to do so. In petty retaliation the king divorced her fearing social embarrassment.

12 But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him.

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

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

1:14 CARSHENA (car-she'-nah; plowman), was one of the seven princes of Persia and Media during the reign of Ahasuerus. The king asked Carshena what should be done after Queen Vashti refused to appear at the royal banquet when commanded by the king.

1:14 SHETHAR (she'-thar; star), refers to an official or a leader under the king of Persia who was allowed at will into the presence of the king.

1:14 ADMATHA (ad'-math-ah; earthy, dark-colored), was the third named son of the seven princes of Persia.

1:14 TARSHISH, THARSHISH (tar'-shish; fortress), was one of the seven princes of Persia.

1:14 MERES (me'-res; worthy), was one of the seven princes of Persia under Ahasuerus, c. 478 BC.

1:14 MARSENA (mar'-se-nah; forgetful men), was one of the seven princes of Persia and Media in the days of Ahasuerus, c. 479 BC.

1:14 MEMUCAN (mem-u'-can), was one of the seven princes in the court of Persia of Ahasuerus. It was his counsel to divorce Queen Vashti, c. 478 BC.

1:14 PERSIA (per'-she-ah). The Persian Empire was cut into provinces which were ruled over by a satrap. To assist the satraps were military and civil officials who were directly responsible to the king.

1:14 MEDIA (me-de-ah), was a mountainous country, with some rich pastoral sections. Much of the land was cold, unfruitful, and swampy.

The lush plains of the S were used as pasture land for the large herds of horses used in the cavalry.

15 What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus [486-465 BC] by the chamberlains?

16 And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that are in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus.

17 For this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not.

18 Likewise shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king's princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus shall there arise too much contempt and wrath.

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

20 And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small.

Worldly Wisdom Given on How to Discipline a Willful Woman

- Step 1. Accuse the woman of doing something wrong.
- Step 2. Magnify the transgression.
- Step 3. Create the worse case scenario as far as the consequences of the action.
- Step 4. Place the action in such a light as to produce the desired impression of the woman being in the wrong even if there were circumstances that would mitigate or even justify her behavior.

- Step 5. Presume to know exactly how others will act in a given situation.
- Step 6. Speak from the position of power and authority, not love.
- Step 7. Isolate the transgressor.
- Step 8. Take away all visible means of power, privilege and support.
- Step 9. Slander her personally.
- Step 10. Remain out of touch with reality by thinking to know how others will respond to legalism's reign of fear.

21 And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan:

1:21 pleased the king. An evil philosophy and practice will always find a pleased response in the hearts of those who are of their father the devil.

22 For he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that it should be published according to the language of every people.

1:22 every man should bear rule in his own house. The continual success of worldly wisdom is found in part in the concept that it often incorporates a spiritual truth. It is the will of God that men should bear rule in their own homes. The divine design was established in the Garden of Eden. However, when the right to rule is not tempered with grace and love and knowledge then the undergirding law of the Lord becomes a license for tyranny.

Leader's Study Guide

Esther 1

Questions and Answers

1. Who was Ahasuerus?

Answer.

Ahasuerus (a-has-u-e'-rus), is identified with the Persian king Xerxes (486-465 BC), the son of Darius I the Great.

2. How many days total did all the celebration last?

Answer. 180 days plus 7 more for a total of 187 days.

3. What was the main charge brought against Queen Vashti?

Answer.

“She hath not performed the commandment of the king.”

4. List the groups of sevens found in the book of Esther.

Answer.

There are four groups of seven in Esther.

- Seven days of fasting 1:5
- Seven chamberlains 1:10
- Seven princes 1:14
- Seven maidens 2:9

5. List the worldly wisdom in disciplining a willful woman.

Answer.

- Step 1. Accuse the woman of doing something wrong.
- Step 2. Magnify the transgression.
- Step 3. Create the worse case scenario as far as the consequences of the action.

- Step 4. Place the action in such a light as to produce the desired impression of the woman being in the wrong even if there were circumstances that would mitigate or even justify her behavior.
- Step 5. Presume to know exactly how others will act in a given situation.
- Step 6. Speak from the position of power and authority, not love.
- Step 7. Isolate the transgressor.
- Step 8. Take away all visible means of power, privilege and support.
- Step 9. Slander her personally.
- Step 10. Remain out of touch with reality by thinking to know how others will respond to legalism's reign of fear.

Personal Reflection and Application

1. Was queen Vashti justified in refusing to come before the king's guest when summoned? Why?
2. Have you ever had an occasion to stand for principle over expediency? If so please share how your Christian conviction led you to take a stand for righteousness.
3. Reflect upon the counsel given to the king by the wise men. Are you surprised by what was suggested to him? Explain.
4. Why was the king "*pleased*" with the counsel given to him by his counselors?
5. Is it possible that a royal decree or any legal authority can force women to be submissive to their husbands if they have a mind to move in a different direction? What is the role of a Christian woman to be towards her husband and in the home?

Memory Work

Esther 1: 22 For he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that it should be published according to the language of every people.

ESTHER 2

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

2:1 After these things. History records that Xerxes made an expedition into Greece only to be defeated at the Battle of Platea in the sixth year of his reign (480 BC). After returning to Greece Xerxes indulged his licentious passions (Herodotus ix. 108).

2:1 AHASUERUS (a-has-u-e'-rus), is identified with Xerxes (486-465 BC), the son of Darius I the Great. The events surrounding Esther, Haman's plot against the Jews, and the rescue of the same take place during AHASUERUS' reign.

2:1 VASHTI (vash'-ti; beautiful woman), was the lovely queen of the Persian king Xerxes. When Vashti became disgusted at her husband's behavior during a feast she refused to obey his command to appear before the guest. Xerxes divorced his wife and made young Esther queen.

2 Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king:

3 And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hege the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given them:

2:3 SHUSHAN (shu-shan; lily), SUSA, refers to a city of the Babylonians which was probably named from the lilies that grow in the area. It was one of the capitals of the Persian Empire during the days of Darius the Great.

2:3 HEGE, HEGAI (he'-gahee; meditation, word), refers to the eunuch in charge of the harem of Xerxes, 473 BC.

4 And let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so.

Worldly Wisdom Given on How to Please a Selfish Monarch

- Step 1. Study the emotional mood swings of the sovereign.
- Step 2. Appeal to his sensual lust patterns.
- Step 3. Set before him a dream of seduction.
- Step 4. Encourage the usage of his royal power.

- Step 5. Gather the trophies of his power before his eyes for consideration.

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

2:5 JEW, refers to one belonging to the tribe or to the kingdom of Judah (2 Kings 16:6; 25:25).

2:5 MORDECAI (mor'-de-cahee; "belonging to Merodach" [a Babylonian deity]), was the son of Jair, a descendant of the Benjamite Kish.

2:5 JAIR (ja'ur; one who enlightens), was the father of Mordecai, Esther's uncle, c. 518 BC.

2:5 SHIMEI (shim'-e-i; a renowned one), SHIMI, SHIMHI, was a Benjamite, the grandfather of Mordecai who brought up Esther (2:5).

2:5 KISH (kish; a bow), was the great-grandfather of Mordecai (Esther 2:5), c. BC 748. He was from the tribe of Benjamin.

2:5 BENJAMITE (ben'-ja-mite), refers to a descendant of Benjamin the son of Jacob (1 Sam. 9:21; 22:7).

6 Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.

2:6 CAPTIVITY. This event took place in the year 599 BC Ahasuerus began his reign in 486 BC. The difference is a period of 113 years. Even if Mordecai had been carried into captivity as a child he would have been more than 120 years old when he was appointed to his high position by the king.

2:6 JEHOIACHIN (je-hoy'-a-kin; Jehovah has appointed, Jehovah will establish), JECONIAH, CONIAH, was the son of Jehoiakim. He succeeded his father as the nineteenth king of Judah (2 Kings 24:8; 2 Chron. 36:9).

2:6 NEBUCHADNEZZAR (neb-u-kad-nez'-zar; O god Nabu, protect my son), was the king of the Babylonian Empire. Nebuchadnezzar succeeded his father Nabopolassar as king in 605 BC and continued his father's attempts to conquer the surrounding nations.

2:6 BABYLON (bab'-il-un), was the ancient capital of the Babylonian empire. The "*Canon of Ptolemy*" provides a succession of the monarchies of Babylon from 747 BC to 331 BC when Alexander the Great conquered the last Persian ruler.

