

Esther

- “for such a time
as this”

-part three

Ladies' Bible Study
Wyldwood Baptist Church
398 Union Chapel Road
Cedar Creek, TX 78612



Esther 8:1-8

1 That same day King Ahasuerus awarded Queen Esther the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. Mordecai entered the king's presence because Esther had revealed her relationship to Mordecai.

2 The king removed his signet ring he had recovered from Haman and gave it to Mordecai, and Esther put him in charge of Haman's estate.

3 Then Esther addressed the king again. She fell at his feet, wept, and begged him to revoke the evil of Haman the Agagite, and his plot he had devised against the Jews.

4 The king extended the gold scepter toward Esther, so she got up and stood before the king.

5 She said, "If it pleases the king, and I have found approval before him, if the matter seems right to the king and I am pleasing in his sight, let a royal edict be written. Let it revoke the documents the scheming Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the king's provinces.

6 For how could I bear to see the disaster that would come on my people? How could I bear to see the destruction of my relatives?"

7 King Ahasuerus said to Esther the Queen and to Mordecai the Jew, "Look, I have given Haman's estate to Esther, and he was hanged on the gallows because he attacked the Jews.

8 You may write in the king's name whatever pleases you concerning the Jews, and seal it with the royal signet ring. A document written in the king's name and sealed with the royal signet ring cannot be revoked."

The suddenness of Haman's execution and his inability to prevent it is unnerving! The awarding of the executed person's property to the injured party was usual procedure. And almost immediately, Mordecai is brought into the King's presence and given the signet ring!

What a reversal of events! It was the first time Mordecai had seen the Queen in person for 5 years and the first time he was brought into the Palace! But does all this change the decree? No, the lives of the Jews are still forfeit.

Now Esther falls at the feet of the King, weeping and pleading for their lives. She knows the decree cannot be revoked, but she uses the same wording as before, **"If it pleases the King...if I have found approval...if it seems right...if I am pleasing in his sight..."**

As is typical of King Ahasuerus, he abdicates his power in this situation and gives Esther and Mordecai permission to do as they please.



Esther 8:9-14

9 On the twenty-third day of the third month (that is, the month Sivan), the royal scribes were summoned. Everything was written exactly as Mordecai ordered for the Jews, to the satraps, the governors, and the officials of the 127 provinces from India to Cush. The edict was written for each province in its own script, for each ethnic group in its own language, and to the Jews in their own script and language.

10 Mordecai wrote in King Ahasuerus's name and sealed the edicts with the royal signet ring. He sent the documents by mounted couriers, who rode fast horses bred from the royal racing mares.

11 The king's edict gave the Jews in each and every city the right to assemble and defend themselves, to destroy, kill, and annihilate every ethnic and provincial army hostile to them, including women and children, and to take their possessions as spoils of war.

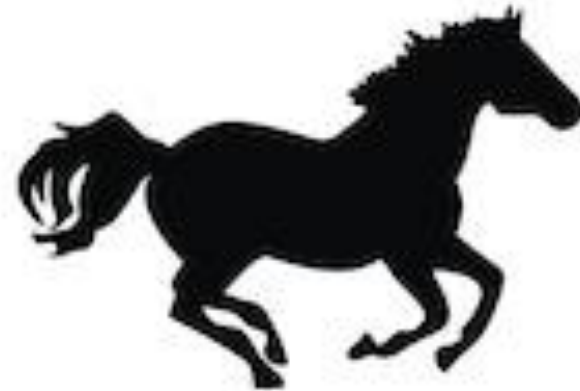
12 This would take place on a single day throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month Adar.

13 A copy of the text, issued as law throughout every province, was distributed to all the peoples so the Jews could be ready to avenge themselves against their enemies on that day.

14 The couriers rode out in haste on their royal horses at the king's urgent command. The law was also issued in the fortress of Susa.

Hooves pounding, dust flying, this time the decree goes out to all 127 provinces on the fastest horses available! The sense of urgency is great to ensure that the Jews knew that they could defend themselves against Haman's edict.

Mordecai's decree intentionally mirrors the language of Haman's using the same three words: **destroy, kill, annihilate**. **But what is the difference between the two decrees? The Jews were now able to defend themselves, to the death, if necessary.**



Esther 8:15-17

15 Mordecai went from the king's presence clothed in royal purple and white, with a great gold crown and a purple robe of fine linen. The city of Susa shouted and rejoiced,

16 and the Jews celebrated with gladness, joy, and honor.

