

# Act 1: The Stage is Set (Esther 1-2): Ahasuerus, Vashti, Mordecai & Esther

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## Who, What, Where, When, Why

**Who:** Ahasuerus, Vashti, Mordecai & Esther

**What:** Esther 1-2

**Where:** Modern-day **Iran** (~200 miles East of Baghdad) **When:** 482 – 478 B.C. **Why:** **Romans 8:28**

Year	Event
586	The Jews deported by the Babylonians
485	Xerxes becomes king of Persia
478	Esther becomes queen of Persia

## Special Note

**[Bob Deffinbaugh: In Esther, what is not said is vitally important.]** Note that there is no mention of **God** in Esther. While His hand can be seen, His name is not mentioned—the characters do not express any dependence on Him, they do not praise Him, they do not pray to Him. All action is done as if everything depended upon human actions.

## Ahasuerus' First Feast (1:1-1:4)

**1:1** Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus (this was the Ahasuerus who reigned over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, from India to Ethiopia) [Donald Curtis: You might wonder how one gets Xerxes from Ahasuerus. Moving from the Greek to the Persian to the Hebrew to the English shows that the derivation is not as strange as might first appear: Xerxes – Xshayarshan – Achashverosh – Ahasuerus.] [David Guzik: Ahasuerus is well known to history, though more commonly under the name Xerxes. Archaeologists have discovered the ruins of the very palace these things took place in. At this time, Ahasuerus is planning for a doomed invasion of **Greece**. The Persian Empire was the largest the world had ever seen. It covered what we call today Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Jordan, Lebanon, and Israel; and parts of modern day Egypt, Sudan, Libya, and Arabia. Also at this time, Ezra had returned to Jerusalem after it had been conquered by the Babylonians. In another forty years, under the successor of Ahasuerus, Nehemiah will return to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls of the previously conquered city], **2** in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan [the **winter** residence of the Persian kings] the citadel, **3** that in the third year of his reign he made a feast for all his officials [princes, rulers, leaders, chiefs, captains, vassals, nobles, elders] and servants—the powers [strength, army] of Persia and Media, the nobles, and the princes of the provinces being before him— **4** when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty for many days, one hundred and eighty days in all.

## Ahasuerus' Second Feast (1:5-1:8)

**5** And when these days were completed, the king made a feast lasting seven days for all the people who were present in Shushan the citadel, from great to small, in the court of the garden of the king's palace [Donald Curtis: Nearly every event in Esther happens **twice**]. **6** *There were white* [David Guzik: Literally, verse 6 describes the white material as "white stuff."] *and blue* [John C. Whitcomb: White and violet were the royal colors of Persia.] *linen curtains fastened with cords of fine linen* [literally, byssus (BY-suss), a costly, fine white linen cloth made in Egypt] *and purple on silver rods and marble pillars; and the couches were of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement* [glowing live coals] *of alabaster* [red marble], *turquoise* [violet], *and white* [pearl] *and black marble*. **7** And they served drinks in golden vessels, each vessel being different from the other, with royal wine in abundance, according to the generosity [hand, strength] of the king. **8** In accordance with the law, the drinking was not compulsory; for so the king had ordered all the officers of his household, that they should do according to each man's pleasure.

## Vashti's Feast (1:9)

**9** Queen Vashti [Persian name meaning **beautiful**] also made a feast for the women *in the royal palace which belonged to King Ahasuerus*. [John Gill: Persians . . . did not allow their wives to be with them at feasts, only their concubines and harlots, with whom they could behave with more indecency.]

## Vashti's Refusal (1:10-1:12)

**10** On the seventh day, when the heart [understanding] of the king was merry [agreeable, prosperous] with wine, he commanded Mehuman [muh-hoo-MAWN, faithful], Biztha [biz-THAW, booty], Harbona [car-bo-NAW, ass-driver], Bigtha [big-THAW, in the wine-press], Abagtha [ab-ag-THAW, God-given], Zethar [zay-THAR, star], and Carcas [car-KAS, severe], seven eunuchs [officials] who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus, **11** to bring Queen Vashti before the king, *wearing her royal crown, in order to show* [exhibit, allow to be inspected] *her beauty to the people and the officials, for she was beautiful* [agreeable, prosperous] *to behold* [See [Proverbs 23:29-33](#)]. **12** But Queen Vashti refused [the sense of the verb is that it was both an intentional and repeated refusal] *to come at the king's command brought by his eunuchs; therefore the king was furious* [exceedingly angry], *and his anger burned* [consumed, to be made stupid or barbarous] *within him*. [Donald Curtis: Herodotus [a historian from this era], clearly no fan of a king that invaded his country, reported that Ahasuerus had a very bad temper. [Here is one of his accounts:] They then began to build bridges across the Hellespont . . . the Phoenicians building one of ropes made from flax, and the Egyptians building a second one out of papyrus. . . . But no sooner had the strait been bridged than a great storm came on and cut apart and scattered all their work. Xerxes flew into a rage at this, and he commanded that the Hellespont be struck with three hundred strokes of the whip and that a pair of foot-chains be thrown into the sea. . . . [whipped and chained]. He also commanded the scourgers to speak outlandish and arrogant words: "You hateful water, our master lays his judgment on you thus, for you have unjustly punished him even though he's done you no wrong! Xerxes the king will pass over you, whether you wish it or not! It is fitting that no man offer you sacrifices, for you're a muddy and salty river!" In these ways he commanded that . . . the heads be severed from all those who directed the bridging of the Hellespont.]

### Ahasuerus' Question (1:13-1:15)

**13** Then the king said to the wise men who understood the times (for this was the king's manner toward all who knew law and justice [case law], **14** those closest to him *being* Carshena [car-shin-AW, illustrious], Shethar [SHAY-thar, a star], Admatha [ad-maw-THAW, a testimony to them], Tarshish [tar-SHEESH, yellow jasper], Meres [MAY-res, lofty], Marsena [mar-sin-AW, worthy], and Memucan [mem-oo-KAWN, dignified], the seven princes of Persia and Media, who had access to the king's presence, and who ranked [lived] highest [first] in the kingdom): **15** "What shall we do to Queen Vashti, according to law, because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus brought to her by the eunuchs?"

### Memucan's Answer (1:16-1:20)

**16** And Memucan answered before the king and the princes: "Queen Vashti has not only wronged [bent, distorted, and perverted] the king, but also all the princes, and all the people who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. **17** For the queen's behavior will become known to all women, so that they will despise their husbands in their eyes, when they report, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in before him, but she did not come.' **18** This very day the noble ladies of Persia and Media will say to all the king's officials that they have heard of the behavior of the queen. Thus there will be excessive contempt and wrath. **19** If it pleases the king, let a royal decree go out from him, and let it be recorded in the laws of the Persians and the Medes, so that it will not be altered [See Daniel 6:8 for more on the irrevocability of the laws of the Medes and Persians], that Vashti shall come no more before King Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she. **20** When the king's decree which he will make is proclaimed throughout all his empire (for it is great), all wives will honor [value] their husbands, both great and small."

