

The Book of Esther
A Woman Who Would be Queen



Introduction to the Book of Esther

The events that the first chapter of the book of Esther describes what happened about 483 BC (Before Christ). Esther and Ruth are the only two books of the Bible that are named after women. Over 100 years earlier, Nebuchadnezzar (the king of Babylon) had attacked Jerusalem. He overcame the Jews and he took many of them to Babylon. These Jews endured 70 years of captivity; why? Because they had been disobedient to God by raising up Asherah poles which worship the fertility goddess Astarte and the kings that followed Hezekiah who listened to God, but they did not. Afterwards, just as many times in the past, God heard their cry and sent a God king to free them from their bondage and his name was Cyrus of Persia. After the fall of Babylon, Cyrus encouraged the Jews to return to their homeland and he even offered help in the form of financial aid to help them rebuild the temple and the wall around Jerusalem. However, many Jews stayed behind and seem comfortable under the rule of both Cyrus, his son who would succeed him Darius and finally we come to the current king named Xerxes or in some Bible translations Ahasuerus.

Upon the return of the Jews to Jerusalem only 50,000 would initially return but more than that would remain in Babylon, which is current day Western Iraq. **Why given the opportunity to return to their homeland would so many Jews want to continue to reside in Persia?** Probably because many were making a living there and that being the case were content with being where they were.

We do not know who wrote the book. It may have been Mordecai or Nehemiah. Whoever wrote it knew the customs of Persia well by the descriptive terms used in the book. The book of Esther is mentioned in other portions of the Bible and some people think that it is only a story. They think that it is not true. But, the writer wants us to know that the story is true. At the start of the book, he says when it happened. At the end of the book, he says that the official records included the story about Esther. (See Esther 10:2 and also Esther 2:23.)

An astounding fact in the book of Esther is that the name of God is not found anywhere in the book. This is strange for a book that is in the Bible. Sometimes God seems to be silent just as He was after the closing of the Old Testament book of Malachi

© 2014 – Dr. Oliver L. Johnson, Jr.

and the New Testament where 400 years of silence occurs between God and man. We might even think that God sometimes doesn't care about nor listens to us at times, but the God who sent His Son into the world to die for us does indeed care. The writer of the book of Esther probably wanted his readers to realize that God is always in control. Although we cannot understand and see God's will, He is always doing things in the world. Nobody can stop his plans for they are just that, His plans.

Usually the kings of Persia only married wives from the seven most important families in Persia, but God wanted Esther, who was a *Jew, to be queen because He knew the wicked heart of Haman who will be a prominent figure in the book of Esther. The servants of the king suggested that officials should search all the *kingdom for suitable young girls. The king would then choose his favorite girl and he would make her queen (Esther 2:2-4). God made Esther beautiful (Esther 2:7). And the king chose her to be queen.

Mordecai was Esther's cousin but he acted in the capacity as her stepfather after the death of her own father at an early age. He saved the king's life, but the king forgot to reward him, but God knew that the best time for Mordecai to get his reward, which was much later (Esther 2:21-23).

Haman was the enemy of the *Jews. He wanted to select a lucky date when he could kill the *Jews, so he used the *Purim stones, which were stones used in a game of chance. God made sure that the *Purim stones chose a date nearly a year later after they were cast. God had a special plan to save the *Jews from Haman's plot (Esther 3:7).

As we get into the book of Esther one of the most prominent aspects to take away from the book is that God works on behalf of unbeliever and believers to bring about His will. What would be His will in this case? That the remnant that chose to stay behind would be saved from death as plotted by wicked Haman. Now before we get into the book, the king of Persia is called by two different names depending on what version of the bible you have. He is called Xerxes in several versions and he is also called Ahasuerus.

Xerxes is derived from the Greek language and Xerxes is derived from English when it was translated from the Latin form to the English language.

Another prominent thing I'd like the reader to keep in mind as you read this wonderful book of Esther is that notice how God works in the lives of both those who call upon His

name and in those who do not. Also please take note of how God built up great kingdoms throughout time, but because those kingdoms did not acknowledge Him, they fell and will continue to fall until Jesus Christ comes back and sets up the final and greatest Kingdom of all.

Chapter 1 Commentary

A HALF-DRUNKEN XERXES DEPOSES HIS QUEEN VASHTI

XERXES MAKES PREPARATIONS TO INVADE GREECE

Vs 1-8: " This happened in the days of King Xerxes, who reigned over 127 provinces stretching from India to Ethiopia. **2** At that time he ruled his empire from his throne at the fortress of Susa. **3** In the third year of his reign, he gave a banquet for all his princes and officials. He invited all the military officers of Media and Persia, as well as the noblemen and provincial officials. **4** The celebration lasted six months -- a tremendous display of the opulent wealth and glory of his empire. **5** When it was all over, the king gave a special banquet for all the palace servants and officials -- from the greatest to the least. It lasted for seven days and was held at Susa in the courtyard of the palace garden. **6** The courtyard was decorated with beautifully woven white and blue linen hangings, fastened by purple ribbons to silver rings embedded in marble pillars. Gold and silver couches stood on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and other costly stones. **7** Drinks were served in gold goblets of many designs, and there was an abundance of royal wine, just as the king had commanded. **8** The only restriction on the drinking was that no one should be compelled to take more than he wanted. But those who wished could have as much as they pleased, for the king had instructed his staff to let everyone decide this matter for himself."

What is revealed here is a six-month interval of intense preparations by Xerxes for the invasion of Greece. It was terminated by a big banquet that lasted a week. During this period all of the mighty princes of his extensive dominion were summoned to appear, probably in successive assignments, to be entertained and to see the king's exhibition of his power and riches, and also, most likely, to receive his assignment to them regarding the troops each would supply for that immense army, which he gathered together for the war with Greece.

"Who reigned from India ... to Ethiopia" (Esther 1:1). "A foundation tablet has been recovered from Xerxes' palace at Persepolis which lists both India and Ethiopia as provinces of Xerxes' realm. Also Herodotus a prominent Greek historian mentioned that

© 2014 – Dr. Oliver L. Johnson, Jr. 5

both the Ethiopians and the Indians paid tribute to Xerxes. This in mind, one can see the enormous wealth that Xerxes possessed and why he could afford the lavish and extensive parties.

"Xerxes oversaw One hundred twenty and seven provinces" (Esther 1:1). We learned from Ezra and Nehemiah that there were 27 territories in the Persian Empire; but these divisions were different. "The territories were taxation districts; but these provinces were racial or national units in the vast empire.

"In those days when Xerxes sat on his throne" (Esther 1:2). It is strange that Persian kings almost constantly sat on their throne. "Herodotus the Greek scholar wrote that Xerxes watched the battle of Thermopylae (480 B.C.) seated on a throne! And Plutarch wrote the same thing regarding the battle of Salamis, which came that same year.

"Upon his throne which was in Susa the palace" (Esther 1:2). There were four capitals of Persia; and the king, at times, reigned in each of them. These were: "Susa, Babylon, Ecbatana, and Persepolis.

"In the third year of his reign" (Esther 1:3). As Xerxes came to his throne in the year 486 B.C., this would have been 483, B.C. The magnificent decorations, the luxurious surroundings and all the glory of the Persian palace are beautifully described in the aforementioned verses. It is particularly interesting that drinking vessels of gold, each one of a different design, were features of that concluding banquet.

"And the drinking was according to the law" (Esther 1:8). It is amusing to us that some of the scholars declare that there was not any such law regarding drinking; but the text flatly says there was, and furthermore, it relates what the law was, "They should do according to every man's desire" (Esther 1:8). This was the law, tailor-made for that occasion by the king himself. Drunkenness was almost a universal sin among the Gentiles and rulers, who especially indulged in it. Even Alexander the Great drank himself to death. This great banquet given by Xerxes was by no means a beautiful party. It was an unqualified disaster filled with all sorts of debauchery. **In your opinion, if you work at a job that requires you to go what many call a mixer where alcohol and wild dancing is the order of the night, how would you handle that?**

Verse 9-12

VASHTI REFUSES TO HONOR THE KING'S CALL TO DISPLAY HER BEAUTY

"9 Queen Vashti gave a banquet for the women of the palace at the same time.10 On the seventh day of the feast, when King Xerxes was half drunk with wine, he told Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven eunuchs who attended him, 11 to bring Queen Vashti to him with the royal crown on her head. He wanted all the men to gaze on her beauty, for she was a very beautiful woman. 12 But when they conveyed the king's order to Queen Vashti, she refused to come. This made the king furious, and he burned with anger."

"**When Xerxes was half-drunk**" (Esther 1:10). This appears to this writer as a euphemism with the meaning that the king was indeed very drunk. That this is true appears from the fact of the king's unreasonable request that his prize fleshly possession would be paraded around like a piece of meat was not fitting for a queen of Persia.

"**The seven Eunuchs that ministered before the king**" (Esther 1:10). The fact of these men having access to the king's harem indicates that all of them were eunuchs. Scholars usually suggest that this request of the king was reasonable, but this writer cannot believe that it was reasonable, or else Vashti, knowing the outrageous nature of the king's ungovernable temper, would not have disobeyed him. She most certainly knew that death itself might be the penalty of her refusal. Now what is a Eunuch? It is a man who has been castrated and dedicated to a king or queen's court in the Middle Eastern as well as portions of the African continent i.e. the Ethiopian Eunuch who the Apostle Phillip taught the Word of God afterwards he was baptized. (Ref. Acts 8:26-40).