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

HADASSAH (ha-das'-sah; myrtle), is the earlier Jewish name of Esther.

2:7 ESTHER (est'-thur; Venus) was the daughter of Abihail of the tribe of Benjamin. She was a very beautiful Jewish maiden and an orphan.

2:7 UNCLE'S DAUGHTER (2:7). The father of Esther was Abihail (2:15). Abihail was the brother of Jair and an uncle to Mordecai. This made Esther a cousin to Mordecai.

8 So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women.

9 And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, which were meet to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women.

10 Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew it.

11 And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her.

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

2:12 to go in to king Ahasuerus. The meaning of this language is sexual in nature. It was the practice of the king to engage in a one night liaison with the virgins.

2:12 MYRRH, refers to a slightly fragrant, bitter-tasting gum resin. It is used in making incense perfume, anointing oil, embalming fluid, and medicine (Matt. 2:11; John 19:39).

13 Then thus came every maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house.

14 In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name.

2:14 SHAASHGAZ (sha-ash'-gaz; servant of the beautiful), was an eunuch or chamberlain in court of Ahasuerus (Xerxes), king of Persia and husband of Esther, c. 478 BC (Esth. 2:14).

15 Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her.

2:15 ABIHAIL (ab-e-ha'-il; father of might; mighty) was the father of Esther and uncle of Mordecai c. BC 500 (Esth. 2:15; 9:29).

2:15 HEGAI (he'-gahee), HEGE, was one of the leading servants in the household of Ahasuerus, the king of Persia. He was a eunuch in charge of overseeing the royal harem.

16 So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

2:16 TEBETH (te'-beth), is the tenth month (December-January) of the Hebrew religious calendar (Esther 2:16), having 29 days. Farm season: rainy winter months.

2:16 SEVENTH YEAR. A period of four years had passed between the repudiation of Vashti in the third year of Ahasuerus and the evaluation of Esther to be queen. It is possible that his campaign against Greece took place during this time.

17 And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.

2:17 VASHTI (vash'-ti), was the queen of the Persian king Xerxes. The king divorced Vashti when she did not obey his foolish and wicked command (Esther 1:9).

18 Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king.

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

2:19 VIRGINS WERE GATHERED. This was the second gathering of virgins (2:8) for the custom of polygamy prevailed even after Esther was made queen.

20 Esther had not yet shewed her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him.

21 In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.

2:21 BIGTHAN (big'-than), BIGTHANA, was one of the chamberlains of King Xerxes who was exposed by Mordecai as being part of a conspiracy against the king. He was hanged (Esther 6:2).

2:21 TERESH (te'-resh; firm, solid) was one of the two eunuchs whose plot to kill Ahasuerus was discovered by Mordecai. Teresh was executed by hanging.

22 And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told it unto Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king thereof in Mordecai's name.

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

2:23 HANGED ON A TREE. The two criminals were impaled on a stake, and the circumstances recorded in the *Book of the Chronicles of the Kingdom*.

Leader's Study Guide

Esther 2

Questions and Answers

1. What was the original name of Esther and what does her name mean?

Answer.

Hadassah which means "myrtle."

2. What relation did Esther have to Mordecai?

Answer.

Esther was a cousin to Mordecai.

3. How did Mordecai gain favor with the king?

Answer.

He uncovered an assassination plot against Ahasuerus. The assassins were immediately executed.

4. On what basis did Esther become the new queen of the Persian people?

Answer.

The king fell in love with Esther and made her queen in place of Vashti.

5. Explain the purpose of Esther's feast and its providential significance.

Answer.

Esther's feast was simply a wedding celebration. In the providence of God it was during this celebration that Mordecai was able to learn about an assassination plot against the king. In all matters, in every incident God was working all things together for good.

Personal Reflection and Application

1. Is the story of a sexual liaison with a pagan king by a daughter of the covenant being the basis for the survival of the Jewish people shocking?
2. The *Bible* strongly condemns sexual sins. Were the actions of Esther sinful? Why or why not?
3. Comment on the concept that what is wrong today can be right tomorrow.
4. Do you think the love of Ahasuerus for Esther was authentic?
5. Was Esther wise or wrong for concealing her covenantal Jewish heritage even when instructed to do so? Explain.

Memory Work

Esther 2: 17 And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.

ESTHER 3

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

3:1 AHASUERUS (a-has-u-e'-rus; king), is the king of Persia known to history as Xerxes who reigned from 486 B.C to 465 BC.

3:1 HAMAN (ha'-man; celebrated), was the wicked prime minister during the reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes I), king of Persia (485-464 BC).

3:1 HAMMEDATHA (mah-med'-a-thah), was the father of Haman. Hammedatha was usually referred to as the "Agagite," a title of the kings of the Amalekites (Esth. 3:10; 8:5).

3:1 AGAGITE (ag'-ag-ite; of Agag). This term is a synonym for an Amalekite who descended from the ancient kings of that people, whose royal title was Agag (Num. 24:7; 1 Sam. 15:9).

2 And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence.

3:2 MORDECAI (mor'-de-cahee; "belonging to Merodach" [a Babylonian deity]), resided at Shusham in Persia during the days when Xerxes desired an heir to Queen Vashti.

3 Then the king's servants, which were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment?

3:3 MORDECAI (mor'-de-cahee), had responsibility for Hadasseh (Esther), who was his adopted daughter.

4 Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand: for he had told them that he was a Jew.

3:4 HE WAS A JEW. The custom of falling down to earth before a personage of dignity was not prohibited to the Jews (cf. 2 Sam. 14:4; 18:28; 1 Kings 1:6). The underlining concern was that the Persians regarded the homage performed to nobility as an act of honoring a divine being. This is something that no devout Jew would consider doing.

5 And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath.

6 And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai.

**Characteristics of an Ungodly Political
Worldly Wiseman**

- There is the gift of articulation.
- There is political insight.
- There is the ability to flatter those who hold the keys to power.
- There is ambition.
- There is excessive personal pride that is easily offended when slighted.
- There is a determination to dominate others.
- There is the willingness to retaliate and hurt all opponents real or imagined.

7 In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar.

3:7 FIRST MONTH (NISAN), refers to March/April.

3:7 NISAN (ni'-san), is the first month of the Hebrew sacred calendar, (originally called ABIB), March-April, marking the beginning of the barley harvest.

3:7 PUR (poor), pl. PURIM (a lot). Pur is mentioned only (Esther 3:7; 9:24, 26) in connection with Haman's consulting the astrologers to decide upon the best time for destroying the Hebrews. Today, the term is identified with a Jewish festival commemorating the divine deliverance of the Jews by Queen Esther from a general destruction plotted by Haman.

3:7 THEY CAST PUR. In the first month, the month of NISAN (Mar/Apr), lots were immediately cast, one after another, for all the days and all the months of the year in order that a favorable day might be found to exterminate the Jews.

3:7 TWELFTH MONTH, refers to the month ADAR (Feb/Mar).

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

9 If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king's treasuries.

10 And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy.

3:8-10 the Jews' enemy. The attempt to destroy the Jews has been part of the angelic conflict since God made a covenant with Abraham. The purpose of this satanic assault upon the Jews is to frustrate the plan of God, but it will not succeed. The holocaust of World War II was designed to be the Final Solution of the alleged Jewish problem. While it failed the murderous attempts of modern Arab nations has taken up the cause. Openly have Palestinians and Iranian leaders stated a national intention to eliminate Israel from off the face of the globe. The Jews have many enemies.

11 And the king said unto Haman, The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee.

3:11. seemeth good to thee. It has been said that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Haman is given absolute power to perform an act of genocide against the Jewish people. The basis for his hostile action was his personal pride had been offended. However, this fact was cleverly covered with a political agenda of protecting the king. Evil is never honest in its stated intentions for it seeks to appear to be noble in its endeavors.

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

3:12 KING'S LIEUTENANTS. The 127 provinces of the Persian Empire were divided into 20 satrapies or jurisdictional territories (cf. Esther 8:9; 9:3; and Ezra 8:36).

3:12 KING'S RING. The reference is to a seal-ring bearing the symbol of the king. It served as both seal and signature.

13 And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey.

3:13 ADAR (a'-dar; dark, cloudy) is the twelfth month (February-March) of the Babylonian calendar also used by the Hebrew calendar (Esther 3:13; 8:12), having 29 or 30 days.