17 In every province and every city, wherever the king's command and his law reached, joy and rejoicing took place among the Jews. There was a celebration and a holiday. And many of the ethnic groups of the land professed themselves to be Jews because fear of the Jews had overcome them.

Mordecai is now truly honored as a hero in Susa. His garments are meant to remind us the Jews of the priests of the Tabernacle and Temple. No one else in the entire book of Esther is so honored in this way. This was exactly what Haman had desired so much, but never received!

The words in verses 16-17 are Hebrew words of lightness, as opposed to darkness: **gladness, joy and honor, joy and rejoicing, celebration and holiday.**

Whether we like it or not, the Old Testament is full of violence – even God's violence against evil nations. God's war is against sin and evil. The brutality of the book of Esther is disturbing, but we have to understand it in the full context of the Bible's big story of redemption through Jesus Christ. All of the vengeance we would wish against those who practice evil has been satisfied on the Cross! True holy war, or jihad, in human history has ceased because of Jesus' death and resurrection. Salvation does imply destruction because we are saved from the real and terrible wrath of God. Ephesians 6:12 says, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*."

Esther 9:1-10

1 The king's command and law went into effect on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month Adar. On the day when the Jews' enemies had hoped to overpower them, just the opposite happened. The Jews overpowered those who hated them.

2 In each of King Ahasuerus's provinces the Jews assembled in their cities to attack those who intended to harm them. Not a single person could withstand them; terror of them fell on every nationality.

3 All the officials of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, and the royal civil administrators aided the Jews because they were afraid of Mordecai.

4 For Mordecai exercised great power in the palace, and his fame spread throughout the provinces as he became more and more powerful.

5 The Jews put all their enemies to the sword, killing and destroying them. They did what they pleased to those who hated them.

6 In the fortress of Susa the Jews killed and destroyed 500 men,

7 including Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha,

8 Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha,

9 Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vaizatha.

10 They killed these 10 sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. However, they did not seize any plunder.

Esther is a book of reversals. In verse 1, the Hebrew word “**hapak**” means “**to overturn, to overthrow**”. **This same word is used in Genesis 3:24. God had placed a cherubim at the entrance to the Garden of Eden to guard it with a flaming sword. The flashing back and forth of the sword is this same word “hapak”. This is more evidence of God's Providence at work.**

We notice in verse 10 that the ten sons of Haman were put to death. In the Hebrew Bible, the names are written in a single column: **one**

above

the

other.

It is a very visual example of their death and execution. Also notice in verse 10 that no plunder was seized. This will be mentioned twice more in the following verses. **The issue of plunder was extremely important because of Saul's disobedience. God had directed Saul to destroy the Amalekites (Haman's ancestors) and to take NO PLUNDER, but Saul's disobedience (he claimed it was to sacrifice to God) caused Saul to lose his kingship.**

Esther 9:11-19

11 On that day the number of people killed in the fortress of Susa was reported to the king.

12 The king said to Queen Esther, "In the fortress of Susa the Jews have killed and destroyed 500 men, including Haman's 10 sons. What have they done in the rest of the royal provinces? Whatever you ask will be given to you. Whatever you seek will also be done."

13 Esther answered, "If it pleases the king, may the Jews who are in Susa also have tomorrow to carry out today's law, and may the bodies of Haman's 10 sons be hung on the gallows."

14 The king gave the orders for this to be done, so a law was announced in Susa, and they hung the bodies of Haman's 10 sons.

15 The Jews in Susa assembled again on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and killed 300 men in Susa, but they did not seize any plunder.

16 The rest of the Jews in the royal provinces assembled, defended themselves, and got rid of their enemies. They killed 75,000 of those who hated them, but they did not seize any plunder.

17 They fought on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar and rested on the fourteenth, and it became a day of feasting and rejoicing.

18 But the Jews in Susa had assembled on the thirteenth and the fourteenth days of the month. They rested on the fifteenth day of the month, and it became a day of feasting and rejoicing.

19 This explains why the rural Jews who live in villages observe the fourteenth day of the month of Adar as a time of rejoicing and feasting. It is a holiday when they send gifts to one another.

A second day of revenge and killing is proclaimed. We are not told the reason and many commentators have wondered. Esther seems to have changed character. Even though it is stressed that NO PLUNDER was taken, it is still a dark episode.

Whether or not Esther was justified in extending the killing for a second day, it brings to mind the failure of Israel to wage war against the moral and spiritual darkness of pagan worship.

Karen Jobes in her commentary on Esther writes, "But we live in the new covenant period where no one is worthy to wage true holy war in God's name. God's strategy against sin and evil depended on the perfect warrior, who could execute divine justice with clean hands and a pure heart. His name is Jesus".