"**But the queen refused to come**" (Esther 1:12). Scholars have suggested a number of possible reasons why Vashti would not obey the king. **Why do you think she would not come?** In all likelihood, Vashti was pregnant with Artaxerxes I. John Bendor-Samuel writes that, "This banquet probably took place just before the birth of Artaxerxes"; and her natural modesty rebelled against making a display of herself before the king and his well drunken banqueters even at the possibility of death. Another school of thought is

that Vashti was the feminist of her day and could be considered as the first standard bearer for women's rights.

QUEEN VASHTI IS DEPOSED AND DISPOSSESSED

What a heartless, evil wretch was Xerxes! "His design was to present Vashti unveiled before a multitude of semi-drunken revelers ... Xerxes' behavior here was a cruel outrage upon one whom he, above all men, was bound to respect and protect. No man even today would have his wife parade around the room before other drunken men unless he doesn't care about her, but would also be a reflection on him as a person incapable to lead others.

Verse 13-22

"**13** He immediately consulted with his advisers, who knew all the Persian laws and customs, for he always asked their advice. **14** The names of these men were Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan -- seven high officials of Persia and Media. They were his closest associates and held the highest positions in the empire. **15** "What must be done to Queen Vashti?" the king demanded. "What penalty does the law provide for a queen who refuses to obey the king's orders, properly sent through his eunuchs?" **16** Memucan answered the king and his princes, "Queen Vashti has wronged not only the king but also every official and citizen throughout your empire. **17** Women everywhere will begin to despise their husbands when they learn that Queen Vashti has refused to appear before the king. **18** Before this day is out, the wife of every one of us, your officials throughout the empire, will hear what the queen did and will start talking to their husbands the same way. There will be no end to the contempt and anger throughout your realm. **19** So if it pleases the king, we suggest that you issue a written decree, a law of the Persians and Medes that cannot be revoked. It should order that Queen Vashti be forever banished from your presence and that you choose another queen more worthy than she. **20** When this decree is published throughout your vast empire, husbands everywhere, whatever their rank, will receive proper respect from their wives!" **21** The king and his princes thought this made good sense, so he followed Memucan's counsel. **22** He sent letters to all parts of the empire, to each province in its own script and language, proclaiming that every man should be the ruler of his home."

Oh my, the male ego is at stake! Nothing could demonstrate more forcefully the low estate of women in the ancient world than the brutal facts of this outrage against Vashti. In all the societies of mankind where women are unprotected by the teachings of outdated belief systems, women have invariably been reduced to the status so clearly visible in this chapter; i.e. Afghanistan, along with many other Islamic nations are good examples of the thought process in Xerxes day. Only in Jesus Christ are women spiritually elevated to the respected and honored status they deserve; and the great pity of our generation is that women are being wooed and persuaded by political promises of all kinds to give up their worship of the Christ. They are promised "equality" with men; but it is a hollow equality, like that which the women of Russia got when they gave up even an imperfect Christianity for communism. It turned out to be "equality" to carry the bricks, sweep the streets, and work until they dropped dead in the fields. However, for the Christian women, she does not become feministic to the point where the role of marriage is overridden by feminist attitudes of the world.

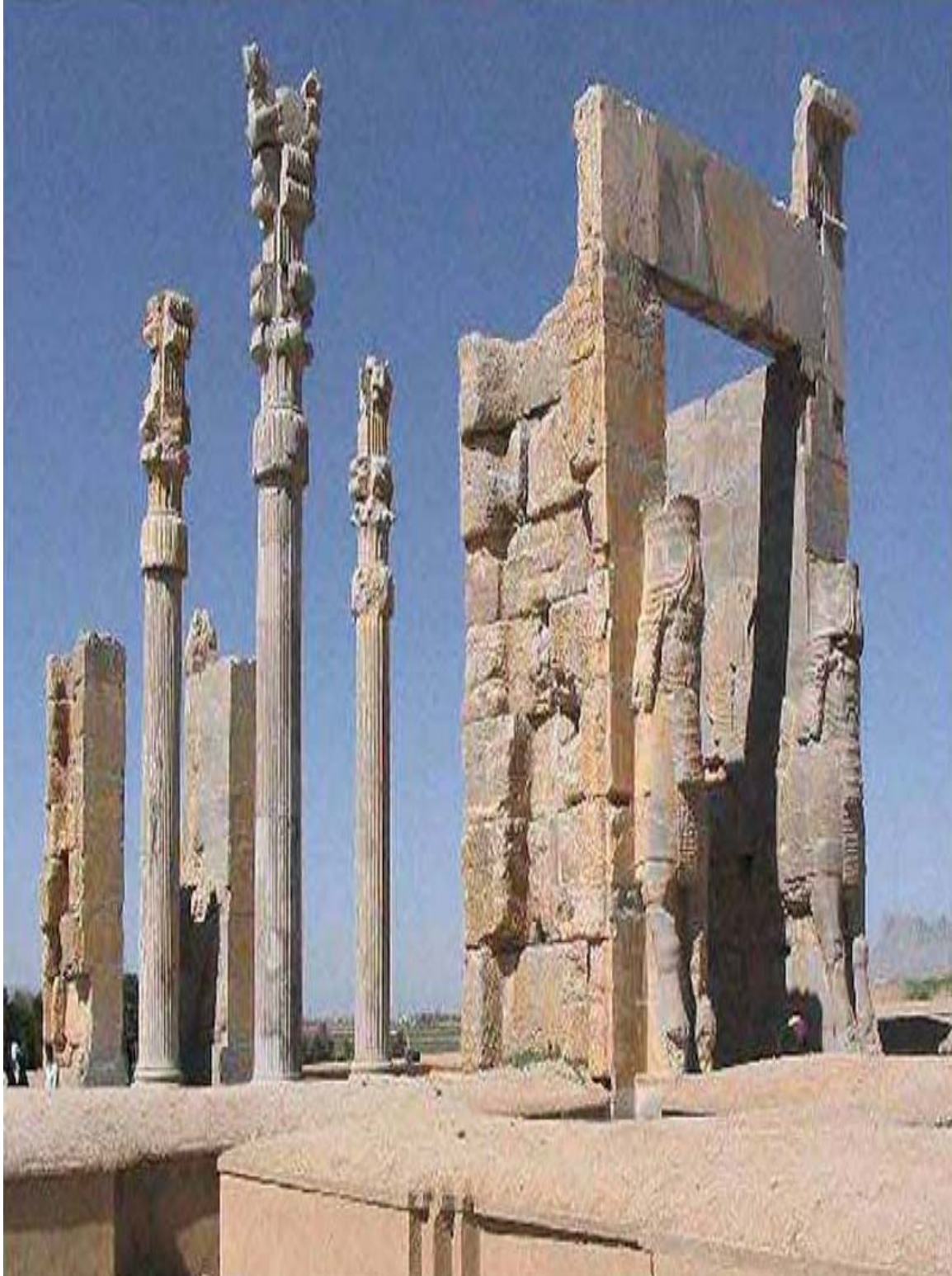
The seven princes of Persia and Media (Esther 1:14). In the book of Daniel, one finds the expression, "The law of the Medes and the Persians"; but a little later in this chapter, it reads, "The law of the Persians and the Medes." Why the difference? In Daniel's day, the king was a Mede (Darius); so the Medes were mentioned first, but now Xerxes, a Persian, was the ruler on his mother's side; so the Persians came first! The Medes and the Persians were the two principal races that formed the Medo-Persian Empire, but it was never two empires - only one.

It is of interest that Xerxes' letter to all the 127 ethnic groups in his empire was addressed to each one of the groups in their native language. Also, there was added that provision that every man should use only his native language in his own house, which certainly presented a problem in homes where there were mixed marriages with the races. Such a law was unenforceable. However judging on how often Xerxes was intoxicated, many strange rulings probably sprang from his throne.



Susa Place As it appeared in the day of Esther where King Xerxes resided. Susa is the Persian Capitol.

<https://www.google.com/search?q=free+domain+pictures+susa+palace&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=viKvU9fxJMaIqAaf7ILoBg&ved=0CCsQsAQ&biw=1920&bih=963>



Susa Palace ruins today. Persia was overthrown by Alexander the Great in 339 B.C.
<https://www.google.com/search?q=free+domain+pictures+susa+palace&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=viKvU9fxJMalqAaf7ILoBg&ved=0CCsQsAQ&biw=1920&bih=963>



Map of Persia and Babylon which is now current day

[https://www.google.com/search?q=free+domain+pictures+susa+palace&tbm=isch&tbo=](https://www.google.com/search?q=free+domain+pictures+susa+palace&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=viKvU9fxJMaIqAaf7ILoBg&ved=0CCsQsAQ&biw=1920&bih=963#q=free+domain+pictures+persia+and+babylon&tbm=isch&facrc=_&imgdii=_&imgrc=80AyzuQ_dJFTgM%253A%3BEOjasMTw3sbRbM%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fupload.wikimedia.org%252Fwikipedia%252Fcommons%252Fthumb%252Fd%252Fdc%252FAncient_near_east_540_bc.svg%252F1249px-)

[u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=viKvU9fxJMaIqAaf7ILoBg&ved=0CCsQsAQ&biw=1920&bih=963#](https://www.google.com/search?q=free+domain+pictures+persia+and+babylon&tbm=isch&facrc=_&imgdii=_&imgrc=80AyzuQ_dJFTgM%253A%3BEOjasMTw3sbRbM%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fupload.wikimedia.org%252Fwikipedia%252Fcommons%252Fthumb%252Fd%252Fdc%252FAncient_near_east_540_bc.svg%252F1249px-)