### Ahasuerus' Law Enacted (1:21-1:22)

**21** And the reply pleased the king and the princes, and the king did according to the word of Memucan. **22** Then he sent letters to all the king's provinces, to each province in its own script, and to every people in their own language, that each man should be master [ruler] in his own house, and speak in the language of his own people.

### Miss Persia Contest (2:1-2:4)

**2:1** After these things [David Guzik: During this time, Ahasuerus makes his great, unsuccessful invasion of Greece, and he comes home a defeated man - wanting to cheer his heart through sensual diversions], when the wrath of King Ahasuerus subsided, he remembered Vashti, what she had done, and what had been decreed against her. **2** Then the king's servants [boys] who attended him said: "Let beautiful young [of marrying age] virgins be sought for the king; **3** and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather all the beautiful young virgins to Shushan the citadel, into the women's quarters, under the custody of Hegai [hay-GAY, eunuch. David Guzik: Hegai is specifically mentioned by . . . Herodotus as being an officer of king Ahasuerus] the king's eunuch, custodian of the women. And let beauty preparations [scraping, rubbing, remedy] be given them. **4** Then let the young woman who pleases [the eye of] the king be queen instead of Vashti." This thing pleased the king, and he did so.

## Mordecai & Esther Introduced (2:5-2:7)

**5** In Shushan the citadel there was a certain Jew whose name was Mordecai [little man] the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite. **6** Kish had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives who had been captured with Jeconiah [king of Judah before he surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar and was taken captive to Babylon along with many other Jews 100 years earlier] king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. **7** And Mordecai had brought up Hadassah [Jewish name meaning myrtle], that is, Esther [Persian name meaning star], his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman was lovely [shape, form, outline] and beautiful. When her father and mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.

## Esther Favored (2:8-2:9)

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

## Esther's Concealment & Mordecai's Concern (2:10-2:11)

**10** Esther had not revealed her people [nationality] or family [circumstances of her birth], for Mordecai had charged [commanded] her not to reveal it. **11** And every day Mordecai paced in front of the court of the women's quarters, to learn of Esther's welfare and what was happening to her.

## Perfumes & Preparations (2:12-2:14)

**12** Each young woman's turn came to go in to [be introduced to] King Ahasuerus after she had completed twelve months' preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women. [Adam Clarke: These were taken out of all classes of the people, indiscriminately; consequently there must have been many who were brought up in low life. . . . Those who feed on coarse strong food, which is not easily digested, have generally a copious perspiration, which is strongly odorous; and in many . . . this odor is far from being pleasant.] **13** Thus prepared, each young woman went to the king, and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the women's quarters to the king's palace. **14** In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned to the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz [sha-osh-GAUZE, servant of the beautiful], the king's eunuch who kept the concubines. She would not go in to the king again unless the king delighted in her and called for her by name.

## Esther Named Queen (2:15-2:20)

**15** Now when the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail [ah-bee-AH-heel, my father is might] the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his daughter, to go in to the king, she requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised. And Esther obtained favor

[grace, charm, elegance] **in the sight of all who saw her. 16 So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth** [December or January], **in the seventh year of his reign** [Four years after **Esther 1:1**]. **17 The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she obtained grace and favor** [*chesed*—faithfulness and kindness] **in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. [Psalm 75:6-7: For exaltation comes neither from the east Nor from the west nor from the south. But God is the Judge: He puts down one, And exalts another.] [David Guzik: And in the outworking of His plan, God can use the evil of man - God did not make Ahasuerus drunk, or make him demand that his queen present herself in an immodest way before the lords of the kingdom; yet God allowed this wicked action of man to fulfill a purpose in His over arching plan. No person can defeat God's plan for your life, no matter what they have done to you or will do to you.] 18 Then the king made a great feast, the Feast of Esther, for all his officials and servants; and he proclaimed a holiday in the provinces and gave gifts** [tribute] **according to the generosity of a king.** [Treasury of Scripture Knowledge: Persian monarchs were accustomed to give their wives distinct **cities** and provinces for the purpose of supplying them with different articles of dress: one was assigned for ornamenting the head and neck; another provided robes, zones, etc.; and the city of Anthilla was given to a Persian queen, we read, to supply her with shoes and sandals. It is probable, therefore, that, at the desire of Esther, Ahasuerus relieved those cities and provinces that had before paid it, from this expense.] **19 When virgins were gathered together a second time, Mordecai sat within the king's gate** [the public meeting place or court]. **20 Now Esther had not revealed her family and her people, just as Mordecai had charged her, for Esther obeyed the command of Mordecai as when she was brought up by him.**

### Mordecai Foils the Assassination Attempt (2:21-2:23)

**21 In those days, while Mordecai sat within the king's gate, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan** [big-THAWN, in their wine-press] **and Teresh** [TAY-resch, strictness], **doorkeepers, became furious and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. 22 So the matter became known** [**perceived, discerned, and declared**] **to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther [1 Peter 2:17b: Fear God. Honor the king.], and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name.** [Turns out that this was not the only assassination attempt on Xerxes—he was actually assassinated later in his life] **23 And when an inquiry was made into the matter, it was confirmed, and both were hanged on a gallows** [Adam Clarke: The words may refer to their being impaled. A pointed stake is set upright in the ground, and the culprit is taken, placed on the sharp point, and then pulled down by his legs till the stake that went in at the fundament passes up through the body and comes out by the side of the neck. A most dreadful species of punishment, in which revenge and cruelty may glut the utmost of their malice. The culprit lives a considerable time in excruciating agonies.]; **and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.**

### Conclusion

1. Ahasuerus, Vashti, Mordecai and Esther really **lived**.
2. Ahasuerus, Vashti, Mordecai and Esther were not **perfect**.
3. Ahasuerus, Vashti, Mordecai and Esther were used by God to complete His plan of **redemption**.

# Act 2: The Die is Cast (Esther 3-4): Haman's Rise, Mordecai's Despise & Esther's Advice

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## Introduction (from Bible.org)

According to a recent study among doctors, their most common aggravation (next to patients who do not pay their bills) is patients who refuse to obey the doctor's orders. It is estimated that as many as 90 percent of all patients leave half-used prescription bottles, cheat on diets, continue to smoke, or never return for checkups. Often this neglect proves detrimental to the patient's health. Sometimes it's fatal. There was an incident in Israel's past which had a similar effect on the nation. In I Samuel 15 we read that God commanded Saul to eradicate the Amalekites, including their livestock and their king, Agag. Saul chose to obey God halfway, defeating the Amalekites, but sparing their leader. God condemned Saul's disregard for His command, and rejected Saul as king. The prophet Samuel then executed Agag, though apparently some of the king's descendants escaped. And so it is in the Book of Esther, some 400 years after Saul failed to obey God, that Mordecai is confronted with a descendant of Agag.