3:13 in one day. Evil is ruthless in its application and spares neither the young nor the old, the rich nor the poor.

14 The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, that they should be ready against that day.

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

3:15 POSTS. The ancient historian Xenophon states that Cyrus had established a consistent system of posts and couriers throughout the Persian Empire. Herodotus (viii. 98) describes the system as it was developed under Xerxes between Susa and the extreme provinces.

3:15 perplexed. Evil does not care what emotional turmoil it induces in others.

3:15 SHUSHAN (shu-shan; lily), SUSA, refers to a city in Elam which was the capital of the Persia empire (Neh. 1:1; Dan. 8:2). The Persian kings came to reside in Shushan for the winter. The Greeks called this place Susa.

Leader's Study Guide

Esther 3

Questions and Answers

1. Who was Haman?

Answer.

Haman was the wicked prime minister during the reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes I), king of Persia (485-464 BC).

2. Why was Haman angry at Mordecai?

Answer.

Mordecai refused to bow before Haman or show him proper reverence.

3. List the characteristics of an ungodly political worldly wiseman.

Answer.

- There is the gift of articulation.
- There is political insight.
- There is the ability to flatter those who hold the keys to power.
- There is ambition.
- There is excessive personal pride that is easily offended when slighted.
- There is a determination to dominate others.
- There is the willingness to retaliate and hurt all opponents real or imagined.

4. List the provisions for genocide the king gave in his royal decree.

Answer.

On the 13th of Adar (February-March) every Jew was to be put to death “*both young and old, little children and women, in one day*”.

5. How did the people react in the city of Shushan when the royal decree was posted?

Answer. The people were perplexed which means they were alarmed and distressed.

Personal Reflection and Application

1. Was Mordecai right or wrong not to bow before Haman or show him reverence?
2. Do you think that most people are prejudiced and racist? Why or why not? What are the characteristics of a racist?
3. Why does evil hide itself and seek to appear noble in its stated objectives?
4. Reflect on the nature of evil and describe at least five characteristics of evil from the text.
5. Reference is made to the casting of lots (Esther 3: 7) for the purpose of finding a suitable day to put the Jews to death. Should Christians cast lots for any reason? Should Christians gamble even as a game or for pleasure? Why or why not?

Memory Work

Esther 3: 5 And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath. 6 And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai.

ESTHER 4

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

4 :1 MORDECAI (mor'-de-cahee). In the providence of the LORD it was Mordecai who was able to expose the plot of Haman to liquidate all the Jews (Esth. 2:5-7; 3-8).

4 :1 SACKCLOTH. This was a hairy garment.

2 And came even before the king's gate: for none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.

3 And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

A Natural Response to an Unjust Law

- Mourning
- Fasting
- Weeping
- Wailing
- Putting on of sackcloth and ashes

4: 3 FASTING, refers to the voluntary abstaining of food for religious reasons. The Law required only one fast (Lev. 16:29f) per year. Self imposed fasts would last for various lengths of time. David vowed not to eat until sundown (2 Sam. 3:35) and later did not eat for seven days (2 Sam. 12:16-20). Moses and Jesus fasted for forty days and nights (Ex. 34:28; Matt. 4:2).

4 So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told it her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him: but he received it not.

5 Then called Esther for Hatach, one of the king's chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and gave him a commandment to Mordecai, to know what it was, and why it was.

4 :5 HATACH (ha'-tak; eunuch), was a eunuch in the palace of king Xerxes. He was appointed to wait on Esther.

6 So Hatach went forth to Mordecai unto the street of the city, which was before the king's gate.

7 And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and of the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them.

4 :7 HAMAN (ha'-man; celebrated) was a prime minister of Persia during the days of Ahasuerus. When Mordecai refused to bow to Haman, Haman sought to destroy him and his family, as well as all of the Jews in the Persian Empire.

8 Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to shew it unto Esther, and to declare it unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her people.

4 :8 SHUSHAN (shu-shan; lily), SUSA, refers to a city in Elam which was the capital of Persia. It was located in the fertile valley on the left bank of the Choaspes River called Ulai (Dan. 8:2, 16).

9 And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

10 Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai;

4 :10 ESTHER (est'-thur; Venus) was the daughter of Abihail of the tribe of Benjamin. Esther was among those carried into captivity about 600 B. C. that chose to remain in Persia rather than go back to Jerusalem. Her Jewish name was Hadassah, which means "myrtle" (Esth. 2:7).

11 All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.

4 :11 put to death. The laws of the land forbid anyone to come into the presence of the king uninvited. Death was the penalty for violation of this law apart from the king holding out a golden sceptre of life.

4 :11 GOLDEN SCEPTRE. From existing sculptures the sceptre may have been a long staff, probably of wood, overlaid with gold.

12 And they told to Mordecai Esther's words.

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

4 :13 JEW (Heb. yehudi, Gk. Ioudaios), is the name used to designate the Hebrew race. The word was not used prior to the writings of the prophet Jeremiah.

14 For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

4: 14

Two Persuasive Arguments to Help

- No one is safe in the presence of evil.
- In God's providence Esther may have been placed in her unique position to help her people.

15 Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer,

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

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

Leader's Study Guide

Esther 4

Questions and Answers

1. What reaction did Mordecai have to the news of the royal decree to kill the Jews?

Answer.

Mordecai tore his clothes, put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city to cry publically with a loud and bitter voice.

2. Explain the significance of the golden sceptre.

Answer.

The laws of the land forbid anyone to come into the presence of the king uninvited. Death was the penalty for violation of this law apart from the king holding out a golden sceptre of life.

3. Define the word "Jew."

Answer.

The word "Jew" (Heb. yehudi, Gk. Ioudaios), is the name used to designate the Hebrew race. The word was not used prior to the writings of the prophet Jeremiah (627 – 580 BC).

4. What two arguments did Mordecai present to Esther to enlist her help on behalf of the Jews?

Answer.

- No one is safe in the presence of evil.
- In God's providence Esther may have been placed in her unique position to help her people.

5. Having determined to help her people what was the final state of mind of Esther?

Answer.

"If I perish, I perish."

Personal Reflection and Application

1. Do you believe that fasting is a valid practice for Christians today? Have you ever fasted over a situation?
2. Comment on the following thought concerning how Esther came to be queen of the Persian Empire. *“The process was wrong but the end product was precious.”*
3. Have you ever been tempted to remain silent in a situation that needed to be protested? Why were you silent? If you spoke out, what finally compelled you to say something?
4. Did you find the two arguments compelling Mordecai used to encourage Esther to speak out on behalf of her people? Is there another argument you might have presented to her for motivation?
5. Esther resigned herself to an uncertain fate saying, *“If I perish, I perish.”* Have you faced an uncertain future by way of sickness, financial loss or a broken relationship whereby you had to cast yourself upon the mercy and sovereignty of God? Please share that situation.

Memory Work

Esther 4: 15 Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer, 16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.

Leader’s Supplemental Material

Doctrine of Fasting

1. Fasting refers to the voluntary abstaining from food for religious purposes.
 - *Esther 4:3 And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.*
 - *Daniel 6:18 Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of musick brought before him: and his sleep went from him.*
 - *Matthew 15:32 Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.*

- *Luke 2:37 And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.*
 - *Acts 14:23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.*
 - *2 Corinthians 6:5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;*
2. Fasting was common among God's people. While much fasting became ineffectual (Isa 58:3-9), a solemn fast elicited the grace and mercy of God (Est. 4:16).
- *Isaiah 58:3-9 Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. 4 Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. 5 Is it such a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD? 6 Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? 7 Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? 8 Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward. 9 Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;*
 - *Est 4:16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.*
3. Fasting was commonly accompanied by the refusal to drink wine or water or both. Fasting was also accompanied by:
- abstaining from work. *Leviticus 16:29 And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you:*
 - not using a razor or touching the dead. *Numbers 6:5 All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separateth himself unto the LORD, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow.*

- assembling. *Numbers 29:7 And ye shall have on the tenth day of this seventh month an holy convocation; and ye shall afflict your souls: ye shall not do any work therein: Nehemiah 9:1 Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them.*
 - pulling the hair on the head. *Ezra 9:3 And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished.*
 - Weeping. *Judges 20:26 Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.*
 - and mourning. *2 Samuel 1:12 And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword.*
 - presenting of an offering. *Leviticus 23:27 Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD. Judges 20:26 Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. Jeremiah 14:12 When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence.*
 - pouring out water. *1 Samuel 7:6 And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.*
 - tearing of the clothes. *2 Samuel 1:11 Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that were with him:*
 - putting on sackcloth. *1 Kings 21:27 And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.*
 - covering oneself with ashes. *Daniel 9:3 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:*
 - refusing to talk *2 Samuel 12:16-20 David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth.*
4. In the early Church, The Didache (1:3) urged fasting for one's enemies as a means of showing grace towards them

- *Psalms 35:13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.*

5. People in the Bible fasted for a variety of reasons:

- as an expression of sorrow. *1 Chronicles 10:12 They arose, all the valiant men, and took away the body of Saul, and the bodies of his sons, and brought them to Jabesh, and buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh, and fasted seven days.*
- as a sign of repentance. *1 Kings 21:27 And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly. 28 And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 29 Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house.*
- in order to seek the Lord's grace. *Esther 4:15 Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer, 16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.*

6. Fasting, prayer, and the giving of alms were three acts of devotion that were highly respected in the early Church. They are often mentioned together.