[q=free+domain+pictures+persia+and+babylon&tbm=isch&facrc=_&imgdii=_&imgrc=80Ayz](https://www.google.com/search?q=free+domain+pictures+persia+and+babylon&tbm=isch&facrc=_&imgdii=_&imgrc=80AyzuQ_dJFTgM%253A%3BEOjasMTw3sbRbM%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fupload.wikimedia.org%252Fwikipedia%252Fcommons%252Fthumb%252Fd%252Fdc%252FAncient_near_east_540_bc.svg%252F1249px-)

[uQ_dJFTgM%253A%3BEOjasMTw3sbRbM%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fupload.wikimedia.or](https://www.google.com/search?q=free+domain+pictures+persia+and+babylon&tbm=isch&facrc=_&imgdii=_&imgrc=80AyzuQ_dJFTgM%253A%3BEOjasMTw3sbRbM%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fupload.wikimedia.org%252Fwikipedia%252Fcommons%252Fthumb%252Fd%252Fdc%252FAncient_near_east_540_bc.svg%252F1249px-)

[g%252Fwikipedia%252Fcommons%252Fthumb%252Fd%252Fdc%252FAncient_near_east_5](https://www.google.com/search?q=free+domain+pictures+persia+and+babylon&tbm=isch&facrc=_&imgdii=_&imgrc=80AyzuQ_dJFTgM%253A%3BEOjasMTw3sbRbM%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fupload.wikimedia.org%252Fwikipedia%252Fcommons%252Fthumb%252Fd%252Fdc%252FAncient_near_east_540_bc.svg%252F1249px-)

[40_bc.svg%252F1249px-](https://www.google.com/search?q=free+domain+pictures+persia+and+babylon&tbm=isch&facrc=_&imgdii=_&imgrc=80AyzuQ_dJFTgM%253A%3BEOjasMTw3sbRbM%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fupload.wikimedia.org%252Fwikipedia%252Fcommons%252Fthumb%252Fd%252Fdc%252FAncient_near_east_540_bc.svg%252F1249px-)

Chapter 2 Commentary

ESTHER BECOMES QUEEN INSTEAD OF VASHTI

This chapter takes us into the Haram of Xerxes, who will prove to be one of the vilest cesspools of immorality, selfishness, greed, hatred, wickedness, lust and shame that existed in the ancient pagan world.

In order to protect and preserve the chosen people, God worked His will in the lives of the evil men who controlled and directed the affairs related in this chapter. What is of prominent note in chapter 2 of this book is that there is no condemnation regarding the behavior of Xerxes and his government. This palace Susa was a den of iniquity, fornication and selfish grandiose behavior. This should be as a warning to many countries today that harbors such attitudes thinking their country is safe from the wrath of God. Kingdoms and Kingdoms go, mainly because of their disobedience to God and their evil and wicked ways. There are many examples of nations that fell who thought they were too powerful to fail: Persia being one of them even though they would eventually rise again with Sadaam Husain as their leader, but he too fell. Other great countries though too big to fall were: Assyria, Greece, Rome, Babylon Germany and the Soviet Union.

THE SEARCH FOR A REPLACEMENT FOR VASHTI

VS. 1-4

1 But after Xerxes' anger had cooled, he began thinking about Vashti and what she had done and the decree he had made. 2 So his attendants suggested, "Let us search the empire to find beautiful young virgins for the king. 3 Let the king appoint agents in each province to bring these beautiful young women into the royal harem at Susa. Hegai, the eunuch in charge, will see that they are all given beauty treatments. 4 After that, the young woman who pleases you most will be made queen instead of Vashti." This advice was very appealing to the king, so he put the plan into effect immediately."

"**After these things ... he remembered Vashti.**" This means after the Grecian campaign, Xerxes had begun to seek a more normal pattern of living. The last clause is

subtle in nature suggesting that the king desired to reinstate Vashti, but he had signed an irrevocable decree against her. This is probably true, because his son, and heir, Artaxerxes I, born during the Grecian campaign, or just prior to it, was now, no doubt a charming child of three or four years of age. The king found himself a victim of his own drunken and extravagant decree against Vashti; but there was nothing he could do about it. Sometimes when we make decisions either hastily or under the influence of alcohol, illegal substances, we are not making a decision that is prudent nor in many cases competent. Xerxes is pinning over the absence of Vashti, but it is now too late for although he is king, he is bound by the laws of the nation of Persia. Of course, he might have tried to reinstate Vashti, but the king's advisors, in such a development, might easily have fallen under the severe wrath and punishment inflicted upon them by a restored Vashti; therefore, they proposed this shameful rape of all the pretty girls in Persia as a prerequisite for the choice of Vashti's successor. It is clear that this man indeed lives by his fleshly desires regardless of who it may hurt thereby leaving one of the opinion that Xerxes is an evil and lascivious king.

"And the king did so" (Esther 2:4). This means that they searched throughout the vast domain of the Persian Empire, and brought "all the fair young virgins to Susa" (Esther 2:3). "What unspeakable horror this must have caused among all the beautiful young women of Persia! They were forcibly taken from their homes, turned over to a eunuch in the house of the women, and secluded for life among the wretched company of the king's concubines. The king would gratify his lust upon these girls, one each night, as they came to his bed and then what happened? They were returned to the harem, henceforth and forever mere chattels, his property, having no more rights than one of the king's dogs.

However, Xerxes was not alone in his behavior towards women. Even the kings of Israel did similar things to their women. For instance, the bible says in regards to King David: "And David took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem, after he came from Hebron, and more sons and daughters were born to David" (2 Samuel 5:13). What is a concubine? A woman who is sexually subservient is similar to a Haram. Moreover, the bible says about King Solomon: "He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray." (1 Kings 11:3). In regards to the two aforementioned Kings, this was not God's desire that they have all these wives especially Solomon who married women who worshipped Pagan gods and he himself fell into

idolatry and God would snatch his kingdom away from but not until after he died. God then handed Solomon's kingdom not to his son Reaboam but to one of his former servants Jereboam because of all this womanizing which led him astray (Ref. 1 Kings 10:11).

Let's also understand one other fact in regards to these young women of Persia. They had no say-so what-so-ever in regards to becoming part of Xerxes' harem and their lives were reserved for the fleshly pleasure of the king until they became too old or their beauty faded to the point to where their services were no longer needed.

Verse 5-8

THE INTRODUCTION OF MORDECAI AND ESTHER

"**5** Now at the fortress of Susa there was a certain Jew named Mordecai son of Jair. He was from the tribe of Benjamin and was a descendant of Kish and Shimei. **6** His family had been exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar, along with King Jehoiachin of Judah and many others. **7** This man had a beautiful and lovely young cousin, Hadassah, who was also called Esther. When her father and mother had died, Mordecai adopted her into his family and raised her as his own daughter. "

"**Mordecai**" (Esther 2:5). This name is said to be derived from the pagan god Marduk, meaning "dedicated to Mars. Evidently Mordecai's parents were worshipping pagan gods before and after the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon.

"**Carried away from Jerusalem (by) Nebuchadnezzar**" (Esther 2:6). That deportation of Jews was more than a century prior to the events of this chapter; and the meaning appears to be that Mordecai's parents or grandparents were the ones carried away. Mordecai's name suggests that he was born in Babylon, although the Babylonians generally changed the names of people whom they employed, as in the case of Daniel. "The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego. (ref. Daniel 1:7).

Verse 8-11

" **8** As a result of the king's decree, Esther, along with many other young women, was brought to the king's harem at the fortress of Susa and placed in Hegai's care. **9** Hegai

was very impressed with Esther and treated her kindly. He quickly ordered a special menu for her and provided her with beauty treatments. He also assigned her seven maids specially chosen from the king's palace, and he moved her and her maids into the best place in the harem. **10** Esther had not told anyone of her nationality and family background, for Mordecai had told her not to. **11** Every day Mordecai would take a walk near the courtyard of the harem to ask about Esther and to find out what was happening to her.

The key development here was Hegai's partiality to Esther. It is evident that she not only displayed great beauty, but she probably showed some other quality not shown by other women. More than likely Esther displayed a wonderful character; she carried herself majestically and she was not the type of woman who was unapproachable. Sometimes extreme beauty can make a woman unapproachable unless she shows through some other avenue that she is well mannered and down to earth. How many times have you met a woman or man who was either very beautiful or very handsome yet were very arrogant in their behavior thereby making them unapproachable because one just doesn't want to be bothered with people like that. The words speedily and the best place (Esther 2:9) show that Hegai probably shortened the one year stay in the house of women for Esther and that he moved her as quickly as possible into the rotation for the king's bed.

Verse 12-15

ESTHER'S TURN TO GO IN TO THE KING

"**12** Before each young woman was taken to the king's bed, she was given the prescribed twelve months of beauty treatments -- six months with oil of myrrh, followed by six months with special perfumes and ointments. **13** When the time came for her to go in to the king, she was given her choice of whatever clothing or jewelry she wanted to enhance her beauty. **14** That evening she was taken to the king's private rooms, and the next morning she was brought to the second harem, where the king's wives lived. There she would be under the care of Shaashgaz, another of the king's eunuchs. She would live there for the rest of her life, never going to the king again unless he had especially enjoyed her and requested her by name. **15** When it was Esther's turn to go to the king, she accepted the advice of Hegai, the eunuch in charge of the harem. She asked for nothing except what he suggested, and she was admired by everyone who saw her."