## Haman's Rise and Mordecai's Despise (3:1-3:6)

**1 After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman** [haw-MAWN, magnificent], **the son of Hammedatha the Agagite** [see **1 Samuel 15**], **and advanced him and set his seat** [can also be translated **throne**] **above all the princes who were with him** [Haman was, in effect, the king's prime **minister**]. **2 And all the king's servants who were within the king's gate bowed and paid homage to Haman, for so the king had commanded concerning him. But Mordecai would not bow or pay homage** [that things in the book of Esther frequently happen twice—this is the second time that the king's command is disobeyed—this time by Mordecai]. **3 Then the king's servants who were within the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why do you transgress the king's command?"** [Donald Curtis: **Why does Mordecai not bow down to Haman, and why does Haman overreact? Since the author of Esther makes a point of identifying Haman as an Agagite and that Mordecai was possibly of the family of Saul, the issue seems to be one of long-past grievances.**] **4 Now it happened, when they spoke to him daily and he would not listen to them, that they told** [to tell by being conspicuous] **it to Haman, to see whether Mordecai's words would stand; for Mordecai had told them that he was a Jew.** [Why would Mordecai tell these men he was a Jew when he commanded Esther not to tell?] **5 When Haman saw** [Haman is watching Mordecai] **that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath. 6 But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told** [to tell by being conspicuous] **him of the people** [nationality] **of Mordecai. Instead, Haman sought to destroy** [exterminate] **all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus—the people of Mordecai.**

## Calendars and Casting (3:7)

**7 In the first month** [Thomas Constable: **In the pagan ancient Near East it was unthinkable to make plans of this nature without astrological guidance. . . . The official casting of lots happened during the **first** month of each year to determine the most opportune days for important events., which is the month of Nisan** [March or April], **in the twelfth year** [nine years after **Esther 1:3** and 5 years after **Esther**

**2:16**] of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur [POOR] (that is, the lot [pebbles] used for systematically making decisions. See [Proverbs 16:33](#)]), before Haman to determine the day and the month, until it fell on the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar. [Haman started on day one of month one and proceeded to cast Pur for each day until it landed on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month. Very frustrating]

### A Sinister Minister (3:8-3:9)

**8** Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain [one] people [nation] [Thomas Constable: Perhaps Haman did not mention the Jews by name since Ahasuerus' predecessors . . . had issued proclamations favorable to them ([Ezra 1:1-4](#); [6:3-5](#), [8-12](#))] scattered [dispersed] and dispersed [divided, separated] among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different [changed, altered] from all other people's, and they do not keep the king's laws. Therefore it is not fitting [agreeable] for the king to let them remain [rest]. **9** If it pleases the king, let a decree be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents [round weights] of silver [1 talent = 3,000 shekels; 1 shekel = 10 grams; 1 gram = 1/28 ounce; 1 ounce = \$18; therefore the total is worth ~ \$190M as of 07/20/08. Compare [Matthew 18](#)—could Jesus have been referring to Mordecai?] into the hands of those who do the work, to bring it into the king's treasuries." [John Gill: this he proposed, to prevent any objection that might be made from the loss of tribute paid by this people to the king . . . for as to what is suggested by some, that he intended to repay himself out of the spoil of the Jews.]

### The King's Ring (3:10-3:11)

**10** So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. **11** And the king said to Haman, "The money and the people are given to you, to do with them as seems good to you."

### Law of the Land (3:12-3:15)

**12** Then the king's scribes were called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and a decree was written according to all that Haman commanded—to the king's satraps [Wikipedia: The satrap was the head of the administration of his province, and found himself surrounded by an all-but-royal court; he collected the taxes, controlled the local officials and the subject tribes and cities, and was the supreme judge of the province before whose "chair" ([Nehemiah 3:7](#)) every civil and criminal case could be brought. He was responsible for the safety of the roads (cf. Xenophon), and had to put down brigands and rebels.], to the governors who were over each province, to the officials of all people, to every province according to its script, and to every people in their language. In the name of King Ahasuerus it was written, and sealed with the king's signet ring [Why would Haman have acted so early?] [John Gill: All this Haman took care to have done so early as the thirteenth of Nisan, though the execution was not to be until the thirteenth of Adar, eleven months after; partly that there might be time enough to send the letters everywhere, even to the most distant parts; and chiefly lest Ahasuerus should change his mind, and be prevailed upon to revoke his grant; and, it may be, either to keep the Jews in continual dread, or cause them to flee.]. **13** And the letters were sent by couriers into all the king's provinces, to destroy [exterminate], to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their possessions. **14** A copy of the document was to be issued as

law in every province, being published for all people, that they should be ready for that day. **15** The couriers went out, hastened by the king's command; and the decree was proclaimed in Shushan the citadel. So the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Shushan was perplexed. [Why was the city perplexed?] [Adam Clarke Commentary: Although the Jews were the only objects of this decree, yet . . . many Persian families had, no doubt, become united by intermarriages with Jewish families, and in such a massacre they would necessarily share the same fate with the Jews.]

### Tears and Fears (4:1-4:3)

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

### Facing and Pacing (4:4-4:9)

**4** So Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her, and the queen was deeply distressed. Then she sent garments to clothe Mordecai and take his sackcloth away from him, but he would not accept *them*. **5** Then Esther called Hathach [hath-AWK, verily], *one* of the king's eunuchs whom he had appointed to attend her, and she gave him a command concerning Mordecai, to learn what and why *this was*. **6** So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square that *was* in front of the king's gate. **7** And Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries to destroy the Jews. **8** He also gave him a copy of the written decree for their destruction, which was given at Shushan, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her, and that he might command her to go in to the king to make supplication to him and plead [pity] before him for her people. **9** So Hathach returned and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

### Tradition's Prohibition (4:10-4:12)

**10** Then Esther spoke to Hathach, and gave him a command for Mordecai: **11** "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, *he has* but one law: put *all* to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days." [Jamieson-Faussett-Brown: The Persian kings surrounded themselves with an almost impassable circle of forms. The law alluded to was first enacted by Deioces, king of Media, and afterwards, when the empires were united, adopted by the Persians, that all business should be transacted and petitions transmitted to the king through his ministers. Although the restriction was not intended, of course, to apply to the queen, yet from the strict and inflexible character of the Persian laws and the extreme desire to exalt the majesty of the sovereign, even his favorite wife had not the privilege of entree, except by special favor and indulgence. Esther was suffering from the severity of this law; and as, from not being admitted for a whole month to the king's presence, she had reason to fear that the royal affections had become alienated from her, she had little hope of serving her country's cause in this awful emergency.] **12** So they told Mordecai Esther's words.