- *Luke 5:33 And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink?*
- *Luke 18:12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.*
- *Acts 10:31 And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.*

7. For a while, the early Church may have observed the fast on the Day of Atonement as the Law required (Lev. 16:29ff). In the Didache (8:1) the Christians were instructed to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays.

8. Though the Law of Moses commanded only one fast on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29ff), other fasts were added to commemorate traumatic moments in Hebrew history such as the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and the murder of Gedaliah.

- *Leviticus 16:29 And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you:*

ESTHER 5

1 NOW it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house.

5: 1 ESTHER (est'-thur; Venus) was the daughter of Abihail of the tribe of Benjamin. She and her uncle lived at Shushan the palace.

5:1 THE THIRD DAY. The counting must start from the day of the transaction between the queen and Mordecai (4:14); the first day being that on which it took place. The fasting would have begun about midday and on the third day, Esther went to the king. The fast lasted about 40-45 hours.

2 And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre.

3 Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? And what is thy request? It shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.

4 And Esther answered, If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him.

5: 4 HAMAN (ha'-man; celebrated), the prime minister of Persia.

5 Then the king said, Cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther hath said. So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

5:1-5 the banquet. The *Bible* teaches that if any lack wisdom they can pray and ask God for guidance and wisdom will be given. *James 1:5* *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.* While she fasted and prayed, God gave Esther courage to appear before the king, and wisdom to request a private banquet be held with the guest of honor being Haman. This approach aroused the curiosity of the king who was anxious to give Esther whatever her heart desired; it also prepared the way to expose the evil character of Haman.

6 And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition? And it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? Even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed.

7 Then answered Esther, and said, My petition and my request is;

8 If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do to morrow as the king hath said.

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

5: 9 MORDECAI'S (mor'-de-cahees; related to Marduk), is the name of two men in the Old Testament. This Mordecai was one of the Jewish captives who returned with Zerubbabel from the Babylon Captivity (Ezra 2:2; Neh. 7:7).

10 Nevertheless Haman refrained himself: and when he came home, he sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife.

11 And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king.

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

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

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

5: 14 ZERESH (ze'-resh; gold or the joyful one), was the wife of Haman the Agagite who first suggested the hanging of the Jew Mordecai (Esther 5:14; 6:13).

Leader's Study Guide

Esther 5

Questions and Answers

1. What did Ahasuerus (Xerxes) promise to give Queen Esther?

Answer.

Esther was promised whatever she wanted even to “*half of the kingdom*”.

2. What was the initial request of Esther?

Answer.

Esther asked that a banquet be held for the king and Haman, with Haman being the guest of honor.

3. What mixed reaction did Haman have when invited to the private banquet with the king?

Answer.

Haman was excited about being invited to the private banquet until he saw Mordecai near by. His demeanor changed from gladness to anger for he hated this Jew.

4. Who was the first to suggest that a gallows be built to execute Mordecai?

Answer.

Zeresh, the wife of Haman was the first to suggest that a gallows be erected to execute Mordecai.

5. How high was the gallows to be constructed?

Answer.

The gallows on which Mordecai was to be executed were fifty cubits or 75 feet high.

Personal Reflection and Application

1. Do you believe that Esther displayed personal courage in going before the king? Have you ever had an occasion to exercise the courage of your convictions? Please share.
2. Was Esther being wise not to rush in and make her true request known? Was she being wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove? Comment.
3. Can you identify with Haman in having someone you did not like spoil a happy occasion by their presence?
4. If Haman represents spiritually the fleshly part of man, what are some of the negative characteristics that still linger in the soul?
5. The anger of Haman led to attempted murder of Mordecai. What did Jesus have to say about wounded pride and anger in the heart according to Matthew 5:21? *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: 22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire? Do you hate anyone?*

Memory Work

Esther 5: 2 And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre.

ESTHER 6

1 ON that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king.

6:1 could not the king sleep. The principle of Romans 8:28 is clearly manifested in the providential event which now unfolds rapidly. The sleepless king will read of the exploits of Mordecai on his behalf leading to a reward for this faithful Jew and ultimately the salvation of the race in the Persian Empire.

2 And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.

6: 2 MORDECAI (mor'-de-cahee), may have been born in Babylonia during the years of the Babylonian Captivity of the Jewish people. He was a resident of Susa (Shushan), the Persian capital during the reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes I), the king of Persia (486-465 BC).

6: 2 BIGTHAN (big'-than; giving meat), BIGTHANA, was one of the chamberlains of King Xerxes who was exposed by Mordecai as being part of a conspiracy against the king. He was hanged (Esther 2:21).

6: 2 TERESH (te'-resh; firm, solid) was one of the two eunuchs in the reign of Xerxes (Ahasuerus) whose plot to kill the king was discovered by Mordecai. Teresh was executed by hanging.

6: 2 AHASUERUS (a-has-u-e'-rus; king), was the son of Darius Hystaspis, whom he succeeded to the Persian throne, 486 BC. His mother was Atossa, the daughter of Cyrus.

3 And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him.

6:3 honour and dignity. Because it is a moral universe even the unconverted have a sense of right and wrong. Morality is for the whole human race.

4 And the king said, Who is in the court? Now Haman was come into the outward court of the king's house, to speak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.

5 And the king's servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in.

6: 5 HAMAN (ha'-man; celebrated), the prime minister of Persia, was the son of Hammedatha, an Amalekite, and a descent of Agag (Est. 3:1; 9:24).

6 So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?

6:6 more than to myself. The inflated pride of an individual will eventually be their downfall. *“The focus of health in the soul is humility, while the root of inward corruption is pride. In the spiritual life, nothing stands still. If we are not constantly growing downward into humility, we shall be steadily swelling up and running to seed under the influence of pride” (J. I. Packer).*

7 And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour,

8 Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head:

9 And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

**Worldly Honor for a
Worthy Recipient**

- The putting on of royal clothing
- The riding of the king's horse
- The wearing of the royal crown
- An honor guard of princes
- Being robed in public with formal procession to follow

10 Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken.

6:10 do even so to Mordecai. While Haman was humbled by this order of the king he was not humble. True humility does not consist of mere outward actions of subservience but of a condition of the heart.

11 Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

12 And Mordecai came again to the king's gate. But Haman hastened to his house mourning, and having his head covered.

13 And Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends every thing that had befallen him. Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto him, If Mordecai be

of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him.

6:13 ZERESH (ze'-resh; gold or the joyful one), was the wife of Haman, the Prime Minister of Persia who plotted to kill the Jews. She was the mother of ten sons who were accomplices in this scheme (Esther 5:4, 10; 6:13).

6: 13 JEWS (a person of Judah). This name was first applied to the people living in Judah when the people of Israel were divided into the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

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

Leader's Study Guide

Esther 6

Questions and Answers

1. Who were Bigthan and Teresh.

Answer.

Bigthan (big'-than; giving meat), was one of the chamberlains of King Xerxes who was exposed by Mordecai as being part of a conspiracy against the king. He was hanged (Esther 2:21).

Teresh (te'-resh; firm, solid) was one of the two eunuchs in the reign of Xerxes (Ahasuerus) whose plot to kill the king was discovered by Mordecai. Teresh was executed by hanging.

2. What does Dr. J. I. Packer say about pride?

Answer.