"In the evening she went; the next morning brought to the second harem" (Esther 2:14). What a sad situation for these poor women who were used generally speaking for nothing but sex and if they were special in some way, the king would request her appearance again? One fretful night in the bed with Xerxes, and the next morning relegated to the status of a concubine, never more to see him, unless called by name; and the odds are that he did not even remember the names of half of them. The text states that there were many of these women. Also from our text we see that many of these women had to endure a lonely life for there were no special men in their lives, therefore there was no loving connection of a husband/wife type of relationship; the only friends they had were the other women in the harem. Moreover, these lonely women could not display any type of lesbian tendencies because in doing so would bring death because that wasn't tolerated in that day nor is it still not tolerated in Middle-Eastern countries to this day.



Ester being Attended to by one of the palace servants

https://www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl#q=free+domain+picture+of+queen+esther

Verse 16-18

ESTHER BECOMES QUEEN OF PERSIA

"**16** When Esther was taken to King Xerxes at the royal palace in early winter of the seventh year of his reign, **17** the king loved her more than any of the other young women.

He was so delighted with her that he set the royal crown on her head and declared her queen instead of Vashti. **18** To celebrate the occasion, he gave a banquet in Esther's honor for all his princes and servants, giving generous gifts to everyone and declaring a public festival for the provinces.

Only Almighty God could have brought to pass such a thing as Esther, a Jew becoming queen. "This humble Jewish maiden, an orphan, dependent for her living upon the charity of her cousin Mordecai - this girl became the first woman in all Persia, the wife of the most powerful living monarch on earth, the queen of an empire comprised of more than half the world of that time. God placed something in Esther's heart that none of the other women who came to Xerxes had, which was a beauty beyond the senses; a beauty of lying besides a cool spring watching the waters fall majestically from a cliff; a beauty of someone to talk to whose conversation was thought provoking and enjoyable; that's why he immediately put the crown on her head (vs 17).

It didn't take several visits by Esther for this king to make up his mind of who would succeed Vashti. It was always the Lord in his infinite wisdom who laid His plans to preserve the remnant of the Jews from destruction. He sent Joseph to be seated next to the throne of Egypt; He brought up Moses in the palace of Pharaoh and made him an heir to the throne; in the land of their captivity, he made Daniel the third ruler in the kingdom during the Babylonian captivity; now, when Satan would again make a move to destroy many in the Jewish community, God placed Esther in a strategic position to prevent it. It happened again with Cyrus the great who would be a type of Christ in saving the Jewish nation for he would be the catalyst in the effort to restore God's people back to their prominent position of not only in their homeland, but in God's heart.

Esther 2:19-23

MORDECAI SAVES THE KING FROM ASSASSINATION

"**19** Even after all the young women had been transferred to the second harem and Mordecai had become a palace official, **20** Esther continued to keep her nationality and family background a secret. She was still following Mordecai's orders, just as she did when she was living in his home. **21** One day as Mordecai was on duty at the palace, two

of the king's eunuchs, Bigthana and Teresh -- who were guards at the door of the king's private quarters -- became angry at King Xerxes and plotted to assassinate him. **22** But Mordecai heard about the plot and passed the information on to Queen Esther. She then told the king about it and gave Mordecai credit for the report. **23** When an investigation was made and Mordecai's story was found to be true, the two men were hanged on a gallows. This was all duly recorded in The Book of the History of King Xerxes' Reign."

"And when the young women were gathered together the second time" (Esther 2:19). This indicates the time when Mordecai discovered a plot against Xerxes. There were two gatherings of virgins for the king, the one mentioned in Esther 2:8, and a second one after that. It was at that second collection of virgins that Mordecai had the good fortune to save the king's life. Now why did Esther keep her nationality from the eunuchs and Xerxes (vs. 20)? Probably because of God's divine providence for it was not yet time for her to disclose that. In addition, what was the reason for Bigthana's and Teresh's desire to assassinate Xerxes? Two reasons suggest themselves: 1st The eunuchs occupied or guarded the inner most doors to the king's bed chambers having the greatest access to him yet they burned with anger over the promotion of Mordecai for they had previously thought of him as only a street Jew not worthy of such a position. Secondly, these men had formed a close relationship with Vashti and saw her deportation as an affront to her dignity as queen. Both of these reasons are only conjecture, but if we look closely at what has happen so far, these can be one or both reasons for these eunuchs wanting to assassinate Xerxes. It would have been quite easy to agree with Bigthana and Teresh, for Xerxes certainly deserved to be murdered in the eyes of many; a fate that he indeed suffered about thirteen years later at the hands of one of his eunuchs. Having said that, why would Mordecai even say anything since this king has literally forced himself upon his stepdaughter? Because he knew that by her being queen, she was the best avenue in ensuring the Jews had a place at the table in Babylon along with many other nationalities; once again God's divine providence is still in play because His hand is at work in this whole story even though as we go along we do not see His name mentioned at all.

Chapter 3 Commentary

Verse 1-6

HAMAN'S PLOT TO KILL THE ENTIRE JEWISH RACE

"**1** Some time later, King Xerxes promoted Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite to prime minister, making him the most powerful official in the empire next to the king himself. **2** All the king's officials would bow down before Haman to show him respect whenever he passed by, for so the king had commanded. But Mordecai refused to bow down or show him respect. **3** Then the palace officials at the king's gate asked Mordecai, "Why are you disobeying the king's command?" **4** They spoke to him day after day, but still he refused to comply with the order. So they spoke to Haman about this to see if he would tolerate Mordecai's conduct, since Mordecai had told them he was a Jew. **5** When Haman saw that Mordecai would not bow down or show him respect, he was filled with rage. **6** So he decided it was not enough to lay hands on Mordecai alone. Since he had learned that Mordecai was a Jew, he decided to destroy all the Jews throughout the entire empire of Xerxes. "

"Why did Mordecai not bow to Haman even though he was told to?" (Esther 1:4).

Before we answer this question, notice that Haman is called "the Agagite", which is a term to describe King Agag of the Amalekites whereby it is viewed as meaning either a literal descendant of Agag or an anti-Semite; the Amalekites having come to be symbolic of the antithesis of Judaism because these were the first nation to fall to the Jews when they came out of Egypt. Therefore, Haman is viewed as a descendent of King Agag of the Amalekite race. That being said, Haman would carry the deep-seated hatred of the Jews for the literal destruction of his race of people.

It was improper for a Jew to bow before a mortal man hence the situation a hundred years before when Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, would not bow to a great statue in Babylon honoring Nebuchadnezzar and were thrown into the fiery furnace or when Daniel who was thrown into the lions den for the same. Joseph the son of Jacob was told to bow before Pharaoh and neither would he. Now, even though Mordecai had told these palace officials that he was a Jew, this did not make a difference to Haman and he sought

to destroy a whole people because of the conduct of one man. It is evident through these verses that Haman is indeed a wicked man who seeks to commit genocide because of the perceived wrong by one person. I believe that it all runs more deeply than one man's refusal to bow to Haman. I believe that he had a deep-seated hatred for Jews in generally that I talked about earlier and this act by Mordecai made a sore that was already there even more painful. He probably came by his position through some deceitful avenue. Haman was a very proud man who was not only rich but cunning as well. He had all the attributes of Satan; that being said, Satan was well at home in Haman's heart and he wanted to be worshipped; something that no Jew would do. Therefore, when others queried Mordecai as to his reason not bowing before Haman, his response was that he would be breaking both the first and the second commandments "you shall have no other gods before me, and you shall not bow down to any graven image.

Verse 7-11

HAMAN RECEIVES THE KING'S PERMISSION TO DESTROY ISRAEL

"7 So in the month of April, during the twelfth year of King Xerxes' reign, lots were cast (the lots were called purim) to determine the best day and month to take action. And the day selected was March 7, nearly a year later. 8 Then Haman approached King Xerxes and said, "There is a certain race of people scattered through all the provinces of your empire. Their laws are different from those of any other nation, and they refuse to obey even the laws of the king. So it is not in the king's interest to let them live. 9 If it please Your Majesty, issue a decree that they be destroyed, and I will give 375 tons of silver to the government administrators so they can put it into the royal treasury." 10 The king agreed, confirming his decision by removing his signet ring from his finger and giving it to Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite -- the enemy of the Jews. 11 "Keep the money," the king told Haman, "but go ahead and do as you like with these people."

First of all, what are lots called purim? These are stones cast to determine a specific act or event in some future date. Some ask, "why would any king have given blanket permission to anyone to destroy a considerable percentage of the people in his whole kingdom"? The answer to that is, "Xerxes certainly did so out of fear and carelessness; all

Xerxes cared about was drinking, partying, having a good time and having sex with many women. Moreover, this shows that Xerxes is also a coward since he does not want his name attached to the law that all the Jews in Babylon be killed.

So, Haman convinces the king and as a sign of solidarity, the king gives Haman a very important piece of his governing powers; his signet ring, which gave Haman the power to do many things through the scribes who after writing the order down from the king's governing body (Haman) would become law and the signet ring would be stamped on the law making it public. Even that was not any more unreasonable or stupid than some other actions of that evil significantly, Haman was so sure of receiving the king's permission, that he actually cast lots for the day he would do it before mentioning the matter to the king. Also, that tremendous promise of ten thousand talents of silver (vs. 9), which was well over \$10,000,000.00 (today's wealth), which Haman promised to pay into the king's treasury, was also most likely based upon the presumption by Haman that the king would not accept it.