## Man's Plans (4:13-4:14)

**13 And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: "Do not think in your heart that you will escape** [slip away, be delivered] **in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. 14 For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"** ["There is a tide in the affairs of men, Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; Omitted, all the voyage of their life Is bound in shallows and in miseries." Brutus to Cassius in *The Life and Death of Julius Caesar*.] [Is Mordecai acknowledging God? Is Mordecai being a **godly** Jew?] [Bob Deffinbaugh: Mordecai is . . . a disobedient, unbelieving Jew, who seems hardly to think of God. His panic is because he sees the deliverance of the Jews as the result of man's initiative. . . . Esther is the ace up Mordecai's sleeve, his last hope, Israel's last chance for survival. If she fails, all is lost. And this explains why he threatens Esther that her family will be wiped out. If deliverance comes from elsewhere, then why would Esther die?]

## Contrasting Fasting (4:15-4:16)

**15 Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai: 16 "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise.** [Donald Curtis: Note the date in **Esther 3:12** . . . The decree to annihilate the Jews went out on the 13th of Nisan. Among observant religious Jews, here is what should have been going on: **Exodus 12:1-6**. Haman's decree went out on the eve of the slaughter of the Passover **lambs**. But Mordecai the Jew made no reference to this holiday of national deliverance at a time when the Jews needed deliverance! Not only does the Book of Esther make no mention of God, it does not do so even when it would be the most natural. Instead of seeking the God of Moses, Mordecai appealed to Esther.] [Donald Curtis: Esther then called upon all the Jews in Susa to fast for three days. That period covered the time during which the Passover lamb was to have been slaughtered and **eaten**. It is ironic that the Jews fasted when the calendar called for feasting.] **And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!"** [Bob Deffinbaugh: Those who hasten to see Esther as a hero should ponder verses 9-12, for she is certainly not quick to take up the cause of her people. The principle reason is her own safety.]

## Obedient and Expedient (4:17)

**17 So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded him.** [Bob Deffinbaugh: I would not argue that Esther was regarded as a hero by the Jews and even by the author of this book. One can be a hero, a true patriot, without being godly. I think Esther and Mordecai were, at best, ungodly heroes.]

## Conclusion

1. Ahasuerus, Vashti, Mordecai and Esther really **lived**.
2. Ahasuerus, Vashti, Mordecai and Esther were not **perfect**.
3. Ahasuerus, Vashti, Mordecai and Esther were used by God to complete His plan of **redemption**.

# Act 3: The Game is Afoot (Esther 5-6): Esther's Plan, Haman's Plot and Mordecai's Prestige

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## Review of Chapters 1-4

We're in modern day Iran, almost 2,500 years ago. The Persians rule the world and their king is Xerxes (also known as Ahasuerus). Xerxes has a feast and his wife, Vashti, makes him mad, so he gets rid of her. He asks his wise men what to do, they tell him to pass a law. Yeah, that'll fix things. End of chapter 1.

Xerxes finds himself without a wife, so he holds the, 'Miss Persia' contest and finds a knockout named Esther to be his new wife. Esther is a Jew (as is her cousin Mordecai who raised her). Mordecai, who serves in the king's gate, tells Esther not to reveal the fact that she's a Jew, so she doesn't. Mordecai foils an assassination attempt on the king's life and receives no reward. End of chapter 2.

Haman, a previously unknown character, rises to power and is appointed to the position of prime minister of Persia. Haman is angered that Mordecai won't bow down to him (per the king's command), so Haman plots to kill all the Jews. He casts lots, known as Pur, to decide what day to strike at the Jews. Next, the king decides to fund Haman's sinister plans without knowing the details. End of chapter 3.

Mordecai, a Jew, freaks out when he hears the plans and starts to mourn at the king's gate. Esther gets wind of this and tries to intercede. Mordecai convinces Esther to attempt to persuade the king to spare the Jews—a dangerous idea since no one can come before the king without an invitation. Esther asks all the Jews to sin by fasting for three days during the feasting holiday of Passover. End of chapter 4.

## The Courageous Queen (5:1-5:2)

**1 Now it happened on the third day that Esther put on *her royal robes* and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, across from the king's house, while the king sat on his royal throne in the royal house, facing the entrance of the house [Jamieson, Fausset, Brown: [There were] guards and counselors . . . and other great officers, accustomed to distribute justice, and transact the public affairs.].** **2 So it was, when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court** [taking her life in her hands], **that she found favor** [grace, charm, elegance. Note the pattern in this—Esther appears and finds favor] **in his sight** [Proverbs 21:1: The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.], **and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter** [A spear-like object] [Jamieson, Fausset, Brown: held in the right hand, with one end resting on the ground] **that was in his hand. Then Esther went near and touched the top of the scepter.**

## The Magnanimous Monarch (Part 1) (5:3)

**3 And the king said to her, "What do you wish, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given to you—up to half the kingdom!"** [The standard polite response meaning, "I'll give you what you want". Remember, Persian kings gave their wives cities for their personal use, so this was accurate as well.]

### The Audible Appeal (Part 1) (5:4)

**4** So Esther answered, “If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet [feast] that I have prepared for him.” [Why would Esther invite Haman?] [Adam Clarke: It was necessary to invite Haman to prevent his suspicion, and that he might not take any hasty step which might have prevented the execution of the great design.] [Jamieson, Fausset, Brown: By showing such high respect to the king's favorite, she would the better insinuate herself into the royal affections.]

### The Quick Command (5:5)

**5** Then the king said, “Bring Haman quickly, that he may do as Esther has said.” So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther had prepared. [Imagine a private banquet with the first **couple**. WOW]

### The Magnanimous Monarch (Part 2) (5:6)

**6** At the banquet of wine the king said to Esther, “What is your petition? It shall be granted you. What is your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!” [Note the repeated question]

### The Audible Appeal (Part 2) (5:7-5:8)

**7** Then Esther answered and said, “My petition and request is this: **8** If I have found favor [grace, charm, elegance] in the sight of the king [which she knew she had], and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request [it appeared so], then let the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said.” [The way to a man's heart.]

### The Heated Haman (5:9-11)

**9** So Haman went out that day joyful and with a glad heart; but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, and that he did not stand or tremble [quiver, be in terror. Haman was a bully.] before him, he was filled with indignation [heat, rage] against Mordecai [Remember **Esther 3:5**? This is a **pattern** in Haman's life.]. **10** Nevertheless Haman restrained himself and went home, and he sent and called for his friends [literally, lovers—those that loved Haman] and his wife Zeresh [ZEH-resch, gold]. **11** Then Haman told [numbered, counted] them of his great [abundant] riches, the multitude of his children, everything in which the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced [lifted] him above the officials and servants of the king.