Just as the story began and continued with feasting, we conclude with more celebrations. However, notice that the Jews did not commemorate the day of battle, but **the day of REST from battle**, an important distinction. It was to be a day of rejoicing and feasting and gifts.

Esther 9:20-28

20 Mordecai recorded these events and sent letters to all the Jews in all of King Ahasuerus's provinces, both near and far.

21 He ordered them to celebrate the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month Adar every year

22 because during those days the Jews got rid of their enemies. That was the month when their sorrow was turned into rejoicing and their mourning into a holiday. They were to be days of feasting, rejoicing, and of sending gifts to one another and the poor.

23 So the Jews agreed to continue the practice they had begun, as Mordecai had written them to do.

24 For Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them. He cast the Pur (that is, the lot) to crush and destroy them.

25 But when the matter was brought before the king, he commanded by letter that the evil plan Haman had devised against the Jews return on his own head and that he should be hanged with his sons on the gallows.

26 For this reason these days are called Purim, from the word Pur.

Because of all the instructions in this letter as well as what they had witnessed and what had happened to them,

27 the Jews bound themselves, their descendants, and all who joined with them to a commitment that they would not fail to celebrate these two days each and every year according to the written instructions and according to the time appointed.

28 These days are remembered and celebrated by every generation, family, province, and city, so that these days of Purim will not lose their significance in Jewish life and their memory will not fade from their descendants.

The feast of Purim is not prescribed in the Torah, (neither is Hanukkah). But verse 27 says the Jews bound themselves to celebrate these two days “each and every year” and the reason is given in verse 28 “so that these days of Purim will not lose their significance in Jewish life and their memory will not fade from their descendants”.



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Today Purim is celebrated around the end of February or beginning of March in accordance with the Jewish calendar. It is a time of feasting, gifts and celebration. A favorite food are apricot cookies in the shape of a triangle, called “Hamantaschen” or Haman Hats.

Esther 9:29-32

29 Queen Esther daughter of Abihail, along with Mordecai the Jew, wrote this second letter with full authority to confirm the letter about Purim.

30 He sent letters with messages of peace and faithfulness to all the Jews who were in the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus,

31 in order to confirm these days of Purim at their proper time just as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had established them and just as they had committed themselves and their descendants to the practices of fasting and lamentation.

32 So Esther's command confirmed these customs of Purim, which were then written into the record.

Esther 10:1-3

1 King Ahasuerus imposed a tax throughout the land even to the farthest shores.

2 All of his powerful and magnificent accomplishments and the detailed account of Mordecai's great rank to which the king had honored him, have they not been written in the Historical Records of the Kings of Media and Persia?

3 Mordecai the Jew was second only to King Ahasuerus, famous among the Jews, and highly popular with many of his relatives. He continued to seek good for his people and to speak for the welfare of all his descendants.

The last mention of Esther is in chapter 9, verse 32. Mordecai's last mention is at the end of chapter 10.

How do you describe these last glimpses of Esther and Mordecai? It is interesting that Mordecai is given the final scene. Esther and Mordecai were not religious leaders. Mordecai was not a prophet, priest, or king. Neither one had the position or power to deliver their people and neither one had asked for this circumstance to be thrust upon them.

Nevertheless, God used them to preserve the Jewish race until the time that God entered history as the Messiah.

Acts 2:8-11 gives us a fitting conclusion with Pentecost:

"And how is it that we each hear *them* in our own language to which we were born? ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites,...both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our *own* tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God."



Banquets and Feasts in Esther

- ❖ Xerxes' banquet for the nobles of the empire (Esther 1)
- ❖ Xerxes' banquet for all men in Susa (Esther 1)
- ❖ Esther's coronation banquet (Esther 2)
- ❖ Esther's first banquet for the King and Haman (Esther 5)
- ❖ Esther's second banquet for the King and Haman (Esther 7)
- ❖ Feasting to celebrate Mordecai's promotion (Esther 8)
- ❖ First day of Purim feasting in the empire (Esther 9)
- ❖ The second day of Purim feasting in Susa (Esther 9)



Reversals in Esther

Esther is an orphan (2:7)	Esther is a Queen (2:17)
Haman is exalted (3:1-2)	Haman is killed (7:10)
Mordecai is brought low (4:1)	Mordecai is raised up (6:11)
City of Susa is confused (3:15)	City of Susa rejoices (8:16)
Jews are to be killed (3:13)	Enemies of the Jews are killed (8:11)
Haman is wealthy (5:11)	Haman is stripped of his wealth (8:2)