Verse 12-15

THE DAY WAS SET; THE DECREE WAS SIGNED; THE MASSACRE WAS ANNOUNCED

"**12** On April 17 Haman called in the king's secretaries and dictated letters to the princes, the governors of the respective provinces, and the local officials of each province in their own scripts and languages. These letters were signed in the name of King Xerxes, sealed with his ring, **13** and sent by messengers into all the provinces of the empire. The letters decreed that all Jews -- young and old, including women and children -- must be killed, slaughtered, and annihilated on a single day. This was scheduled to happen nearly a year later on March 7. The property of the Jews would be given to those who killed them. **14** A copy of this decree was to be issued in every province and made known to all the people, so that they would be ready to do their duty on the appointed day. **15** At the king's command, the decree went out by the swiftest messengers, and it was proclaimed in the fortress of Susa. Then the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Susa fell into confusion."

God's people never faced a more terrible threat than this one; to be annihilated and live in mortal fear for almost a whole year. The egomaniac Haman had engineered that which might easily have destroyed a very large portion of a race of His chosen people; but, there was no way that God would have allowed such a thing to happen because all of the glorious promises of the Messiah to redeem men from their sins were contingent upon the preservation of the Israel of God until that Messiah was born in Bethlehem. God had foreseen this threat. He had foreseen it when king Saul was ordered (by God) to destroy the Amalekites. Saul failed to do so; but God did not abandon his people even though the writer of Esther does not indicate any type of prayer for deliverance.

God used the drunken request of Xerxes to degrade Vashti the queen; he elevated an orphan Jewish girl to take her place; he planted the name of Mordecai in the chronicles of the king; and he would remind Xerxes of that fact at precisely the proper instant. Oh yes, for all of his power and hatred, Haman had undertaken to do that which was impossible.

Not let's propose another question at this point. Why would God save 150,000 Jews in Babylon, but allow over 6 million to be destroyed in German? That is a very interesting question isn't it? God promised in Jeremiah that He would save the Jews; let's go to that wonderful prophet and says, "'Do not be afraid, Jacob my servant; do not be dismayed, Israel. I will surely save you out of a distant place, your descendants from the land of their exile. Jacob will again have peace and security, and no one will make him afraid" (Jeremiah 46:27). Now, just as God did not allow all the Jews to be killed by the Babylonian invasions (many were killed), He did not allow the Jews to be destroyed in said country nor did He allow all the Jews to be exterminated in Nazi Germany. A lot of them were killed, but not all. Now let's look at another assurance of God and comes from the book of Isaiah and says, "Nations will take them and bring them to their own place. And Israel will take possession of the nations and make them male and female servants in the LORD's land. They will make captives of their captors and rule over their oppressors" (Isaiah 14:2)." You see God's master plan of which occurs in posterity (future generations) for Israel?

"And the king and Haman sat down to drink" (Esther 3:15). A little later in this narrative, we shall read of the execution of Haman by what amounted to his crucifixion. But, sad as a thing like that surely is, it should be remembered that Haman was the kind

of man who could condemn unnumbered thousands, perhaps even as many as a million people, to murder by wholesale massacre, and then sit down to drink liquor and enjoy himself without any remorse whatsoever. The fate encountered by this servant of the devil would be fully realized.

Chapter 4 Commentary

THE ISRAEL OF GOD IN SACKCLOTH; ASHES; AND TEARS

The last verse of the previous chapter mentioned that the city of Susa was in a state of confusion. Although the Jews certainly had enemies in Susa, the majority of the Persians were Zoroastrians (official religion of the Persian Empire), and were likely to sympathize with the Jews. There might also have been other national groups in Persia who would have been alarmed and apprehensive at the king's decision to slaughter all the Jews. Some might have been fearful that their group might be next. It must have been a major shock to the Persian capital when the king's decree became known.

MORDECAI LEARNS ALL THAT WAS DONE

Verse 1-3

" When Mordecai learned what had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, crying with a loud and bitter wail. **2** He stood outside the gate of the palace, for no one was allowed to enter while wearing clothes of mourning. **3** And as news of the king's decree reached all the provinces, there was great mourning among the Jews. They fasted, wept, and wailed, and many people lay in sackcloth and ashes."

This great mourning prevailed in every province of the vast empire, including Jerusalem and Judaea of course. Although the name of God is not mentioned in Esther (as we indicated earlier), this outpouring of grief on the part of the Chosen People was nothing at all unless it was an appeal for God's intervention to save his people from their threatened destruction. The sackcloth and ashes were universally recognized as signs of extreme grief and distress, but both together were indications of the most distressing grief possible. All the Jews throughout Persia broke out into mourning, weeping, and lamentations, while many of them exhibited their mourning as did Mordecai. Mordecai's purpose for such a visible demonstration of his mourning was to alert Esther that something was terribly wrong and to get the truth of the situation and its seriousness to Esther because he at that time, did not have access to her court..

Verse 4-8

ESTHER THE QUEEN GETS A FULL REPORT FROM MORDECAI

"**4** When Queen Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai, she was deeply distressed. She sent clothing to him to replace the sackcloth, but he refused it. **5** Then Esther sent for Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs who had been appointed as her attendant. She ordered him to go to Mordecai and find out what was troubling him and why he was in mourning. **6** So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the square in front of the palace gate. **7** Mordecai told him the whole story and told him how much money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. **8** Mordecai gave Hathach a copy of the decree issued in Susa that called for the death of all Jews, and he asked Hathach to show it to Esther. He also asked Hathach to explain it to her and to urge her to go to the king to beg for mercy and plead for her people.."

"**Esther sent clothing to Mordecai ... but he refused it**" (Esther 4:4). "Mordecai's refusal to accept the clothing was evidence to Esther that his actions were not caused by personal sorrow, but by an unusually dire public calamity.

"**The exact amount of money that Haman agreed to pay**" (Esther 4:7). Throughout the Book of Esther, it is evident that Mordecai had access to any information that he requested; and this mention of that ten thousand talents of silver Haman agreed to pay the king indicates, that regardless of the king's seeming refusal of it, that it became finally a binding part of the agreement. The most natural interpretation of this is that the king's acceptance of the blood money was part of the transaction.

"**To declare it unto her**" (Esther 4:8). This means that Hathach was probably intended to read it to the queen; she might not have known the Persian language.

"**To ask Esther to beg for mercy from the King**" (Esther 4:8). This means that Hathach, at least, and probably all of Esther's maidens and servants knew that she was a Jewess, but they have been dedicated to her all these years and were not about to disclose this fact to anyone else. Even if she had not told it to them, they would soon have known it through her concern for and interest in Mordecai. The king, however, probably did not learn of it until Esther told him.

Verse 9-12

MORDECAI'S REQUEST OF ESTHER LOADED WITH DANGER

"**9** So Hathach returned to Esther with Mordecai's message. **10** Then Esther told Hathach to go back and relay this message to Mordecai: **11** "The whole world knows that anyone who appears before the king in his inner court without being invited is doomed to die unless the king holds out his gold scepter. And the king has not called for me to come to him in more than a month." **12** So Hathach gave Esther's message to Mordecai "

"**The golden sceptre**" (Esther 4:11). In all of the numerous representations of Persian kings (by sculptors and inscriptions recovered by archaeologists), the king holds a long tapering staff (the sceptre of Esther). Death was the penalty for any person who came unbidden into the private area of a Persian king. By her reply, Esther did not refuse to accept Mordecai's charge; she merely apprised him of the extreme danger to herself in such a request. Esther was also apprehensive that the king had not invited her into his presence in months, indicating that his love for her had dwindled if not all together disappeared. We must remember that just because Xerxes made Esther Queen did not mean he stopped having sex with the other women of his haram for this was not the case. Nevertheless, Esther's apprehension was justified because there was certainly no guarantee that the king would be pleased by her coming uninvited into his presence.

Verse 13-17

MORDECAI CHARGED ESTHER TO TAKE THE RISK TO SEE THE KING

"**13** Mordecai sent back this reply to Esther: "Don't think for a moment that you will escape there in the palace when all other Jews are killed. **14** If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. What's more, who can say but that you have been elevated to the palace for just such a time as this?" **15** Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: **16** "Go and gather together all the Jews of Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will do the same. And then, though it is against the law, I will go in to see the king. If I must die, I am willing to die." **17** So Mordecai went away and did as Esther told him.."

I think it can safely be said that initially when Xerxes met Esther, he sensed that she was a woman of courage an attribute that he admired in her. Now, her courage would be put to the test along with her obedience to Mordecai who raised her to be both respectful and obedient to his request. In verse 16 Esther shows a leadership never seen before in any woman in the bible. She gave instructions for both Mordecai and her Jewish brethren to fast for 3 days. Fasting in the Old Testament was generally done in times of distress.

"If you keep quit deliverance will arise from some other place ... but you and your relatives will die." (Esther 4:14). "Mordecai's argument here was brutal in its clarity. Death awaited Esther whether or not she went in to the king. She had nothing to lose. If she failed, deliverance would come from some other place for the Jews in the city, but Esther and all her relatives would die. Now, what other place could Mordecai be talking about? Mordecai is more than likely confident that God will not allow the destruction of His people. Without naming his name, he implies a trust in his gracious promises, and a conviction that Haman's purpose will be frustrated; how, he knows is not indicated, but certainly in some way or other he knows. "But, thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed." **A denunciation of Divine vengeance.** Though the nation will be saved, it will not benefit you Esther; you will fall into a just judgment - having endeavored to save your life, you will lose it - and your "father's house will be involved in your ruin which included me Mordecai. Notice still the absence of the name of God not being called upon. What I find so amazing is that through all this distress the Jews in this story are going through, God is not mentioned once! Nevertheless, what we see so far is that although the name of the Lord is not called upon to help them, God is still working to save not only Esther and Mordecai, but the Jews left behind in Babylon for His will be done.

