

The Queen and I: All Because of Mordecai

BY DR. JERRY VINES

By the Book™ A Chapter by Chapter Bible Study Series from **Jerry Vines Ministries**
2295 Towne Lake Parkway • Suite 116 #249 • Woodstock, GA 30189

Let's Begin

The quote "Man proposes but God disposes" is credited to Thomas a

Kempis, a German priest from the fifteenth century, from his work The Imitation of Christ. He understood the sovereignty of God and the truth of Proverbs 16:9, "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps." In our final lesson in the book of Esther, we again are reminded of the sovereignty of God. While His name has not occurred throughout the book, God has been very much at work. It is as if He has been in the shadows, watching over His own.

We are also reminded of the importance of one person. Many times people wonder if they can make a difference for the Lord. After all, they are just one person. But,

consider the following: in 1776 one vote decided that English, not German would be the official language of the American people. In 1876 one vote elected Rutherford B. Hayes president of the United States of America. And, as we come to the conclusion of the book of Esther today, we see the importance of one person. Esther truly is the book's heroine, but even her heroism started because of one person. Using the outline below, let's study the happy ending of Esther, all because of one person, all because of Mordecai.

- I. The Defeat of Haman (7:1-10)
- II. The Decree of the King (8:1-17)
- III. The Deliverance of the Jew (9:1-32)
- IV. The Day of Mordecai (10:1-3)

I. The Defeat of Haman (7:1-10)

As our lesson begins today, Queen Esther has invited the king and Haman to a second banquet. Haman has no idea that his plan to destroy all the Jews of the kingdom will include the king's wife Esther. The king also has no idea that he has sanctioned a decree which includes the death of his own wife.

In our last lesson Haman started out feeling on top of his world after being invited to not just one but two of the queen's banquets (5:12). Because he felt

so secure in his position with the king, he had even gone ahead and built a gallows on which to hang Mordecai (5:14). His exuberance quickly changed to humiliation (6:6-12). He had to lead Mordecai, the man he hated, throughout the city and proclaim the king was honoring Mordecai. Then, most likely without realizing what they were saying, his wife and friends gave Haman the ominous warning: "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou

has begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him" (6:13). While they were still talking to Haman, the king's chamberlains arrived to escort him to the queen's banquet with the king (6:14-7:1).

Don't you think at this point in the story, Ahasuerus, the king, had to really wonder what Esther wanted? After all, he had to know she had risked her life to see him, yet she had only asked for him and Haman to attend her



two banquets. She had not asked for anything worthy of risking her life. So, for the third time he asks her what she wants (7:2; cp. 5:3, 6). He is still willing to give her “even to half of the kingdom,” meaning whatever she wanted. This time Esther gives her answer (7:3-4). Using the same language as the decree, she recounts what is getting ready to happen to her people. She then pleads for her life and the life of her people.

The king immediately wants to know who would dare do such a thing and would want to harm the queen (7:5). It is as if he doesn’t realize the connection between the decree he allowed Haman to make and what Esther has just said. Esther does not delay in accusing “this wicked Haman” as the guilty person (7:6a). Think about what this must have done to the king as he starts to put “two and two” together. He begins to realize he has jeopardized the life of his own wife. He understands the man he had exalted to a place of special leadership in his kingdom was actually his enemy. In a rage, the king gets up from the banquet and goes into the palace garden (7:7a).

While the king is exploding in anger, Haman is imploding in horror (7:6b). He realizes his life is now in jeopardy. He doesn’t follow the king out to the garden, “knowing evil was determined against him by the king,” but instead goes to Esther to plead for his life (7:7b). He realizes she is his only hope. Isn’t that interesting? He got angry because Mordecai, the Jewish man, would not bow down before

Think about what this must have done to the king as he starts to put “two and two” together.

him. Now he is bowing down before a Jewish woman. Haman got into trouble because of his anger against a Jewish man. Now, he is appealing to a Jewish woman to get him out of his trouble.