### The Melancholy Minister (5:12-13)

**12** Moreover Haman said, “Besides, Queen Esther invited no one but me to come in with the king to the banquet that she prepared; and tomorrow I am again invited by her, along with the king. **13** Yet all this avails [resembles] me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.” [Adam Clarke: **Pride** will ever render its possessor unhappy. . . . The soul was made for God, and nothing but God can fill it and make it happy.] [David Guzik: Haman's problem wasn't Mordecai.]

### The Sinister Support (5:14a)

**14** Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, “Let a gallows [tree, wood, a plank] be made, fifty cubits [1 cubit ~ 18 in., ~ 75 feet--really wanting to make him a spectacle because the higher you hung someone, the more people that could see it happen] high, and in the morning suggest to the king that Mordecai be hanged [hanged on display] on it; then go merrily with the king to the banquet.”

## The Completed Construction (5:14b)

**And the thing pleased Haman; so he had the gallows made.** [Notice he never wastes **time**.]

## The King's Chronicles (6:1-6:3a)

**1 That night the king could not sleep** [Why would he not be able to sleep after a banquet? Seems like he should have had a great night's sleep. It's interesting to note that the same thing happened to King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2. God's hand is always working His plan.]. **So one was commanded to bring the book of the records** [memorial, reminder, remembrances] **of the chronicles** [times of speech]; **and they were read before the king** [Jamieson, Fausset, Brown: In Eastern courts, there are scribes or officers whose duty it is to keep a journal of every occurrence worthy of notice. A book of this kind, abounding with anecdotes, is full of interest. It has been a custom with Eastern kings, in all ages, frequently to cause the annals of the kingdom to be read to them. It is . . . a source of instruction to the monarch, by reviewing the important incidents of his own life, as well as those of his ancestors.]. **2 And it was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana** [big-THAWN, in their wine-press] **and Teresh** [TEH-res, strictness], **two of the king's eunuchs, the doorkeepers who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.** **3 Then the king said, "What honor** [price, pomp] **or dignity** [greatness] **has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?"**

## The Insomniac's Insight (6:3b)

**And the king's servants who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him."** [Read **Esther 2:23**]

## The Hidden Hand (6:4-6:5)

**4 So the king said, "Who is in the court?"** Now Haman had *just* entered the outer court of the king's palace to suggest that the king hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him [Jamieson, Fausset, Brown: It is the invariable custom for kings in Eastern countries to transact business before the sun is **hot**.] [Haman got to work early that day, but in this case, the worm gets the early bird.].

**5 The king's servants said to him, "Haman is there, standing in the court."** [Maybe rehearsing?]

**And the king said, "Let him come in."** [And the fun is about to begin]

## The Elliptical Inquiry (6:6a)

**6 So Haman came in, and the king asked him, "What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?"**

## The Proudful Presumption (6:6b-6:9)

Now Haman thought in his heart, "Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?" **7 And Haman answered the king, "For the man whom the king delights to honor, 8 let a royal robe be brought which the king has worn** [Adam Clarke: The royal apparel was never worn but by the king: even when the king had lain them aside, it was death to put them on.], **and a horse on which the king has ridden** [again, a death sentence to ride], **which has a royal crest placed on its head. 9 Then let this robe and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes** [notice he didn't say, the most noble—lest Haman refer to himself], **that he may array the man whom the king delights to**

**honor. Then parade [mount] him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him: 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!'"** [David Guzik: Haman, in his childish desire to be praised and honored by all, asks for things that really matter very little, except to puff one up with pride. Haman is a tragic man who can only believe he has done well when he hears **applause**. It is a good and sometimes appropriate thing to have applause here on earth, but it is tragic to live your life seeking for it.] [Bob Deffinbaugh: Haman's view of honor was to experience the honor of the king himself. He would love to wear the king's clothing and ride the king's horse. He would love to wear the king's crown. He would love to parade about having the entire city bow down to him as they would the king. Is it not evident that Haman really would like to be the **king**?]

### The Tables Turned (6:10)

**10 Then the king said to Haman, "Hurry, take the robe and the horse, as you have suggested, and do so for Mordecai the Jew who sits within the king's gate! Leave nothing undone of all that you have spoken."** [Remember, Haman is a masterful politician, so he can't seem taken back. He simply obeys.]

### The Public Picture (6:11)

**11 So Haman took the robe and the horse, arrayed Mordecai and led him on horseback through the city square, and proclaimed before him, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!"** [Bob Deffinbaugh: Mordecai accepts this honor, the very same kind of honor he refuses to give to Haman. This incident does not cause us to think fondly of Haman, but neither should it cause us to think too highly of Mordecai. Mordecai is a **hypocrite**. He is willing to receive that which he is unwilling to give—honor to the one whom the king chooses to honor.]

### The Depressing Decree (6:12-6:13)

**12 Afterward Mordecai went back to the king's gate. But Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered. 13 When Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him, his wise men and his wife Zeresh said to him, "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish descent, you will not prevail against him but will surely fall before him."** [Nothing like a supportive family network, eh?]

### The Sequestering Servants (6:14)

**14 While they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs came, and hastened to bring Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared** [Jamieson, Fausset, Brown: A message is always sent to the guests, immediately at the day and hour appointed, to announce that all things are ready].

[David Guzik: Esther wasn't *lucky* to be queen; Mordecai wasn't *lucky* to have overheard the assassination plot; it wasn't *luck* or *chance* that made Haman enter the royal courts at this time with this heart. It was God; we don't say *praise the luck!* This becomes difficult, of course, when bad things happen to us. It is easy to see God's management of all things when we see good things happen. But what about the bad? Even then, we must trust God's total plan, realizing that **all things work together for good** to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). . . . Any one event, taken in isolation may seem to make no sense, but when we see all things working **together**, we see the ultimate wisdom of God's plan]

# Act 4: The Fairer Sex (Esther 7-8): Haman's Ordeal and Esther's Appeal

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## Review of Chapters 1-6

We're in modern day Iran, almost 2,500 years ago. The Persians rule the world and their king is Xerxes (also known as Ahasuerus). Xerxes needs a wife, so he holds the, 'Miss Persia' contest and finds a Jew named Esther. Her cousin, Mordecai, foils an assassination attempt on the king's life and receives no reward. Haman, a previously unknown character, rises to power and is appointed to the position of prime minister of Persia. Haman is angered that Mordecai won't bow down to him (per the king's command), so Haman plots to kill all the Jews. He casts lots, known as Pur, to decide what day to strike at the Jews. Xerxes approves and even decides to fund Haman's sinister plans, apparently without knowing the details. Mordecai panics and Esther tries to calm him down. Mordecai convinces Esther to ask the king to spare the Jews—a dangerous idea since no one can come before the king without an invitation. Esther asks all the Jews to fast for three days during the feasting holiday of Passover. Esther goes to the king and invites Xerxes and Haman to a banquet. The king accepts and then asks Esther what she wants and she invites he and Haman to another banquet the next day. That evening, Haman gets angry again when Mordecai won't bow down to him and upon the advice of his wife and friends, has a gallows 75 feet tall erected to hang Mordecai on. That night, Xerxes can't sleep and discovers that Mordecai was never rewarded for saving his life. The king asks the first person he sees (Haman) what should be done Haman lists everything he's ever wanted. Xerxes then commands Haman to do so to Mordecai and Haman does. Chapter 6 ends with the eunuchs taking Haman to the second banquet.