Some scholars make a big thing out of there being no mention of God's name in the Book of Esther; nevertheless a most vital and living faith in God is evident in every line of it. Why all that fasting (and prayer that always accompanied it)? Why? It was an appeal for God's help. Even the writer chose not to mention the name of the Lord, these people prayed and fasted; prayed to who; why the Almighty God who had delivered them on numerous occasions.

Note here that Mordecai expected deliverance from some other quarter, even if Esther failed. Why? He believed in God's protection of the chosen people.

Chapter 5 Commentary

Verse 1-4

HAMAN PREPARES TO EXECUTE MORDECAI AT ONCE

"**1** Three days later, Esther put on her royal robes and entered the inner court of the palace, just across from the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne, facing the entrance. **2** When he saw Queen Esther standing there in the inner court, he welcomed her, holding out the gold scepter to her. So Esther approached and touched its tip. **3** Then the king asked her, "What do you want, Queen Esther? What is your request? I will give it to you, even if it is half the kingdom!" **4** And Esther replied, "If it please Your Majesty, let the king and Haman come today to a banquet I have prepared for the king."

"**Three days later ... Esther put on her royal apparel.**" (Esther 5:1). This was the third day of her fasting, during which she had not worn her royal apparel; perhaps she had even been clad in sackcloth, which indicated a sign of mourning.

"**The king sat on his royal throne**" (Esther 5:1) Haman sat on his throne even though he wasn't holding a royal court. I believe he did this to reassure himself that he was king for this man was filled with pride and arrogance hardly seen by anyone else in the bible.

"**Esther the queen standing in the inner court**" (Esther 5:2). This was the moment of truth for Esther. If the king had merely refrained from noticing her appearance, she would have been dragged out of the court and slaughtered. One can only imagine her excitement and fear, as she stood there, facing either her death or the king's forgiveness of her intrusion, her thoughts wavering between hope and fear.

"**Then said the king, What do you want, queen Esther?**" (Esther 5:3). The king received her with honor. So far so good. The victory belonged to Esther and her people; but only IF (and what an **IF** that was!) Esther's request, when made known to the king, would actually be granted.

"**It shall be given you, even to the half of my kingdom**" (Esther 5:3). Such a kingly oath was hyperbole, of course; nevertheless it was a mighty promise indeed. Herod the
© 2014 – Dr. Oliver L. Johnson, Jr.

second said the same thing to Herodias who danced before him while he was drunk and she got what she wanted for she desired the head of John the Baptist.

"Let the king and Haman come this day to the banquet I have prepared" (Esther 5:4). This is a surprise for one might expect Esther to ask for the immediacy of the rescue of the Jews. But Esther was too cautious, too wary of the dangerous ground upon which she stood, to risk it all at once. She would wait; she would gain time; she would be sure that she had the king's affection before she makes that appeal upon which life of a remnant hung in the balance.

Here in the attitude of the king we find an example of a great truth that, "The king's heart is in the hand of Jehovah as the watercourses" (Proverbs 21:1). The fate of ancient Israel turned upon the whim of this all-powerful monarch, but that response, in this situation, moved in perfect harmony with God's will.

Verse 5-8

ESTHER DELAYS HER REQUEST UNTIL A SECOND BANQUET

5 The king turned to his attendants and said, "Tell Haman to come quickly to a banquet, as Esther has requested." So the king and Haman went to Esther's banquet.**6** And while they were drinking wine, the king said to Esther, "Now tell me what you really want. What is your request? I will give it to you, even if it is half the kingdom!" **7** Esther replied, "This is my request and deepest wish. **8** If Your Majesty is pleased with me and wants to grant my request, please come with Haman tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for you. Then tomorrow I will explain what this is all about."

What we see so far is that Esther is a very shrewd and intelligent person; characteristics that made her queen in the first place. She was not about to place all her cards on the table especially in a place that she wasn't comfortable in. She wanted to play ball on her home turf that being her living quarters. In verses 6-8 we find Xerxes and Haman at the queen's banquet and he ask her again what it was that she desired and restated that whatever it is he would grant even if it meant giving up half his kingdom, but Esther takes another gamble here where she tries the king's patience and tells him to wait until

tomorrow. Why would Esther want to wait another day; what difference would it make? Since the king has laid on Esther in this moment, she hopes the affection he felt for her would be rekindled and secondly, there is a saying that anticipation of the heart is good for the soul.

Verse 9-14

HAMAN PREPARES FOR THE EXECUTION OF MORDECAI

"**9** What a happy man Haman was as he left the banquet! But when he saw Mordecai sitting at the gate, not standing up or trembling nervously before him, he was furious. **10** However, he restrained himself and went on home. Then he gathered together his friends and Zeresh, his wife, **11** and boasted to them about his great wealth and his many children. He bragged about the honors the king had given him and how he had been promoted over all the other officials and leaders. **12** Then Haman added, "And that's not all! Queen Esther invited only me and the king himself to the banquet she prepared for us. And she has invited me to dine with her and the king again tomorrow!" **13** Then he added, "But all this is meaningless as long as I see Mordecai the Jew just sitting there at the palace gate." **14** So Haman's wife, Zeresh, and all his friends suggested, "Set up a gallows that stands seventy-five feet tall, and in the morning ask the king to hang Mordecai on it. When this is done, you can go on your merry way to the banquet with the king." This pleased Haman immensely, and he ordered the gallows set up."

The picture of Haman that emerges here is a good example of, "The deceived sinner, glorying in himself, hating God, and God's people. Although Esther's maids and other attendants knew of her Jewish race, Haman obviously did not; and that ignorance was his undoing.

We see Haman both glorifying in himself to his family while exercising his intense hatred for Mordecai and then springs an idea from his wife. She says hang him from the highest tree! Some critics have found fault with the height of the gallows mentioned here, making it imaginative, untrue, or ridiculous, but they overlook the key fact that the text does not say how high the gallows was. The text only states that Haman's advisers recommended a gallows that high. Crucifixion was the usual form of punishment in

Persia. It was Zeresh, Haman's wife, who mentioned that the gallows should be 75 feet high, but that was nothing more than a remark as that once heard in the old west that, "So and so should be hanged as high as heaven"!

Chapter 6 Commentary

Verse 1-3

HAMAN GETS THE SHOCK OF HIS LIFE; THE KING'S DECISION TO REWARD MORDECAI

"**1**That night the king had trouble sleeping, so he ordered an attendant to bring the historical records of his kingdom so they could be read to him. **2** In those records he discovered an account of how Mordecai had exposed the plot of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the eunuchs who guarded the door to the king's private quarters. They had plotted to assassinate the king. **3** "What reward or recognition did we ever give Mordecai for this?" the king asked. His attendants replied, "Nothing has been done."

Notice that the king could not sleep and therefore wanted his attendant to read the historical record to him probably as a form of entertainment. When the attendant comes to the part about Mordecai saving the king's life from the heinous acts of Bigthana and Teresh, it crossed Xerxes mind of how Mordecai was reward for such a gracious act? When Xerxes found that Mordecai didn't receive so much as a thank you from the king, he resolved to right this injustice. But even before he had time to announce his decision, Haman had arrived for the purpose of asking the king's permission to hang Mordecai! What an inopportune moment for Haman's request!

Verse 4-6

THE KING ASKED HAMAN'S SUGGESTION ON HOW TO REWARD THE MAN WHOM THE KING DELIGHTED TO HONOR

4 "Who is that in the outer court?" the king inquired. Now, as it happened, Haman had just arrived in the outer court of the palace to ask the king to hang Mordecai from the gallows he had prepared. **5** So the attendants replied to the king, "Haman is out there." "Bring him in," the king ordered. **6** So Haman came in, and the king said, "What should I do to honor a man who truly pleases me?" Haman thought to himself, "Whom would the king wish to honor more than me?."

As a consequence of Haman's egotism in thinking that his suggestions would be applied to himself, he really went all out with what he proposed as a just reward for a man that pleases the king.

Verse 7-9

HAMAN'S ADVICE ON HOW TO HONOR THE MAN

"7 So he replied, "If the king wishes to honor someone, 8 he should bring out one of the king's own royal robes, as well as the king's own horse with a royal emblem on its head. 9 Instruct one of the king's most noble princes to dress the man in the king's robe and to lead him through the city square on the king's own horse. Have the prince shout as they go, 'This is what happens to those the king wishes to honor!'"

Talk about turnabout is fair play. Unbeknownst to Haman the man that the king was about to honor was his most hated adversary. Here is Haman constructing the proper event for the king to honor a great man such himself (so he thought). Ah the pride and happiness Haman must have felt that he was about to have one the greatest honors bestowed upon him in front of the whole town. Certainly, a man riding on a horse with a royal crown on his head was a very powerful symbol of royal authority. Such would most certainly have been an effective way of reminding Haman that he was not the most noble prince, but one of the most noble princes in all the land.

"On the head of which a crown royal is set" (Esther 6:8). "The practice of setting crown-like head-dresses on horses is attested by Assyrian reliefs.

Only the king seems to have been ignorant of the feud between Mordecai and Haman; certainly everybody in Susa must have been aware of it. "Thus the king had no idea of the irony of the situation in which he placed his favorite minister. However, the whole city of Susa would have been astounded at this development and so would Haman.

Verse 10-11

HAMAN ORDERED TO HONOR MORDECAI THE JEW

"10 "Excellent!" the king said to Haman. "Hurry and get the robe and my horse, and do just as you have said for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the gate of the palace. Do not fail to carry out everything you have suggested." 11 So Haman took the robe and put it on

Mordecai, placed him on the king's own horse, and led him through the city square, shouting, "This is what happens to those the king wishes to honor!."