As the king returns from the garden, he finds Haman has fallen on the couch where Esther

was reclining (7:8). Possibly blinded by his anger, he believes Haman is trying to assault Esther, not beg for his life. It is at this point that it’s all over for Haman. Without having to be told what to do, the king’s attendants cover Haman’s face, signaling his doom. He is to be executed and is no longer fit to see the light of day. Haman had earlier covered his own head in shame and humiliation (6:12). Now his face is covered in condemnation.

Harbonah, one of the king’s chamberlains, is quick to tell the king about the gallows Haman had built for Mordecai (7:9). As he describes Mordecai, he is careful to include how Mordecai was the one, “who had spoken good for the king.” It is as if he is contrasting the differences between Haman and Mordecai. The king orders Haman to be executed on the same gallows and his anger is pacified (7:10).

Reflection Connection:

Discuss how Haman’s fate is a picture of poetic justice. How is his fate also a reminder of Galatians 6:7?

II. The Decree of the King (8:1-17)

In those days when a person was a condemned criminal, his property reverted to the king. So the king takes all of Haman’s property and gives it to his wife Esther, the queen (8:1a). She

in turn puts Mordecai in charge of the property (8:2b). It is also at this point that the king finds out more about Mordecai. He was not only the man who had saved the king’s life earlier, but

he was also Esther’s closest relative (8:1b; cp. 2:7). In verse 2 the king does an interesting thing. He takes off the ring he had taken from Haman and gives it to Mordecai. He is promoting



Mordecai to the position Haman once had. Truly, the king had to be impressed with both Mordecai's and Esther's willingness to risk their own lives for their people, the Jews. He also understood Mordecai's devotion to the throne.

Even with Haman, the great enemy of the Jews, out of the way, the Jews still had a major problem. The king's decree for all Jews to be destroyed was still a valid decree. According to the laws of the Medes and Persians, it was irreversible. How could they stop the decree? The only way to stop the old decree was to have a new decree to overrule or override it. Was that even possible? Yes. It is the same principle we see whenever we fly in an airplane. The law of gravity is an irrevocable law of God. Whatever goes up comes down. But we can fly in airplanes and not fall. Do we break or revoke the law of gravity? No. Whenever we fly in an airplane, though the law of gravity is still there, we interpose a superior law, the law of aerodynamics. Thus, we become the beneficiary of a superior law.

Esther understands what needs to be done. A new decree is needed

to override the old decree. Again, she goes into the king to plead for her people (8:3). Likewise, he again holds out his golden scepter to her. This time she asks him to write a new decree to reverse or overrule the first decree (8:4-6).

Esther understands what needs to be done.

Just as the king had given Haman "carte blanche" in chapter 3 (3:8-15), he gives Esther and Mordecai the freedom to do whatever they want to ensure the Jews' protection from the first decree (8:7-8). The king's official scribes are then called in, and Mordecai dictates the new decree (8:9-10). This new decree or law gave the Jews the right to defend themselves from anyone who would try to harm them on the very day the first decree went into effect (8:11-13). All the couriers or messengers get on their animals and hurry to deliver the new

decree throughout the 127 provinces (8:14).

The Jews who had been living in fear because they were under the decree of death soon learn about the new decree. Now they have the right to defend themselves. Not only that, they have one more reason for rejoicing. Mordecai is publically honored and promoted (8:15a). Consider the contrast between the two decrees and the promotion of Mordecai. After the first decree went out, the people of Shushan were "perplexed" (3:15). Now they rejoice and are glad (8:15b). Throughout all 127 provinces, the first decree brought "great mourning" among the Jews (4:3). Now they have "light, and gladness, and joy, and honor" (8:16). Not only that, many of the non-Jews become Jews because they are afraid of what the Jews might do to them (8:17). They understand the Jews now have the king's favor and his own wife, the queen, is also a Jew.

Reflection Connection

Read Romans 8:2. How is the king's second decree a picture of the law of the Spirit of life over the law of sin and death? Discuss.

