

# Church of God Sunday School

## ESTHER PLEADS FOR THE JEWS

Esther 3:1 — 10:3

Ahasuerus (*uh-haz-yoo-EE-ruhs*) was the king of Persia, and Esther was his queen. One day the king decided to honor a man named Haman (*HAY-muhn*), making him "above all the princes." (For some reason, the king must have thought highly of Haman, but Haman was not a good man.)

King Ahasuerus commanded all the servants of his court to show reverence to Haman by kneeling and bowing low with their faces on the ground. But one man would not do this. His name was Mordecai (*MOR-duh-kye*). He was the cousin of Queen Esther.

Every day the king's servants asked Mordecai why he disobeyed the king's command. Finally, Mordecai told them he was a Jew. As a Jew he could not bow to any man in worship, for he worshiped God only. The servants told Haman of Mordecai's refusal to bow in reverence to him. "When Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence," Haman was angry!

Haman was also told that Mordecai would not bow to him because he was a Jew. So, Haman decided to destroy every Jew in the kingdom! To do this, Haman had to have the king's permission.

First, lots were cast to determine the best day for this to happen. Once a day was chosen, Haman then went and told the king that there were "a certain people" who lived in the kingdom whose laws were different from the laws of all other people. Haman said that those people did not keep the king's laws and the king should not put up with them.

If this decree was written, Haman promised to pay "ten thousand talents of silver to . . . the king's treasures." (This was an enormous sum of money!) King Ahasuerus gave the ring from his hand (used to conduct business) to Haman. He told Haman to keep the silver and to do "as it seemeth good to thee."

Using the king's seal, Haman had letters written and sent to the rulers of every province in the kingdom. These letters said that on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, every Jew in the kingdom was to be killed and their belongings were to be taken.

After this was finished, the king and Haman "sat down to drink." But the people of the city were upset. Yet, God had not forgotten about His people, the Jews.

No matter how bad things seemed, God was still in control.

When Mordecai heard of this horrible law, he tore his clothes and "put on sackcloth with ashes." He "went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry." He went up to the king's gate, but could not go inside, for people in mourning could not be in the king's presence. In every providence all the Jews were weeping, wailing, and fasting. Many were lying in sackcloth and ashes.

Queen Esther was "exceedingly grieved" when she heard the news! She sent clothes to Mordecai so he could remove his sackcloth, but he would not take them. So, she sent Hatach (one of the king's chamberlains) to "know what it was, and why it was." Mordecai told him all about the money Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasury to have the Jews destroyed. Mordecai gave Hatach a copy of the decree to show Esther. He told Hatach to tell Esther to go to the king and plead for mercy for her people.

When Hatach told Esther what Mordecai had said, she told Hatach to go and tell Mordecai she could not go to the king without being called. The law stated that if any person came into the inner court without being asked, that person would be put to death. The only exception was if the king held out his golden scepter; then that person would be spared.

Mordecai sent word back to Esther, saying that she should not think she could escape because she was in the king's palace. If she did not say anything, the Jews' deliverance would come from somewhere else, but she and her family would be killed. Mordecai said, "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Again, Esther sent word to Mordecai. This time she told him to have all the Jews in Shushan fast (have no food or drink) for three days. She and her maidens would fast too. Then she would go in to the king. Esther said, "If I perish, I perish." She was determined!

On the third day Esther put on her royal clothes and went to the inner court, where the king was sitting on



his throne. When the king saw Esther, he held out the golden scepter to her. Esther touched the end of the scepter, and the king asked Esther what she wanted. She invited the king and Haman to come to a banquet she had prepared for them. The king agreed, and he and Haman went to the banquet.



too late, that Haman could not win against Mordecai.

While they were talking, the king's servants came to take Haman to Queen Esther's second banquet. Again, the king asked what Esther's petition was. This time she asked that her life and the life of her people be spared. She told the king that she and her people were to be destroyed. The king

The king knew Esther must have had a reason for giving the banquet. He told her whatever she wanted would be granted, "even to the half of the kingdom." Esther asked that the king and Haman come to another banquet the next day. Then she would tell him her request.

Haman headed home, "joyful and with a glad heart." But then he saw Mordecai! It made him so angry that Mordecai did not show reverence to him!

When Haman got home, he told his wife and friends that only he and the king had been invited to Queen Esther's banquet and that tomorrow just the two of them were invited to another banquet given by Queen Esther.

But he could not be happy as long as he kept seeing Mordecai "at the king's gate." Haman's wife and friends suggested that he have a tall gallows made (75 feet high). Then he could ask the king to have Mordecai hanged on them. This suggestion pleased Haman. So, he had the gallows put up right beside his own house!

That night King Ahasuerus could not sleep. He had the book of records read to him. When the servant read how Mordecai had saved the king from being murdered, the king wanted to know if anything had been done to reward Mordecai. The servant said, "There is nothing done for him."

Then the king asked who was in the outer court. (Haman had come to the palace to ask permission to have Mordecai hanged.) When he was told that it was Haman, he said, "Let him come in." The king then asked Haman, "What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour?" Haman thought surely the king must mean him! So, he told King Ahasuerus to put his own kingly robe and crown on the man and let him be led through the town on his own horse, while it was proclaimed: "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour."

Then the king told Haman to hurry and do all this to "Mordecai the Jew." Haman obeyed the king. (How embarrassing this must have been!) Afterward, he was so ashamed that he hurried home with his head covered! His wife and his wise men (the same people who had advised Haman to have Mordecai killed) now realized,

asked who would dare do such a thing. Esther replied, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman."

Haman was very afraid! The king was so angry that he went out into the palace garden. Haman fell before Esther to plead for mercy. When the king came back in, he thought Haman was trying to harm Esther, and he was furious! One of the servants told the king about the gallows Haman had made. King Ahasuerus said, "Hang him thereon." Haman was hung on the very gallows on which he had planned to hang Mordecai.

On that same day, King Ahasuerus gave Haman's house to Esther. Esther told the king that Mordecai was her relative. Then the king gave Mordecai his ring, showing that he would take Haman's place. Also, Esther set Mordecai over Haman's house.

Esther asked the king to reverse the law and spare her people, but what was "written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring" could not be reversed. The king told Mordecai to write letters "in the king's name," as he saw fit. These letters stated that the Jews could gather together and fight for their lives. They could take the belongings of anyone who tried to kill them. These letters were sent to all the provinces.

When the Jews heard this good news, the Bible says, "The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour." On that day when the Jews would have been destroyed, "no man could withstand them." They were able to defend themselves and protect their families.

Mordecai became great in the king's palace, and "his fame went out throughout all the provinces." Afterward, the fourteenth and fifteenth days "of the month Adar" were to be days of "feasting and joy" in remembrance of their deliverance from the wicked Haman. This was called the Feast of Purim.

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**MEMORY VERSE:**

*... who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" —Esther 4:14*  
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# Spiral Word Search

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AHASUERUS  
 VASHTI  
 ESTHER  
 HAMAN  
 MORDECAI  
 JEW  
 KINGDOM  
 SACKCLOTH  
 HATACH  
 SCEPTER  
 MAIDENS  
 BANQUET  
 COURT  
 GALLOWS  
 DECREE  
 PALACE

Queen Esther