What a great irony this is; a man who hates another man and is plotting his destruction now must honor him in the front of a large crowd of people. Now, how did Xerxes know that Mordecai was a Jew? In Esther 2:21 Mordecai had given the information to Esther who then gave the info to Xerxes giving Mordecai credit. Afterwards, Xerxes had the two perpetrations executed, but all this had happen some time ago. The information was recorded in the official record, but Mordecai never received any recognition for his bravery.

Verse 10 said - Make haste. The king will have no more delay in a matter, which has been delayed far too long. Haman is to "hasten, and confer the honour at once. Let nothing fail. Observe every particular of honor that you have mentioned; let there be no omission of one jot or tittle.

In verse 11 Haman is now seething with anger and regret the he planned every detail in honoring a man he so vehemently hated, yet Haman is a loyal subject to the king and he carries out the honor bestowed upon Mordecai with great detail. This is why we as Christians should always be mindful in what God has told us to do in 1 John 3:14; "We have passed from death to life because we love the brethren; he that does not love his brother abideth in death." You cannot go to heaven with hate in your heart for another person; you will not gain entrance. Why do some people carry hatred in their hearts for many years against others? I myself have felt hatred for another long ago and let me tell you that it is the most ugly feeling one can have; why? Because when the Holy Spirit indwells a believer, it grieves Him and it is through that grief that He in turns makes the person fell unhealthy spiritually.



Haman honors Mordecai

**[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purim#mediaviewer/File:Pieter_Pietersz. Lastman -
_The_Triumph_of_Mordechai.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purim#mediaviewer/File:Pieter_Pietersz._Lastman_-_The_Triumph_of_Mordechai.jpg) *Public domain**

Verse 12-14

THE REACTION OF THE PEOPLE TO MORDECAI'S HONOR AT THE HANDS OF HAMAN

"**12** Afterward Mordecai returned to the palace gate, but Haman hurried home dejected and completely humiliated. **13** When Haman told his wife, Zeresh, and all his friends what had happened, they said, "Since Mordecai -- this man who has humiliated you -- is a Jew, you will never succeed in your plans against him. It will be fatal to continue to oppose him." **14** While they were still talking, the king's eunuchs arrived to take Haman to the banquet Esther had prepared."

Haman's mourning and covering his head indicated that he fully understood the horrible humiliation he just had endured at the hands of the king. Everyone in Susa knew the providential blessing of the Jews, beginning with Cyrus' edict for their return to Jerusalem; and the people, and Xerxes own father (King Darius, Xerxes' father), including Haman's 'wise men,' were aware of the hand of God in Jewish history. The historical proof of everything written here is seen in the influence of Esther which prevailed in the Persian Empire throughout the times of Ezra and Nehemiah, whose work, in both instances was doubtless made possible by the influence of this great queen. In a very real sense, the Book of Esther appears here, following Ezra and Nehemiah as an explanation of how their ministries came to be possible.

Esther 6:14 here relates that the eunuchs came to take Haman away to the banquet. "Haman went to Esther's second banquet like a sheep to the slaughter.

Chapter 7 Commentary

Verse 1-4

ESTHER MAKES HER REQUEST; THE KING GRANTED IT; AND THEN SHE IDENTIFIED HAMAN AS HER ENEMY; WHOM THE KING EXECUTED

The king comes to this second banquet with great anticipation because at the first one, she would not disclose why she wanted to see the king so badly. This second banquet is now the climax of the episode. Esther made her petition for her life and for the life of all her people. This request does several things: It causes the king to have great pause; it perplexes his thought process as what in the world are you talking about and it distresses him as well.

ESTHER'S PETITION FOR HER LIFE

"So the king and Haman went to Queen Esther's banquet. **2** And while they were drinking wine that day, the king again asked her, "Tell me what you want, Queen Esther. What is your request? I will give it to you, even if it is half the kingdom!" **3** And so Queen Esther replied, "If Your Majesty is pleased with me and wants to grant my request, my petition is that my life and the lives of my people will be spared. **4** For my people and I have been sold to those who would kill, slaughter, and annihilate us. If we had only been sold as slaves, I could remain quiet, for that would have been a matter too trivial to warrant disturbing the king."

What an incredible shock that request must have been to Haman! At this point, no doubt, he began to understand that Esther was pleading for the life of all the Jews whom Haman had determined to destroy, and that she herself was among the number. This request masterfully presented; the time, the place and the occasion could not have been executed any better. Now, by her request, what does Esther actually say:

Verse 5-7

THE KING'S REQUEST FOR THE ADVERSARY'S IDENTITY

"5 "Who would do such a thing?" King Xerxes demanded. "Who would dare touch you?" 6 Esther replied, "This wicked Haman is our enemy." Haman grew pale with fright before the king and queen. 7 Then the king jumped to his feet in a rage and went out into the palace garden. But Haman stayed behind to plead for his life with Queen Esther, for he knew that he was doomed.

Before we go any further, let's see what Esther was really attempting to do

- Esther protested that if the Jews had merely been sold as slaves, she would have held her peace. That being said, lives are on the line instead of circumstances.
- She protested that Haman had lied about being able to compensate the king for the damage done. Queen Esther probably did some background checking on Haman and concluded that he was not a rich man and had not intention of paying 10,000 silver talents (Esther 3:9).
- She displayed perfect knowledge of Haman's immense bribe, noting that she and her people had been "sold."
- She placed all the blame on Haman, ignoring the king's own responsibility for that evil decree.

At this juncture, the king began to get the whole picture. Indeed, it had been Haman who had concocted that evil story about the Jews, had advised their destruction, and with the king's ring had himself mailed out the decree calling for their slaughter. With his anger aroused to the point of rage, Xerxes briefly leaves the banquet; Haman was astute enough to know that his plans had now been destroyed and his own life was now in danger. Naturally, Haman pleaded with Esther to spare his life. However, when it became apparent that she would not help him, he fell at her feet begging her like the coward that he was. A real man would have owned up to their mistake, but as we've seen throughout this book, Haman is not a man, but a ruthless coward standing behind his fear and hatred.

Verse 8-10

THE KING RETURNED AND ORDERED HAMAN'S EXECUTION

"**8** In despair he fell on the couch where Queen Esther was reclining, just as the king returned from the palace garden. "Will he even assault the queen right here in the palace, before my very eyes?" the king roared. And as soon as the king spoke, his attendants covered Haman's face, signaling his doom. **9** Then Harbona, one of the king's eunuchs, said, "Haman has set up a gallows that stands seventy-five feet tall in his own courtyard. He intended to use it to hang Mordecai, the man who saved the king from assassination." "Then hang Haman on it!" the king ordered. **10** So they hanged Haman on the gallows he had set up for Mordecai, and the king's anger was pacified."

“In despair he fell on the couch where Esther was reclining” (Esther 7:8).

We see Haman's cowardice at work here; man who had been hiding behind fear and power is now quaking in his boots and begging for his life along with hatred for Mordecai because he would not honor him; hatred for the Jews for not only their success in Persia, but because of the historical fact that his forefathers were defeated by them as well.

"Will he even force the queen before me" (Esther 7:8)? The second clause of this verse shows the king's mistakenly placing the worst possible construction upon Haman's prostrate position before Esther, suggesting by these words that Haman was attempting to rape the queen. That was certainly not the case at all; but it is a matter of history that Xerxes was capable of doing nearly anything, and that he was unstable, unreasonable and capricious. It was the knowledge of all this that had fueled Esther's fear when she went uncalled into his presence.

"As soon as the king spoke" (Esther 7:8). Here in lies the third clause of our text. The singular rendition of **WORD** in this place is correct; "For it is singular in the Hebrew. Furthermore, "That Hebrew word may also be rendered **JUDGMENT**, being therefore a statement that the king immediately pronounced the judgment of death against

Haman. The fact that they immediately, "covered Haman's face," supports that understanding of the passage.

"Then said Harbonah ... Haman has build a gallows 75 feet high in his own court yard" (Esther 7:9). This sheds further light on that gallows. Its being in the house of Haman forbids the notion that it was really that tall. How then was it "seventy five high"? The answer appears to be that it had been placed at that altitude on the city wall, where, in all probability, Haman's house was located; and in that position, it could be seen from the place where the banquet of wine was being held. The height of the gallows was probably a hyperbole and probably only measured half that height if that high at all. Afterwards the king ordered Haman hanged from the same gallows that he had intended for Mordecai.

"Then the king's wrath was pacified" (Esther 7:10). Very well, so far, so good! But the danger was far from being averted. That evil decree sent forth in the authority of the "Law of the Medes and Persians that altereth not," was still out there, in every province of the Empire (Daniel 6:9). The great danger of a wholesale slaughter of the Jews still persisted. Remember, according to Persian law, once the king issues an order, he was not above the law, so there was not revocation of his edict.

Chapter 8 Commentary

Verse 1-2

THE PRACTICAL REVERSAL OF THAT IRREVOCABLE DECREE

This chapter deals with the danger that yet remained. Yes, Haman was dead, but that decree, which he had devised was still in force, backed up by the power of that "Law of the Medes and Persians that altereth not." This meant that all the Jews in the Persian Empire were still subject to general slaughter and the confiscation of their property on the thirteenth of Adar. Something had to be done about that.

CONSEQUENCES OF HAMAN'S EXECUTION

"On that same day King Xerxes gave the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews, to Queen Esther. Then Mordecai was brought before the king, for Esther had told the king how they were related. **2** The king took off his signet ring -- which he had taken back from Haman -- and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther appointed Mordecai to be in charge of Haman's property."