“The focus of health in the soul is humility, while the root of inward corruption is pride. In the spiritual life, nothing stands still. If we are not constantly growing downward into humility, we shall be steadily swelling up and running to seed under the influence of pride” (J. I. Packer).

3. What is the principle of Romans 8:28?

Answer.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

4. What did Haman suggest as a way to honor someone in whom the king delighted?

Answer.

Haman suggested the following.

- The putting on of royal clothing
- The riding of the king's horse
- The wearing of the royal crown
- An honor guard of princes
- Being robed in public with formal procession to follow

5. Who was the first to predict that Haman would fall before the Jew Mordecai and not prevail against him?

Answer.

When Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends every thing that had befallen him, his wife was the first to say unto him, *“If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him.”* Zeresh proved to be insightful.

Personal Reflection and Application

1. Do you think God has a sense of humor? Can you think of any biblical illustrations setting forth divine humor?
2. Have you ever been guilty of a moment of inordinate pride? What was the occasion? How did God humble you?
3. List five characteristics of a truly humble person. Do you know someone who displays these characteristics?
4. What are your thoughts about Zaresh, the wife of Haman?
5. Describe your impression on the friends of Haman.

Memory Work

Esther 6: 6 So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?

Leader's Supplemental Material

Doctrine of Pride

1. There are several well-known expressions of pride mentioned in the Bible and its tragic results.

- Pride contributed to the death of Ahithophel who killed himself because his counsel was not followed.

2 Sam 17:23 And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father.

- Naaman initially refused to wash in the Jordan River and so was not initially cured of his leprosy.

2 King 5:11 But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. 12 Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.

Only when he humbled himself in gospel obedience did Naaman find the healing he sought.

2 Kings 5: 13 And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean? 14 Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

- Hezekiah manifested unholy pride by displaying his resources to foreign representatives.

2 King 20:13 And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and shewed them all the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not. 2 Chr 32:31 Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart. Isaiah 39:2 And Hezekiah was glad of them, and shewed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not.

- The pride of Uzziah led him to offer an unacceptable sacrifice to the Lord.

2 Chr 26:16 16 But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense. 17 And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, that were valiant men: 18 And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God. 19 Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar.

- The pride of Haman led to anger and a desire to kill the Jews as a race only to be destroyed himself.

Esth 3:5 And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath.

Esth 5:11 And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king.

Esth 5:13 Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.

Esth 6:6 So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?

Esth 7:10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.

- The King of Tyre was destroyed for his pride.

Ezek 28:2 Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God:

- Nebuchadnezzar was proud of the works of his hands only to have it all taken from him.

Daniel 4:30-34 30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? 31 While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. 32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. 33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. 34 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: Daniel 5:20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him:

2. Pride is listed as one of the seven deadly sins.

- *Proverbs 6:16-19 These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: 17 A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, 18 An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, 19 A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.*

3. God has warned His people that He will move to break the pride of their heart, no longer answer their prayers or bless their labors.

- *Lev 26:19 And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass.*
- *Psalms 18:27 For thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks.*

4. Financial prosperity can lead to pride and a forgetting of the source of one's wealth.

- *Deut 8:11 Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: 12 Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; 13 And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; 14 Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;*
- *Deut 8:17 And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. 18 But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day. 19 And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this*

day that ye shall surely perish. 20 As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.

5. Military conquest can lead to pride.

- *1 King 20:11 And the king of Israel answered and said, Tell him, Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.*

6. Job defended himself against the pride of his three friends who came to comfort him. They thought they knew why Job was suffering affliction but they did not.

- *Job 12:2 2 No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you. 3 But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you: yea, who knoweth not such things as these?*

- *Job 13:2 What ye know, the same do I know also: I am not inferior unto you.*

7. The heart of the wicked is characterized by pride due to finding clever ways to extract money from the poor.

- *Psalms 10:2 2 The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined. 3 For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth.*

8. Pride will cause a person to not seek after God.

- *Psalm 10:4 The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. 5 His ways are always grievous; thy judgments are far above out of his sight: as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them. 6 He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity.*

8. The ability to speak in a persuasive manner can lead to a pride that tries to shut out God.

- *Psalms 12:4 Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?*

ESTHER 7

1 SO the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen.

7:1 AHASUERUS (a-has-u-e'-rus; king), the king of Persia, for the fondness he felt for Esther, allowed the Jews to defend themselves because he could not reverse his earlier decree.

7:1 HAMAN (ha'-man; celebrated), was the prime minister of Persia who found a way to eliminate all the Jews of the empire. He was able to obtain a royal decree but through divine intervention and the influence of Esther his plans were not carried out. He was hanged on the very gallows that had been prepared for Mordecai.

2 And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition, queen Esther? And it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? And it shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom.

7:2 what is thy petition? This is the third time the king has inquired of Esther what her petition might be.

7:2 ESTHER (est'-thur; Venus) was the daughter of Abihail of the tribe of Benjamin. She was selected to be the next Queen of the Persian Empire after Queen Vashti was dismissed.

3 Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request:

7:3 let my life be given me. The words of Esther must have astonished the king who had no idea that so much was at stake.

7:3 AGAGITE (ag'-ag-ite; of Agag), is a synonym for an Amalekite. The epithet was used in reference with Haman the mortal enemy of Mordecai (Esther 3:1, 10; 9:24).

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

7:4 THE KINGS DAMAGE. The reference is to financial damage. If the queen and her people were merely sold into slavery, Esther would not have spoken to the king even though it would mean a loss of financial gain which the enemy [Haman] could not make up. Earlier, Haman had promised that the destruction of the Jews would be profitable (cf. Esther 4:7).

5 Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?

6 And Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen.

7:6 Then Haman was afraid. No longer proud and arrogant, Haman was terrified at the implication of what he had done with his program of genocide.

7:5-6 this wicked Haman. It is not wrong to specifically identify the wicked and call them by name.

7 And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath went into the palace garden: and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king.

8 Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther was. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.

7:8 Will he force the queen. When passions are high, and anger is excessive, even innocent acts are misinterpreted. While Haman was not guilty of trying to seduce the queen, he was guilty of greater sins. There are times when God is pleased to punish what appears to be an innocent transgression because of his knowledge of deeper and darker sins in the soul.

9 And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon.

7:9 HARBONAH (har-bo'-nah; the bald man; ass driver), was one of the seven chamberlains of King Ahasuerus who encouraged the hanging of Haman (Esth. 1:10; 7:9).

7:9 MORDECAI (mor'-de-cahee), was the nephew of Abihail who died (Esth. 2:5). Mordecai took his orphaned cousin, Hadassah (Esther), and became her adoptive father (Esth. 2:7).

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

Leader's Study Guide

Esther 7

Questions and Answers

1. How many times did the king inquire what the petition of Esther might be?

Answer.

Three times he asked Esther what was the desire of her heart.

2. After the queen accused Haman of trying to kill her what was his emotional response?

Answer.

No longer proud and arrogant, Haman was terrified at the implication of what he had done with his program of genocide.

3. Explain what Esther meant when she referred to the king's damage.

Answer.

The reference is to financial damage. If the queen and her people were merely sold into slavery, Esther would not have spoken to the king even though it would mean a loss of financial gain which the enemy [Haman] could not make up. Earlier, Haman had promised that the destruction of the Jews would be profitable (cf. Esther 4:7).

4. Though Haman was not guilty of trying to seduce the queen, he was accused of that and executed. Why did God allow such a punishment to proceed?

Answer.

There are times when God is pleased to punish what appears to be an innocent transgression because of his knowledge of deeper and darker sins in the soul.

5. Who suggested that Haman be hanged on the gallows made for Mordecai?

Answer.

Harbonan, one of the seven chamberlains of King Ahasuerus encouraged the hanging of Haman (Esth. 1:10; 7:9).

Personal Reflection and Application

1. Is it wrong to identify the wicked by name? Explain.
2. Why was the gallows built so high? Do you think divine justice was accomplished when Haman hung on his own gallows?
3. Have you ever suffered being innocent of the accusation but you knew that God was judging some other sin in your soul that had not been exposed? What was your response to the situation?
4. Have you ever misjudged someone's actions? What was the result of that situation?
5. Was the anger of the king towards Haman justified? Is there a place for righteous anger in life? Defend your answer with a biblical response.

Memory Work

Esther 7: 3 Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request:

ESTHER 8

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

8:1 HAMAN (ha'-man; celebrated), was the chief minister of King Ahasuerus (Est. 3:1) who hated the Jews and were hated by them. The Jews would hiss whenever his name was mentioned on the day of Purim.