## Questions, Questions, Questions (7:1-7:2)

**1 So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther. 2 And on the second day, at the banquet of wine, the king again said to Esther, "What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!"** [The **third** time he asks this question.]

## The Deception Displayed (7:3-7:6)

**3 Then Queen Esther answered and said, "If I have found favor [favor, grace, charm, elegance] in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. 4 For we have been sold [A reference to Haman's 10,000 silver shekel offer], my people and I, to be destroyed [exterminated], to be killed [murdered], and to be annihilated [Esther is repeating the words of **Haman** in **Esther 3:13**]. Had we been sold as male and female slaves, I would have held my tongue, although the enemy could never compensate for the king's loss [injury]."**

**5 So King Ahasuerus answered and said to Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who would dare presume in [fill] his heart to do such a thing?" [Adam Clarke: The original words. . . "Who? He? This one? And where? This one? He? Who hath filled his heart to do thus?"] 6 And Esther said, "The adversary [hard pebble, oppressor] and enemy is this wicked Haman!" So Haman was terrified [startled, dismayed, overtaken by sudden terror] before the king and queen.**

## The Slippery Slope of Success (7:7-7:9a)

**7** Then the king arose in his wrath [heat] from the banquet of wine *and went* into the palace garden [He needed a moment]; **but Haman stood before Queen Esther, pleading for his life, for he saw that evil [bad] was determined against him by the king.** **8** When the king returned from the palace garden to the place of the banquet of wine, Haman had fallen across [to fall, fall short, prostrate] [David Guzik: A Jewish writing says that the angel Gabriel pushed Haman so he fell on Esther's couch just as king Ahasuerus was coming back into the room.] **the couch where Esther was** [How ironic that Haman is now at the feet of a **Jew** when all he wanted was a **Jew** at his own feet.]. **Then the king said, "Will he also assault [violate, dominate] the queen while I am in the house?"**

**As the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face** [John Gill: It was the custom of the kings of Persia, that their servants covered the face of him the king was angry with, that he might not see his **face** any more]. **9** Now Harbonah [ass-driver—we met him in **Esther 1:10**], **one of the eunuchs, said to the king, "Look! The gallows, fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke good on the king's behalf, is standing [remains] at the house of Haman."** [Jamieson, Fausset, Brown: [May have been] the messenger sent with the invitation to Haman, and . . . had seen the gallows.]

## The Heated Hanging (7:9b-7:10)

**Then the king said, "Hang him on it!"** **10** So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai [Psalm 7:15]. [David Guzik: Satan thought that he won by getting the crowd to crucify Jesus, but the cross turned out to be the instrument of his **defeat**. In the case of Mordecai and Haman, it was the guilty dying in the place of the **innocent**; in the case of us and Jesus, it is a matter of the innocent dying in the place of **guilty**.] [Haman went from riding high to hanging high.] **Then the king's wrath [heat] subsided [decreased].**

## The Property Passed (8:1-8:2)

**1** On that day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told how he *was related to her*. **2** So the king took off his signet ring [his symbol of authority. Many commentators feel this was Mordecai's promotion to prime minister. Also, Xerxes should have been more cautious this time around when handing out his ring.], **which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai; and Esther appointed Mordecai over the house of Haman.** [David Guzik: Haman . . . ends with nothing—nothing even to pass on to his family. He had climbed the ladder of success, but it was leaning against the wrong **building!**]

## The Nation Named (8:3-8:6)

**3** Now Esther spoke again to the king, fell down at his feet, and implored [to seek favor, implore favor] him with tears to counteract the evil [bad] of Haman the Agagite, and the scheme [thought, plan] which he had devised against the Jews. **4** And the king held out the golden scepter toward Esther [this does not appear to occur the same day]. **So Esther arose and stood before the king, 5 and said, "If it pleases the king, and if I have found favor in his sight and the thing seems right [advantageous] to the king and I am pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to revoke [to bring back, to turn back] the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote [a slight bit of revisionist**

history] **to annihilate the Jews who *are* in all the king's provinces. 6 For how can I endure to see the evil that will come to my people? Or how can I endure to see the destruction of my countrymen?"**

### The Statute Supplemented (8:7-8:8)

**7 Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, "Indeed, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows because he *tried to lay* [stretched out, extended] **his hand on the Jews. 8 You yourselves write a decree concerning the Jews, as you please** [literally, as it is good in your eyes], **in the king's name, and seal it with the king's signet ring; for whatever is written in the king's name and sealed with the king's signet ring no one can revoke** [Adam Clarke: the Jews be enabled legitimately to defend themselves; and, consequently, placed on an equal footing with their enemies.]" [Bob Deffinbaugh: The king spared Esther's life first because he loved her. And because He loved Esther, He spared those for whom she interceded—her people. God saves us for Christ's sake, because of His love for His Son, Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ approaches the Father and intercedes for us. It is because of our Savior that we receive the blessings of **God**.]**

### The Royal Riders (8:9-8:10)

**9 So the king's scribes were called at that time, in the third month, which is the month of Sivan** [May-June], **on the twenty-third day** [**two** months and **ten** days after the prior letters went out in **Esther 3:12**]; **and it was written, according to all that Mordecai commanded, to the Jews, the satraps, the governors, and the princes of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, one hundred and twenty-seven provinces in all, to every province in its own script, to every people in their own language, and to the Jews in their own script and language. 10 And he wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, sealed it with the king's signet ring, and sent letters by couriers on horseback** [swift horses], **riding on royal horses bred from swift steeds.** [The bulk of the commentary by the commentators is around the correct interpretation of the Hebrew/Persian words for horses/mules/steeds/etc. The bottom line, however, is that these were the fastest that the king had available—probably among the fastest in the world.]

