

Esther Chapter 9 (Greek) / 5 (Hebrew)

Greek Esther 9:1-16 – Addition 4 – Esther Obtains Favor

Following her prayer, we see Esther put on an air of confidence as she sheds her mourning garments and dons her royal apparel. What larger aspect of the story does this wardrobe change signify?

This is Esther trusting that God will take care of it. She accepts that she is the one chosen for the task, but does not yet know exactly how it will happen. So she dons culturally appropriate apparel and sets out to execute the plan she made with Mordecai.

Despite seeming confidence, verse 5 tells us that she was afraid and verse 6 tells us why. “He was very dreadful” and “he looked very fiercely upon her” to the point that she fainted from fear. Compared to Haman’s day before the king in chapter 5, what does this section reveal?

The king was not in a pleasant mood. This was one of those days where he might kill anyone who came into his sight without being called, possibly even his wife. Even her glorious apparel was not enough to soften his gaze.

Verse 8 is where Addition 4 finds its purpose. It starts, “Then God changed the spirit of the king into mildness.” What theological truth does this tell the reader?

With all their planning, Esther and Mordecai could not save God’s people. Salvation is not won through works, but a gift given by God. Even as a beautiful, wealthy queen of Persia, Esther’s fate still ended up entirely in God’s hands.

So Ahasuerus, now full of concern, leaps to catch his wife and holds onto her until her fainting has passed. Once she comes to, he speaks words of kindness to her. He calls himself her “brother” which is a common term of endearment at the time, one used most frequently in Song of Solomon.

In Esther 9:10, the king reveals something shocking. What is it and why is it shocking?

Esther will not die for coming unannounced because the edict doesn’t apply to royalty. “General” here refers to the king’s subjects, the people. This is shocking because we know what happened to Vashti. The king acts on a whim, regardless of edict, and even Haman knew that in his careful planning. So for the king to say, “Don’t worry, it doesn’t apply to you,” is not necessarily accurate. What this does, however, is show God working in the heart of Ahasuerus to not let anything get in the way of His plan.

Esther responds to the king saying she “saw [him]... as an angel of God”. Knowing that Ahasuerus is not an angel of God (in fact, he’s quite close to the opposite), what could this mean?

1. *Esther saw the Angel of Yahweh come down and work in the king’s heart.*

2. *Esther was given a vision by God so she would know the right thing to say to win the king’s favor.*

There is the possibility God just gave her the right words to speak, but that would require Esther lying to the king about what she saw, which wouldn’t fit with how God works.

This addition ultimately serves to reveal that it's not "luck" that Esther and Mordecai's plan succeeded, but God working both through the king and through Esther.

Greek Esther 9:17-24 / Hebrew 5:1-8 – Esther's Hesitance

Verses 17-18 are not necessary in the Greek because Addition 4 explains it in detail, but since the LXX does not remove or replace any of the Hebrew Esther, we find the repeated section in these verses.

After the whole ordeal in Addition 4, Esther is given the opportunity to make a request of the king. What does she ask for? Why?

First she asks him to come to her feast with Haman. She clearly wants Haman to be present so when she confronts the king about his edict, Haman would not be able to weasel his way out. 1. He would be surprised and not prepared for the accusation. 2. Esther could refute any lies Haman might tell the king.

Despite seeming confident, how does Esther's fear betray her and manifest itself in this section?

She is unable to find the courage to tell the king about Haman's plan during the first banquet. She has to delay and ask for a second banquet.

Despite responding in fear, Esther comes up with a safe backup plan (the second banquet). This is a safe request because Esther (and everyone) know the king loves to be honored.

Greek Esther 9:25-30 / Hebrew 5:9-14 – Haman's Anger Builds

The first night of banquet ends with Haman leaving happy. This reveals that the one crack in Haman's plan still hasn't been fixed. What is that crack?

He doesn't perceive Esther as a threat. Or even more general, he doesn't know Esther, and knowledge is power in the world of schemes.

Haman's joy quickly dissipates when he passes Mordecai who still refuses to obey him. This leads Haman to bring it up at his family gathering that evening. He recounts the ways that he has been blessed, but admits they all mean nothing to him because of Mordecai. This leads to a critical error by Haman. What is that error?

Haman listens to his wife's suggestion and agrees with it. In his anger, he could not let his plan play out. He had to take one more step to humiliate Mordecai. That deviation from the plan will be the second half of Haman's downfall (with Esther's favor before the king being the first).

Take note of the fact that Esther's original hesitance pushes back her request by one day. That combined with Haman's plan at the end of chapter 9 will be an important chronological detail in the coming chapter.