III. The Deliverance of the Jew (9:1-32)

We see two activities going on in the ninth chapter as a result of the king's new decree. In the beginning verses, the Jews

are fighting (9:1-16). Both the old decree and the new decree go into effect on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, or

the month of Adar (9:1). The Jews are prepared to defend themselves, but everyone is afraid of them (9:2). Even the



king's royal officials throughout the provinces ally with the Jews because they fear Mordecai (9:3). Word of his reputation, promotion, and power spread throughout the empire (9:4).

The Jews do go ahead and kill those who "hated" them, including the ten sons of Haman (9:5-10). They do not touch the spoil of their enemies, even though they were allowed to do so. This is because they were not interested in the plunder.

The king receives the report of what the Jews have done and in turn tells Esther (9:11-12). He is still willing to do whatever she wants. Esther wisely asks for one more day for the Jews in Shushan to continue destroying their enemies (9:13). Apparently, she knows some of the Jews' enemies were still alive. She also asks for the sons of Haman to be hanged. They were already dead (cp. 9:10), but their hanging would be a visible sign to others who would seek to harm the Jews. The king again grants her requests (9:14-15). Verse 16 gives the account of all the other provinces. Seventy-five thousand of the Jews' enemies are killed as the Jews protect themselves.

In verse 17 to the conclusion of chapter 9, the Jews are no longer fighting but are

feasting. The Jews outside the city of Shushan spend one day defending and killing their enemies, while the Jews in

Mordecai understands the significance of what the Lord has done for the Jews.

Shushan take two days to do so. Afterwards, all the Jews are able to celebrate their victories with feasting and gladness (9:17-19). The rejoicing includes sending gifts to one another.

Mordecai understands the significance of what the Lord has done for the Jews. Because of this, he sends letters throughout the empire encouraging the Jews to celebrate the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar every year (9:20-22). These were the days the Jews rested from their enemies. Their sorrow was turned to joy and their mourning into a good day.

Because of Mordecai's suggestion, the Jews institute a new feast, "the feast of Purim" (9:23-28). It is a reference to the dice or lots Haman used to

pick out the day when the Jews were to be annihilated (cp. 3:7). Remember, "pur" means lot. "Purim" is its plural.

The Jewish people still celebrate the feast of Purim as a reminder of what God did for them during the days of Esther and Mordecai. As part of the celebration, the book of Esther is read aloud at the feast. When the names of Esther and Mordecai are read, the Jews cheer and applaud. But when the name of Haman is read, they stomp their feet and say, "May his name be blotted out forever. Let his name be accursed." After the feast of Purim is over, they go home to a holiday meal with special foods and gifts. Then they send out gifts and food to the needy.

Esther and Mordecai both follow up with a letter to establish the feast. Esther goes one step further and sends out a decree to confirm the feast (9:29-32).

Reflection Connection

Why is it important for believers to have days to remember or commemorate what the Lord has done for us? According to 1 Corinthians 11:24-26 why should the Lord's Supper be especially significant to Christians?

IV. The Day of Mordecai (10:1-3)

After telling about a tax the king imposes on his empire in verse 1, the last two verses of

chapter 10 focus on Mordecai. First, all of his achievements are recorded in the king's chronicles

(10:2). Not only was his bravery in exposing the plot against the king recorded in the king's record



books, but the full account of his promotions, accomplishments, and greatness is recorded.

Verse 3 continues and lets us know that Mordecai was next unto the king. Just as Haman had been second in command,

now Mordecai was. He was also great among the Jews. They “accepted” or held him in high esteem because of all he had done for them and was doing for them. He continued to seek their welfare.

Reflection Connection:

Discuss the differences in how Haman responded to his promotion versus how Mordecai responded to his promotion. What lessons can we glean from these differences?

Wrap Up

The book of Esther ends in victory and with a feast that has now been celebrated by the Jews for almost 2,500 years, all because of one man—Mordecai. His belief in the indestructibility of the Jews and in the sovereignty of God made a difference in the history of the Jewish people. Never estimate the influence of one person. When we are willing to believe God's Word and for Him to use us for His glory, there is no telling how He might choose to use us in His sovereign plan for this world!