### The Decree Defined (8:11-8:14)

**11 By these letters the king permitted the Jews who were in every city to gather together** [to assemble] **and protect their lives** [to make a stand, hold one's ground]—**to destroy** [exterminate], **kill, and annihilate** [again, the same words as Haman used in the original decree] **all the forces of any people or province that would assault** [besiege, show hostility] **them, both little children and women, and to plunder their possessions, 12 on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar.** [Bob Deffinbaugh: I believe the author intended for the wording of the new law of Mordecai to bother us. Revenge is getting even or getting back. The new law of Mordecai does not merely grant the Jews permission to defend themselves; it grants them permission to **avenge** themselves. Self defense would involve granting the Jews the right to assemble and to fight back if attacked. But the words of Mordecai's law go much farther. They go every bit as far as Haman's law, only in reverse. The Jews are given license to "destroy, kill, and annihilate," not just those who did attack them, but "all the forces of any people or province that would assault them." . . . it seems the Jews were granted to kill virtually anyone they perceived to be a threat.] **13 A copy of the document was to be issued as a decree in every province**

and published for all people, so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge [take revenge] themselves on their enemies. **14** The couriers who rode on royal horses went out, hastened and pressed on by the king's command. And the decree was issued in Shushan the citadel.

### The Jubilant Jews (8:15-8:17)

**15** So Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue [violet] and white, with a great crown [wreath or perhaps even a turban] of gold [possibly ornamented with gold instead of made out of gold as we might imagine] and a garment [robe] of fine linen [byssus: a costly, fine white linen cloth made in Egypt] and purple; and the city of Shushan rejoiced [literally, neighed as a **horse**] and was glad [Haman was such a proud and most likely unpopular prime minister.]. **16** The Jews had light and gladness, joy and honor [value] [David Guzik: This joy comes before the actual day appointed when the Jews will be attacked . . . yet because of the decree of the king, they can be assured of victory and rejoice in it ahead of time. In the same way, our course is not yet run; our salvation is not yet complete—yet we can rejoice, because of our confidence in our **king** (Philippians 1:6)]. **17** And in every province and city, wherever the king's command and decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a holiday. Then many of the people of the land became Jews [John Gill: [They] concluded their God must be the true God, and they his favorite people, and their religion most correct; though others might only do it to gain the favor of Esther and Mordecai, who had now such great power and influence at court], because fear [terror, dread] of the Jews fell upon them. [Bob Deffinbaugh: The Jews were spared, not because Esther and Mordecai (or any other Jews) were righteous, but because God was faithful to His covenant with the Jews. As clever as Esther's dealings with the king and Haman may seem . . . God was at work bringing about the deliverance of the Jews.]

### Conclusion (by Bob Deffinbaugh)

1. God has a **plan**. God . . . is constantly and progressively working out this plan in history. He employs pagans . . . the sins of men, and their rebellion against Him and His people, to further His purpose.
2. Watching God at **work** a pleasure and a wonder. Have you ever watched someone at work who is very skilled at what they do? It may be an artist who makes every motion of the paint brush work for them. It may be a wood craftsman . . . who never wastes any motion or any wood in creating a beautiful work. [The opening ceremonies] But watching someone with skill is a pleasure and a wonder.
3. God does what **we** cannot do. [Esther and Mordecai] had no control over the king's "oversight" of Mordecai's loyalty so that his loyalty was unrewarded for a period of time. They did not orchestrate the king's sleepless night. They did not determine that the chronicles of the king would be read and that the account of Mordecai's loyalty would be included in this reading. They did not cause Haman to fall upon Esther's bed at the very moment the king returned to the room. They did not prompt Harbonah to suggest that the king use Haman's own gallows on which to execute him.
4. What a difference a **day** makes. Esther chose not to reveal her request to the king until the second banquet on the following day. But in this interim period, God gave the king a sleepless night and reminded him . . . that Mordecai, a Jew, was a loyal citizen to whom he owed his life. And this occurred at the very time when Haman plotted to accuse him of disloyalty and thus hang him.

# Act 5: The Rest of the Story (Esther 9-10)

## Purim and Peace

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### Review of Chapters 1-8

Xerxes is the king, Esther is his wife. Mordecai is Esther's cousin and Haman is the bad guy that has just been killed. Haman had the king issue an order that said the Jews were the targets of the entire empire on a certain day. Esther and Mordecai got the king to allow the Jews to defend themselves. Chapter 9:

### The Day Dawns (9:1-9:5)

**1** Now in the twelfth month, that is, the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day, *the time* came for the king's command and his decree to be executed. On the day that the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower [have **dominion** over] them, the opposite occurred, in that the Jews themselves overpowered [have dominion over] those who hated them. **2** The Jews gathered together in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm. And no one could withstand them, because fear of them fell upon all people. **3** And all the officials of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, and all those doing the king's work, helped [assisted, carried] the Jews, because the fear [terror, dread] of Mordecai fell upon them. **4** For Mordecai *was* great in the king's palace, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces [this was not a bad thing—see [Joshua 6:27](#) and [1 Chronicles 14:17](#) for more about this concept]; for this man Mordecai became increasingly prominent. **5** Thus the Jews defeated [killed] all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, with slaughter and destruction, and did what they pleased with those who hated them.

### The Sons Slaughtered (9:6-9:10)

**6** And in Shushan the citadel [palace/city; odd that many would be opposed to the Jews this close to the king] the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men. **7** Also Parshandatha [given by prayer], Dalphon [dripping], Aspatha [the enticed gathered], **8** Poratha [fruitfulness or frustration], Adalia [I shall be drawn up as Jah], Aridatha [the **lion** of the decree], **9** Parmashta [superior], Arisai [**lion** of my banners], Aridai [the **lion** is enough], and Vajezatha [strong as the wind]— **10** the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews—they killed; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder.

### The King's Question (9:11-9:12)

**11** On that day the number of those who were killed in Shushan the citadel was brought to the king. **12** And the king said to Queen Esther, "The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the citadel, and the ten sons of Haman. What have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? Now what *is* your petition? It shall be granted to you. Or what *is* your further request? It shall be done."

### The Appeal Augmented (9:13-9:14)

**13** Then Esther said, "If it pleases the king, let it be granted to the Jews who *are* in Shushan to do again tomorrow according to today's decree [Perhaps Esther found some enemies had hidden], and let

**Haman's ten sons be hanged on the gallows."** [A few questions: Why would Esther not ask for an extra **day** across all of the empire? (word couldn't travel that fast; How does an extra day change things for the enemies of the Jews? (they had no right to attack the Jews on the next day)] **14 So the king commanded this to be done; the decree was issued in Shushan, and they hanged Haman's ten sons.**

### The Second Slaughter (9:15)

**15 And the Jews who were in Shushan gathered together again on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and killed three hundred men at Shushan; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder.**

### The Remainder Remembered (9:16-9:17)

**16 The remainder of the Jews in the king's provinces gathered together and protected** [took a stand for] **their lives, had rest from their enemies, and killed seventy-five thousand of their enemies** [haters]; **but they did not lay a hand on the plunder.** **17 This was on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar. And on the fourteenth of the month they rested and made it a day of feasting** [feasting and **drinking**] **and gladness** [joy, pleasure].