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

8:1-2 The personal possessions of Haman were given to Esther who turned them over to Mordecai.

3 And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews.

8:3 AGAGITE (ag'-ag-ite; of Agag). This term is a synonym for an Amalekite. It was used in reference with Haman the mortal enemy of Mordecai (Esther 3:1, 10; 8:3,5; 9:24).

4 Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king,

8:4 the golden scepter. This is the second time the golden scepter was extended to Esther. The Christian is reminded there is a spiritual golden scepter extended towards the believer called the privilege of prayer whereby the King of kings and Lord of lord might be petitioned. *Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

5 And said, If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the king's provinces:

8:5 HAMMEDATHA (mah-med'-a-thah), was the father of Haman. Hammedatha was usually referred to as the "Agagite," a title of the kings of the Amalekites (Esth. 3:1,10).

6 For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? Or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?

7 Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews.

8 Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse.

8:8 may no man reverse. The king did not grant the specific request of Esther to reverse the order to destroy the Jews on the fixed date for the law allowed no reversal of the king's order.

9 Then were the king's scribes called at that time in the third month, that is, the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth day thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which are from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces, according to their language.

8:9 SIVAN, refers to the third month (May-June) of the Hebrew sacred calendar, consisting of 30 days.

8:9 MORDECAI (mor'-de-cahee), was the one who discovered the plot of two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, who conspired to assassinate King Ahasuerus by saving the king's life (Esth. 2:21-22), Mordecai's good deed was recorded in the royal chronicles of Persia (Esth. 2:23).

8:9 ETHIOPIA (e-the-o'-pe-ah; burnt), CUSH, refers to the country in Africa, S of Egypt. The Ethiopians often fought as mercenaries in the Egyptian army (2 Chr. 12:3).

JEW (a man of Judah). The destruction of the people for disobedience was foretold (Lev. 26:33, 39; Deut. 4:27; Isa. 6:12; 11:11, 12).

8:9 INDIA, refers to the subcontinent of S central Asia. A great civilization flourished in the Indus Valley as early as the 3rd millennium BC. During the 2nd millennium BC the Aryans entered India through mountain passes in the NW.

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

11 Wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey,

**Principles of a Just War
as Suggested by
Augustine and Thomas Aquinas**

- War must involve an authorized authority.
- War must have a just cause such as an unprovoked attacked.
- War must have a rightful intention such as self defense or the glory of God.
- War must be waged along the least possible means of harm.
- War must have as its stated goal the restoration of peace.

12 Upon one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, namely, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar.

13 The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, and that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.

14 So the posts that rode upon mules and camels went out, being hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment. And the decree was given at Shushan the palace.

15 And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad.

16 The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour.

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

Leader's Study Guide

Esther 8

Questions and Answers

1. What happened to the personal possessions of Haman?

Answer.

The personal possessions of Haman were given to Esther who turned them over to Mordecai.

2. What is the spiritual significance of the golden scepter?

Answer.

The Christian is reminded there is a spiritual golden scepter extended toward the believer called the privilege of prayer, whereby the King of kings and Lord of lords might be petitioned. *Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

3. What specific request did Esther petition of the king?

Answer.

Esther asked the king to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews.

4. Did the king grant the specific request of Esther? If not, why not?

Answer.

The king did not grant the specific request of Esther to reverse the order to destroy the Jews on the fixed date for the law allowed no reversal of the king's order.

5. What did the king grant the Jews?

Answer.

The king granted the Jews permission to defend themselves against any and all enemies that would destroy them.

Personal Reflection and Application

1. Why do you think the Persians had a law not allowing a royal reversal of a decision?
2. Do you believe Christians should be pacifists? If you do, what biblical arguments would you set forth to defend this position?
3. Is it more just for those who could do something to defend against murder and rape and robbery to do nothing, than to resist even with force these evils? Why or why not?
4. Should Christians serve in the military in any capacity? Why or why not?
5. Consider the arguments for a just war. Do you agree or disagree with these principles?

Memory Work

Esther 8: 6 For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? Or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?

Leader's Supplemental Material

Doctrine of War

1. The symbol of war is a red horse.
 - *Revelation 6:4 And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.*
2. War between Satan and his demons and the angels of God once took place in heaven.
 - *Revelation 12:7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,*
3. Though war is horrible, God has approved it on certain occasion.
 - *2 Samuel 22:35 He teacheth my hands to war; so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.*
 - *Psalms 144:1 A Psalm of David. Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.*
4. Civil war has always been part of the history of nations.

- Judges 12:1-6
- Judges 20
- 2 Samuel 2:12-31
- 2 Samuel 3:1
- 2 Sam. 20
- 1 Kings 14:30
- 1 Kings 16:21
- Isaiah 19:2

5. There are times when war is prohibited.

- *2 Chronicles 11:4 Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren: return every man to his house: for this thing is done of me. And they obeyed the words of the LORD, and returned from going against Jeroboam.*

6. Sometimes war can be and should be averted as per Joshua 22:11-34.

7. In times of war much foolish boasting takes place.

- 2 Kings 18:19-36
- 2 Chron. 13:4-12

8. War leads to terrible acts of violence including the extermination of the enemy.

- Numbers 31:7-17
- Deuteronomy 2:33-34
- Deuteronomy 20:13-18
- Joshua 6:21,24
- Joshua 8:24-25
- Joshua 10:2-40
- 1 Samuel 15:3-9
- 1 Samuel 27:8-11

9. Some wars are considered by God to be justified.

- *Exodus 14:13-14 And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. 14 The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.*
- *Deuteronomy 3:21-22 And I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, Thine eyes have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto these two kings: so shall the LORD do unto all the kingdoms whither thou passest. 22 Ye shall not fear them: for the LORD your God he shall fight for you.*

- *1 Samuel 17:45 Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.*
 - *Psalms 18:34 He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.*
10. God will not hesitate to use war as a form of severe divine judgment against His enemies and even against His own.
- *Exodus 23:24 Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images.*
 - *Leviticus 26:17 And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you.*
11. War is repulsive to God. Because David was a violent man he was not allowed to build the Holy Temple.
- *1 Chronicles 22:8-9 But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight. 9 Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days.*
12. War brings fear and panic to a people.
- *Exodus 15:14-16 The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. 15 Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. 16 Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased.*
13. Since all things are in the hands of our sovereign God, He is free to threaten defeat in war for the unrighteous.
- *Deuteronomy 32:25 The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs.*
 - *1 Samuel 2:10 The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.*

- *Isaiah 30:15-17 For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not. 16 But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and, We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift. 17 One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one; at the rebuke of five shall ye flee: till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on an hill.*
14. Prior to going to war, individuals are wise to receive counsel (Josh. 22:10-34; Judges 7:10-11; 2 Sam. 16:20; 17:1-15; Psa. 48:4-7; Rev. 11:14; 20:18).
 15. Wisdom is required in war (Prov. 21:22; 24:6; Eccl. 9:14-18; Luke 14:31-32).
 16. War causes great agitation (Amos 2:2).
 17. Many are killed or neglected in times of war including innocent women and children (Isa. 14:19; 18:6).
 18. The evils of war are numerous (2 Sam. 2:26; Psa. 46:8; Isa. 3:25-26; 5:39-30; Jer. 4:19-31; Amos 6:9-10).
 19. One day God will cause all wars to cease (Psa. 46:9; Isa. 2:4; Micah 4:3).
 20. Until Christ comes there will be wars and rumors of war (Matt. 24:6; Mark 13:7; Luke 21:9).
 21. Warfare is used in a figurative way to speak of the spiritual conflicts of the saints.
 22. Spiritual warfare is not after the flesh (2 Cor. 10:3).
 23. Christians are to wage a good spiritual warfare before God (1 Tim. 1:18-19).
 24. Spiritual warfare is called "*the good fight of faith*" (1 Tim. 6:12).
 25. The believer fights against many things:
 - the devil (Gen. 3:15; 2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 1:12; James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8; Rev. 12:17).
 - the flesh (Rom. 7:23; 1 Cor. 9:25-27; 2 Cor. 12:7; Gal. 5:17; 1 Pet. 2:11).
 - spiritual enemies (Psa. 38:19; 56:2; 59:3).
 - the world (John 16:33; 1 John 5:4-5).
 - death (1 Cor. 15:26; Heb. 2:14-15).
 26. One part of the spiritual warfare of the believer is emotional in nature as opposition arises from friends or families (Micah 7:6; Matt. 10:35-36).
 27. The spiritual war that the Christian engages in is carried on:

- under Christ who is the Captain of the faith (Heb. 2:10).
 - under the banner of the Lord (Psa. 60:4).
 - with great faith (1 Tim. 1:18-19).
 - with a pure conscience (1 Tim. 1:18-19).
 - with a heart which is steadfast in the sphere of faith (1 Cor. 16:13; 1 Pet. 5:9; Heb. 10:23).
 - with due consideration (1 Cor. 16:13; 1 Pet. 5:8).
 - with sobriety (1 Thess. 5:6; 1 Pet. 5:8; Jude 1:3).
 - with a mindset willing to endure hardness (2 Tim. 2:3,10).
 - with a spirit of self-denial (1 Cor. 9:25-27).
 - with absolute confidence in God (Psa. 27:1-3).
 - with earnest prayer (Psa. 35:1-3; Eph. 6:18).
 - without earthly entanglements (2 Tim. 2:4).
28. Those who merely profess a Christian faith will not persevere in the hour of spiritual conflict (Isa. 9:3).
29. Because every believer has been enlisted in the spiritual conflict of the ages he must engage the enemy and stand firm (Phil. 1:30; Eph. 6:13-14)
30. The saints are exhorted to be zealous in war (1 Tim. 6:12; Judge 1:3).
31. In the hour of battle there is
- comfort (Isa. 4:11-12; 51:12; Micah 7:8; 1 John 4:4; 2 Cor. 7:5-6).
 - divine help from the Father (Psa. 118:13; Isa. 41:13-14).
 - divine protection (Psa. 40:7).
 - strength from God (Psa. 20:2; 27:14; Isa. 41:10).
 - strength from Christ (2 Cor. 12:9; 2 Tim. 4:17).
 - divine deliverance (2 Tim. 4:18).
32. In all things there is to be thanksgiving (Rom. 7:25; 1 Cor. 15:57).
33. Spiritual war requires protective armour
- The belt of truth (Eph. 6:14).
 - The breastplate of righteousness (Eph. 6:14).
 - The preparation of the gospel (Eph. 6:15).
 - The shield of faith (Eph. 6:16).
 - The helmet of salvation (Eph. 6:17; 1 Thess. 5:8).
 - The sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17).
 - Called "the armor of God" (Eph. 6:11).
 - Called "the armor of righteousness"
 - (2 Cor. 6:7).
 - Called "the armor of light" (Rom. 13:12).

34. The armor which the Christian wears is

- not carnal (2 Cor. 10:4).
- mighty through God (2 Cor. 4-5).
- required (Eph. 6:13).
- must be put on. (Rom. 13:12; Eph. 6:4). To be on the right hand and left, an idiom meaning "to attack "and to defend" (2 Cor. 6:7).

35. Strategic victory in spiritual war is from God (1 Cor.15:57; 2 Cor. 2:14). Every victory that is won shall be won

- through Christ (Rom. 7:25; 1 Cor. 15:57; 2 Cor. 12:9; Rev. 12:11).
- by faith (Heb. 11:33-37; 1 John 5:4-5).
- over the Devil (Rom. 16:20; 1 John 2:14).
- over the flesh (Rom. 7:24; Rom. 1:25; Gal. 5:24).
- over the world (1 John 5:4-5).
- over all that exalts itself (2 Cor. 10:5).
- over death and the grave (Isa. 25:8; 26:19; Hos. 13:14; 1 Cor. 15:54-55).
- triumphant (Rom. 8:37; 2 Cor. 10:5).

34. Those who overcome in spiritual warfare will

- eat of the hidden manna (Rev. 2:17).
- eat from the Tree of Life (Rev. 2:7).
- be clothed in white clothing (Rev. 3:5).
- be pillars in the temple of God (Rev. 3:12).
- sit with Christ on his throne (Rev. 3:21).
- have a white stone, and in it a new name written (Rev. 2:17).
- have power over the nations (Rev. 2:26).
- have the name of God written upon them by Christ (Rev. 3:12).
- have God as their God (Rev. 21:7).
- have the Morning Star (Rev. 2:28).
- inherit all things (Rev. 21:7).
- be confessed by Christ in the presence of God the Father (Rev. 3:5).
- be sons of God (Rev. 21:7).
- not be hurt by the Second Death (Rev. 2:11).
- not have their names blotted out of the Book of Life (Rev. 3:5).

ESTHER 9

1 NOW in the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them;)

9:1 ADAR (a'-dar; dark, cloudy), is the twelfth month (February-March) of the Hebrew calendar (Esther 3:13; 8:12), borrowed from the Babylonian calendar during the exile, having 29 or 30 days. On the 14th and 15th of this month the Feast of Purim was kept to commemorate divine deliverance of the Jews from annihilation by the hands of Haman (Esther 9:21).

2 The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon all people.

9:2 AHASUERUS (a-has-u-e'-rus). Violence was not new to the kingdom of this Persian king. In 480 BC. Ahasuerus led a grand army against Greece only to see his fleet defeated by a smaller number of Greek ships at Salamis. The next year, 479 BC, his general Mardonius allowed a slaughter that repulsed the Persian invasion. These events led Ahasuerus to seek comfort in his harem and set the stage for the civil unrest that came because of the hostility towards the Jews.

3 And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews; because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them.

9:3 MORDECAI (mor'-de-cahee), was a loyal Jew evidenced by his refusing to bow to Haman, the egotistical official who was second in command to the king (Esth. 3:2,5). According to Herodotus, the Greek historian Herodotus, when the Persians bowed before their king, they paid honor to him as a god. Mordecai would not bow.

4 For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater.

5 Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them.

9:5 JEWS (a person of Judah). Following the Babylonian Captivity, all the descendants of Abraham were called "Jews."

6 And in Shushan the palace the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men.

9:6 SHUSHAN (shu-shan; lily), SUSA, refers to a city in Elam which was the capital of Persia. Many Jews resided here during the days of Darius the Great. From Shushan were sent the group that replaced those who were deported from Samaria (Ezra 4:9).

7 And Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and Aspatha,

9:7 PARSHANDATHA (par-shan'-da-thah; inquisitive, inquiring, given by prayer), was the eldest of the ten sons of Haman killed by the Jews in Shushan (Esther 9:7).

9:7 DALPHON (dal'-fon), was the second of the ten sons of Haman. He was killed by the Jews on the thirteenth day of Adar.

9:7 ASPATHA (as'-pa-thah) was the third of the sons of Haman to be killed by the Jews.

8 And Poratha, and Adalia, and Aridatha,

9:8 PORATHA (por'-a-thah; fruitful), was one of the ten sons of Haman the Agagite. He was killed by the Jews in the palace at Shushan, c. 509 BC.

9:8 ADALIA (ad-al-i'-jah; I shall be drawn up of Jah; one that draws water; poverty; cloud; death), was the fifth of the ten sons of Haman who were hanged along with their father due to a conspiracy plot (Esther 9:8).

9:8 ARIDATHA (a-rid'-a-thah) was the sixth son of Haman who was hanged by the Jews in the city of Babylon.

9 And Parmashta, and Arisai, and Aridai, and Vajezatha,

9:9 PARMASHTA (par-mash'-tah; superior), was one of the ten sons of Haman killed by the Jews in Shushan (Esther 9:9).

9:9 ARISAI (a-ris'-a-i) was the eighth of the ten sons of Haman to be hanged by the Jews in Babylon c. BC 480.

9:9 ARIDAI (a-rid'-a-i) was one of the ten sons of Haman who was hanged by the Jews in the city of Babylon.

9:9 VAJEZATHA (va-jez'-a-tha; son of the atmosphere, sprinkling the chamber), was one of the ten sons of Haman who was hanged by the Jews in Shushan after the plot against the Jews was exposed (Est. 9:9).

10 The ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, slew them; but on the spoil laid they not their hand.

9:10 HAMAN (ha'-man; celebrated), an Agagite, was exalted by the Persian king to the highest official position. He demanded ostentatious reverence from court followers. When Mordecai did not bow before him, Haman sought his death and the death of all the Jews in the empire (Est. 7:10; 9:7-10).

9:10 HAMMEDATHA (mah-med'-a-thah), was the father of Haman. Hammedatha was usually referred to as the "Agagite," a title of the kings of the Amalekites (Esth. 3:1,10; 8:5).