### The Celebration Commences (9:18-9:19)

**18 But the Jews who were at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth day, as well as on the fourteenth; and on the fifteenth of the month they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.** **19 Therefore the Jews of the villages who dwelt in the unwallied towns celebrated the fourteenth day of the month of Adar with gladness and feasting, as a holiday, and for sending** [stretching, sending out] **presents** [parts, portions] **to one another** [literally, man to friend].

### The Celebration Circumscribed (9:20-9:25)

**20 And Mordecai wrote these things** [most scholars assume from this comment that Mordecai wrote the book of Esther, but that's not exactly what is stated here] **and sent letters to all the Jews, near and far, who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, 21 to establish** [fulfill, confirm, ratify, impose] **among them that they should celebrate yearly the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar, 22 as the days on which the Jews had rest** [settled] **from their enemies, as the month which was turned from sorrow** [grief, anguish] **to joy for them, and from mourning** [mourning for the dead] **to a holiday** [literally, an **agreeable** day—a Jewish euphemism for holiday]; **that they should make them days of feasting and joy, of sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor** [those in need]. [Insert comments about the modern day holiday of Purim at this point.] **23 So the Jews accepted the custom which they had begun** [this was a **civil** holiday, not a religious holiday], **as Mordecai had written to them, [Bob Deffinbaugh: (1) The Feast of Purim was not established by God, but by men. The author tells us plainly that "the Jews accepted the custom which they had begun" (Esther 9:23). Other feasts, like Passover and Pentecost, are biblical feasts, feasts which God established.**

**(2) The Feast of Purim is celebrated in a very different manner than the feasts which God has ordained. In our text, Mordecai prescribes the way in which the Jews should celebrate the newly established Feast of Purim: "they should make them days of feasting and joy, of sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor" (Esther 9:22). . . . There are no sacrifices, no references to God, to His deeds, to His character or His Word. There is no worship, only celebration.] 24 because Haman,**

the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to annihilate them, and had cast Pur (that *is*, the lot), to consume them and destroy them; **25** but when *Esther* came before the king, he commanded by letter that this wicked plot which *Haman* had devised against the Jews should return on his own head [see [Psalm 7:16](#)], and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.

### The Celebration Christened (9:26-9:28)

**26** So they called [proclaimed] these days Purim, after the name Pur [the same word as is used for Purim]. Therefore, because of all the words of this letter, what they had seen concerning this matter, and what had happened [touched] to them, **27** the Jews established and imposed [accepted] it upon themselves and their descendants and all who would join them, that without fail they should celebrate these two days every year, according to the written *instructions* and according to the *prescribed* time, **28** that these days *should be* remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city, that these days of Purim should not fail *to be observed* among the Jews, and *that* the memory of them should not perish among their descendants.

### The Celebration Confirmed (9:29-9:32)

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

### The Postscript Printed (10:1-10:3)

**1** And King Ahasuerus imposed tribute on the land and *on* the islands of the sea [What an odd way to end the book. Why is this the **last** mention of Xerxes? (perhaps as a contrast to the upcoming description of Mordecia)]. **2** Now all the acts of his power [authority, strength] and his might, and the account of the greatness [this word is also used of the greatness of God as an attribute] [Bob Deffinbaugh: Mordecai, we are told, was a great man. He was great because he was second only to the king himself in power. He was great because of his accomplishments, authority, strength, and greatness. He was great among the Jews because his fellow-Jews highly esteemed him. He had the favor of his people because he sought their good, and he spoke for the welfare of his whole nation. This all sounds mighty good, does it not? I know how this will sound, but say it I must. . . . Being great in the sight of men is not synonymous with being great in the eyes of **God**. Being great among men is not the same as being godly. Mordecai was great, but we have no reason at all to assume that he was godly.] of Mordecai, to which the king advanced him, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia [How much better to be remembered in the Book of Life than in the eyes of pagans]? **3** For Mordecai the Jew *was* second to King Ahasuerus, and was great among the Jews and well received by the multitude of his brethren, seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his countrymen.

## Esther Timeline from Wikipedia

Date	Event
366 BC	Ahasuerus' 180-day feast; Queen Vashti exiled
Tevet, 362 BC	Esther becomes queen
Nissan, 357 BC	Haman casts lots to choose date for Jews' annihilation
Nissan 13, 357 BC	Royal decree ordering killing of all Jews
Nissan 13-15, 357 BC	Three day fast ordered by Esther
Nissan 15, 357 BC	Esther goes to Ahasuerus; hosts first party with Ahasuerus and Haman
Nissan 16, 357 BC	Esther's second party; Haman's downfall and hanging
Sivan 23, 357 BC	Second decree issued by Ahasuerus
Adar 13, 356 BC	Battles fought against those seeking to kill the Jews; Haman's ten sons killed
Adar 14, 356 BC	Celebrations outside Shushan where second day of battles are fought
Adar 15, 356 BC	Celebration inside Shushan

## David Guzik's observations on the book

1. God loves a great story! 2. God will frustrate the wicked and proud; He will exalt the humble. 3. Though the hand of God is often hidden in human events, it is none the less active and real. 4. God's hand in history never rules out **our** actions - Esther still made her stand and was instrumental in God's plan. God moves in human events - but mostly through people; in His great strategy for all the ages, He has called to be not only spectators, but participants also.

## Bob Deffinbaugh

We must interpret the Book of Esther in light of the **entire** Bible. The Book of Esther is a picture—and not a very pretty one—of the Jew who is in unbelief and in disobedience. No wonder the Jews of the Persian empire are in peril. No wonder Mordecai and the Jews act little differently than do the pagans of Persia. No wonder that neither prayer, nor repentance, nor the Scriptures, nor faith, nor God are mentioned in this book. The book is a description of pagan Jews.

We are all too similar to Esther and Mordecai. . . . We find that this present temporal kingdom has a great attraction to us. It sometimes seems real, while the kingdom of our Lord seems distant and far-fetched. . . . Do we think that only the Jews of ancient days failed to recognize the hand of God and took credit for what God has done? We do exactly the same thing today.

Let us not leave the Book of Esther looking down our spiritual noses at Esther, Mordecai, and the Persian Jews. Let us leave the Book of Esther asking ourselves how we are like them and asking what we should do to be the people God has called us to be. Let us seek first the kingdom of God, and let all other things take a secondary place in our lives. Let us not exalt men and forget God. . . . Let us look for the **hand** of God, even in the events of a secular world and through heathen officials and politicians. To God be the glory, great things He has done. Great things He **still** does and is yet to do.