11 On that day the number of those that were slain in Shushan the palace was brought before the king.

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

9:12 ESTHER (est'-thur; Venus) was the daughter of Abihail of the tribe of Benjamin. She was used by God to deliver her people from the madness of men who wanted to kill all the Jews. This event is still celebrated in the Feast of Purim. Purim means "lots." The feast lasts two days because Haman cast lots to determine the time which would be most profitable for his plans (Esth. 3:7). The feast is celebrated on the 14th and 15th days of the month of Adar.

13 Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan to do to morrow also according unto this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows.

9:13 JEWS (a man of Judah), is the name used to designate the Hebrew race. At first, the term was used to speak of someone belonging to the tribe of Judah or to the two tribes which formed the Southern Kingdom (2 Kings 16:6; 25:25).

14 And the king commanded it so to be done: and the decree was given at Shushan; and they hanged Haman's ten sons.

15 For the Jews that were in Shushan gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day also of the month Adar, and slew three hundred men at Shushan; but on the prey they laid not their hand.

16 But the other Jews that were in the king's provinces gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives, and had rest from their enemies, and slew of their foes seventy and five thousand, but they laid not their hands on the prey,

17 On the thirteenth day of the month Adar; and on the fourteenth day of the same rested they, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

18 But the Jews that were at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth day thereof; and on the fourteenth thereof; and on the fifteenth day of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

19 Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwelt in the unwalled towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar a day of gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another.

9:19 SENDING PORTIONS ONE TO ANOTHER (9:19). It is the custom in the East to send portions from a feast to those who are unable to attend, especially to relatives and friends in adverse circumstances (Neh. 8:10, 12).

20 And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that were in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, both nigh and far,

21 To stablish this among them, that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly,

22 As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day: that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.

23 And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them;

24 Because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that is, the lot, to consume them, and to destroy them;

9:24 AGAGITE (ag'-ag-ite; of Agag), is a term used for an Amalekite. It was used in reference with Haman the mortal enemy of the Jews (Esther 3:1, 10; 8:3,5; 9:24).

25 But when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.

26 Wherefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur. Therefore for all the words of this letter, and of that which they had seen concerning this matter, and which had come unto them,

9:26 PUR (poor), is the plural of PURIM which means "a lot" (Esther 3:7; 9:24).

27 The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing, and according to their appointed time every year;

28 And that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed.

29 Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all authority, to confirm this second letter of Purim.

9:29 ABIHAIL, (ab-i-ha'il; father of might), the father of Esther the Jewess. The king of Persia, Ahasuerus, made her queen instead of Vashti (Esth. 2:15).

9:29 PURIM (pu'rim), is the Jewish festival commemorating the divine deliverance of the Jews by Queen Esther from a general holocaust inspired by Haman. Instead of Haman's killing of the Jews, the Jews were able to exact justice by executing Haman and his sons. Purim is celebrated on the 14th and 15th days of the month of Adar. Haman cast lots (purim) in order to decide which day he should put into effect the decree of the king authorizing for the extermination of the Jews. Purim has been characterized among the Jews as a time for reading the book of Esther, praising her while cursing Haman, and giving gifts to the poor.

30 And he sent the letters unto all the Jews, to the hundred twenty and seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, with words of peace and truth,

31 To confirm these days of Purim in their times appointed, according as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had enjoined them, and as they had decreed for themselves and for their seed, the matters of the fastings and their cry.

32 And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim; and it was written in the book.

9:32 WRITTEN IN THE BOOK. May refer to the "*Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia*" (cf. 2:23; 6:1; 10:2).

Leader's Study Guide

Esther 9

Questions and Answers

1. List the ten sons of Haman and tell what happened to them

Answer.

The ten sons of Haman that were hung on the gallows were the following: Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai and Vajezatha,

2. According to Esther 9:16 how many enemies of the Jews were killed?

Answer.

At least seventy and five thousand people died in this civil war between the Jews and the Persians.

3. Explain what “*sending of portions*” has reference to.

Answer.

The sending of portions refers to the custom in the East to send portions from a feast to those who are unable to attend, especially to relatives and friends in adverse circumstances (Neh. 8:10, 12).

4. Give the name of Esther's father.

Answer.

The name of Esther's father was Abahail.

5. Explain the meaning of Purim and how it is celebrated.

Answer.

PURIM (pu'rim) is the Jewish festival commemorating the divine deliverance of the Jews by Queen Esther from a general holocaust inspired by Haman. Instead of Haman's killing of the Jews, the Jews were able to exact justice by executing Haman and his sons. Purim is celebrated on the 14th and 15th days of the month of Adar. Haman cast lots (purim) in order to decide which day he should put into effect the decree of the king authorizing for the extermination of the Jews. Purim has been characterized among the Jews as a time for reading the book of Esther, praising her while cursing Haman, and giving gifts to the poor.

Personal Reflection and Application

1. Does the request of Esther that the ten sons of Haman be hung surprise you? Why or why not? How would you treat your mortal enemies given a chance?
2. Is it wrong to celebrate the defeat of one's enemies?
3. Should *New Testament* era Christians celebrate the ancient Jewish festivals including Purim, Passover etc? Why or why not?
4. Comment on the following thought: *"If you have nothing worth dying for you really have nothing worth living for?"*
5. Can you make a distinction between the Jews fighting for their lives, the Palestinians fighting for what they believe to be their land and the Arabs waging a Jihad to convert the world to the Islamic faith? Explain your answer.

Memory Work

Esther 9: 2 The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon all people.

ESTHER 10

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

10:1 AHASUERUS (a-has-u-e'-rus), though a violent and petty man, allowed a measure of justice to take place when he brought shame and disgrace to Haman and his ten sons and made Mordecai his prime minister after allowing the Jews to protect themselves.

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

10:2 MORDECAI (mor'-de-cahee), was used of God to help save his people from utter extinction. This whole event is celebrated by the annual feast of Purim (Esth. 9:26-32).

10:2 MEDIA (me'-de-ah), refers to the people of the land of Media. The area was located on the W and to the S of the Caspian Sea. It was bounded on the W by the Zagros Mountains, on the N by the Araxes and Cyrus rivers, on the E by Hyrcania and on the S by Susiana or Elam.

10:2 PERSIA (per'-she-ah), refers to a land bordered by Media on the N, the Persian Gulf on the S, Elam on the W, and Carmania on the E.

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

10: 3

A Man Named Mordecai

- Mordecai was second in command in Persia
- He was well respected among the people
- Mordecai was interested in promoting economic wealth among the Jews
- He was able to speak wisdom and peace to his people

10:2 JEWS (a man of Judah), is the name used to designate the Hebrew race in general and in particular the kingdom of Judah (2 Kings 16:6; 25:25; Jer. 32:12; 38:19; 40:11; 41:3).

Esther 10

Questions and Answers

1. What did Ahasuerus impose upon the people?

Answer.

Ahasuerus imposed a tribute or tax upon all those within his domain.

2. In which book are the exploits of Mordecai recorded?

Answer.

The exploits of Mordecai are recorded in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia.

3. What exalted position did Mordecai enjoy in the Persian Empire?

Answer.

Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus.

4. Define the term Jew.

Answer.

The term Jew refers literally to someone from the tribe of Judah. The name was then used to designate the Hebrew race in general and in particular the kingdom of Judah (2 Kings 16:6; 25:25; Jer. 32:12; 38:19; 40:11; 41:3).

5. List the accomplishments and characteristics of Mordecai.

Answer.

- The second in command in Persia
- Well respected among the people
- Interested in promoting economic wealth among the Jews
- Able to speak wisdom and peace to his people

Personal Reflection and Application

1. Should Christians pay taxes? Why or why not. Consider the words of Jesus in Matthew 22:21 *They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.*
2. It has been said that some people are born great, some people achieve greatness and some people have greatness thrust upon them. Into which category would Mordecai fall? Explain.
3. After reflecting upon the character of Mordecai can you identify with him? Answer yes or no.
 - Do you hold a position of social importance?
 - Are you respected among the people who know you?
 - Do you try to promote the economic interest of others?
 - Are you able to communicate wisdom and words of peace to others?
4. Who is your favorite character in the book of Esther? Why?
5. Is there anything in the narrative of Esther that has surprised or disturbed you? Please share.

Memory Work

Esther 10: 3 For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.