"**The house of Haman**" (Esther 8:1). "Confiscation of goods and properties of the condemned accompanied executions in Persia, as in other Persian countries. The house of Haman included not merely the castle and its furnishings but also the cattle, oxen domestic servants and personal attendants.

The king gave this vast estate to Esther; and she might well have desired to give it to Mordecai; but what she did was even better. She placed him in absolute control over it, thus providing him with a residence and dignity that were appropriate to his new office as Prime Minister.

Summarizing the consequences in evidence here: (1) Haman's vast properties were conferred upon Esther; (2) Mordecai was given the management and control of them; (3) Xerxes bestowed the office of Prime Minister upon Mordecai when he gave him the ring that had been worn by Haman; (4) The ring gave Mordecai the power to seal documents and to convey with them the authority of law, but not to change laws already on the books.

"It was perfectly natural for the king to confer this great authority upon Mordecai. The king had already delighted to honor him for exposing the plot against his life. Also, Xerxes had learned that Mordecai was the foster father of the queen.

Verse 3-6

ESTHER ENTREATS THE KING TO CANCEL HAMAN'S EDICT

"**3** Now once more Esther came before the king, falling down at his feet and begging him with tears to stop Haman's evil plot against the Jews. **4** Again the king held out the gold scepter to Esther. So she rose and stood before him **5** and said, "If Your Majesty is pleased with me and if he thinks it is right, send out a decree reversing Haman's orders to destroy the Jews throughout all the provinces of the king. **6** For how can I endure to see my people and my family slaughtered and destroyed?"

It is of interest that Mordecai does not carry this urgent request to the king. He was the new First Minister of the empire; but he might have felt that Esther would be more likely to have a favorable reply from the king. Nevertheless, Esther did it for she sensed a newfound love between she and the king.

"**And the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre**" (Esther 8:4). This seems to imply that Esther had again approached the king even though he had not called for her presence.

"**And (if) I be pleasing in his eyes**" (Esther 8:5). Esther's appeal was prefaced with the usual stereotyped phrases used by petitioners; but these words also stress Esther's personal attractiveness to the king. This was indeed a delicate touch of female class.

"**Reverse Haman's orders**" (Esther 8:5). This was indeed exactly what should have been done; and this exceedingly intelligent and tactful queen gave Xerxes a valid reason why he should have done so; but that trifling rule about the "Law of the Medes and Persians "that altereth not," prevented the king from taking such action. Esther was careful not to put any blame on the king for Haman's wicked letters for that would be counterproductive to the trust and renewed kinship between a king and his queen.

Many have accused Esther and her race of cruelty because of their slaughter of their

enemies, (in their eyes without justification), but what they didn't know was that God had ordained that action upon the paganistic and heathenish people of Canaan. Esther implored for the bloody edict of Haman to be reversed (Esther 8:5); and if she had been heard, no blood at all would have been shed; but the Gentile mind was not of the kindly sort. Oh no. The king likes to see blood; he is a sportsman. Blood must flow. You Jews need to defend yourselves. Fight! For your lives!

Verse 7-8

UNABLE TO REVERSE THE DECREE; THE KING DID THE NEXT BEST THING

"7 Then King Xerxes said to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, "I have given Esther the estate of Haman, and he has been hanged on the gallows because he tried to destroy the Jews. 8 Now go ahead and send a message to the Jews in the king's name, telling them whatever you want, and seal it with the king's signet ring. But remember that whatever is written in the king's name and sealed with his ring can never be revoked."

"I have given Esther the estate of Haman, and him they have hanged" (Esther 8:7).

"Xerxes, anxious to show Esther that he did indeed love her, recounts the favors already bestowed upon her. However, he added that no one, not even the king of Persia, had the right to reverse a decree signed and sealed with the king's signet ring. The king was saying that his refusal to reverse the decree was not due to his lack of desire, but to his lack of ability. Nevertheless, the king extends a riddle to both Esther and Mordecai when he says tell the Jews whatever you want and seal it with the king's signet ring. In other words, Mordecai as the new procurator and executer of the laws of Persia, you find a way out for the Jews as I'll turn my head in the other direction.

Verse 9-14

A COUNTER-EDICT WAS SENT FORTH BY MORDECAI

"9 So on June 25 the king's secretaries were summoned. As Mordecai dictated, they wrote a decree to the Jews and to the princes, governors, and local officials of all the 127 provinces stretching from India to Ethiopia. The decree was written in the scripts and languages of all the peoples of the empire, including the Jews. 10 Mordecai wrote in the

name of King Xerxes and sealed the message with the king's signet ring. He sent the letters by swift messengers, who rode horses especially bred for the king's service. **11** The king's decree gave the Jews in every city authority to unite to defend their lives. They were allowed to kill, slaughter, and annihilate anyone of any nationality or province who might attack them or their children and wives, and to take the property of their enemies. **12** The day chosen for this event throughout all the provinces of King Xerxes was March 7 of the next year. **13** A copy of this decree was to be recognized as law in every province and proclaimed to all the people. That way the Jews would be ready on that day to take revenge on their enemies. **14** So urged on by the king's command, the messengers rode out swiftly on horses bred for the king's service. The same decree was also issued at the fortress of Susa."

***Let's take another look at the Persian-Median Empire prior to Iraq and Iran becoming separate countries:**



Persian Empire Encompassing parts of India, all of Iran, Iraq Egypt Libya and other countries.

www.google.com/search?q=free+domain+picture+persian-media+empire&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=uGywU7ObGtOhqAbDqoGQDQ&ved=0CDgQsAQ&biw=1920&bih=1005



Iran and Iraq as they are today. www.google.com/search?q=free+domain+picture+persian-media+empire&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=uGywU7ObGtOhqAbDqoGQDQ&ved=0CDgQsAQ&biw=1920&bih=1005

"Wrote to the provinces stretching from India to Ethiopia" (Esther 8:9). From the maps that were just show (above), the Persian-Median Empire was extremely large encompassing the countries of Iran, Iraq, parts of India Egypt and Ethiopia. It probably took months for these horsemen to carry the details of the new edict for the Jews to protect themselves.

"Gave the Jews the ability to unite and defend themselves" (Esther 8:11). This decree followed very closely the language of the edict of Haman (Esther 3:13) in order to nullify it to the fullest extent possible. "The exact treatment intended for the Jews was to be meted out for their enemies. The irrevocability of Haman's decree made it necessary for Mordecai to duplicate in reverse all of its provisions, thus inevitably giving the impression of a very harsh decree. When the day came, it stressed that the Jews could not plunder their enemies.

Verse 15-17

THE GREAT REJOICING OF THE JEWS EVERYWHERE

"15 Then Mordecai put on the royal robe of blue and white and the great crown of gold, and he wore an outer cloak of fine linen and purple. And the people of Susa celebrated the new decree. **16** The Jews were filled with joy and gladness and were honored everywhere. **17** In every city and province, wherever the king's decree arrived, the Jews rejoiced and had a great celebration and declared a public festival and holiday. And many of the people of the land became Jews themselves, for they feared what the Jews might do to them."

"Mordecai put on the royal rob ... with a great crown of gold" (Esther 8:15). "The Hebrew has two different words for crown, namely, [~kether] which referred to the type of crown worn by the monarch, and [~'atarah], a crown of an inferior kind frequently worn by nobles. Mordecai's crown was the latter. His great authority, symbolized here by his apparel and the crown were however, one of the primary reasons for the Jews' rejoicing. One of their race was now in charge and they expected to be treated as equals throughout all of Persia; it wasn't as if they were not already treated as equals, but prior to Haman's demise, fear gripped all of Persia especially in the Jewish community.

"The Jews ... were filled with joy and gladness" (Esther 8:16). "This celebration was in anticipation of the feast of Purim, which was first celebrated eight months later (Esther 9:17-19).

"And many among the peoples of the land became Jews" (Esther 8:17). "Such a providential outworking of events in favor of the Jews convinced many of the power of God, and caused them to become proselytes which means many changed from the Zoroastrianism to Judaism. Some scholars have interpreted this acceptance of Judaism as merely a political maneuver, not based upon any sincere belief in a monotheistic God, but since the name of God is not even mentioned in the book of Esther, this religious change was probably only a symbolic gesture since (as I said before), God is not discussed at all?

Chapter 9 Commentary

Verse 1-10

INSTITUTION AND OBSERVANCE OF THE FEAST OF PURIM; CELEBRATING THE GREAT VICTORY OF ISRAEL ON THE THIRTEENTH OF ADAR; THAT FATEFUL DAY ITSELF - THE THIRTEENTH OF ADAR

"So on March 7 the two decrees of the king were put into effect. On that day, the enemies of the Jews had hoped to destroy them, but quite the opposite happened. **2** The Jews gathered in their cities throughout all the king's provinces to defend themselves against anyone who might try to harm them. But no one could make a stand against them, for everyone was afraid of them. **3** And all the commanders of the provinces, the princes, the governors, and the royal officials helped the Jews for fear of Mordecai. **4** For Mordecai had been promoted in the king's palace, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces as he became more and more powerful. **5** But the Jews went ahead on the appointed day and struck down their enemies with the sword. They killed and annihilated their enemies and did as they pleased with those who hated them. **6** They killed five hundred people in the fortress of Susa. **7** They also killed Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, **8** Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, **9** Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vaizatha -- **10** the ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. But they did not take any plunder."

"**The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities**" (Esther 9:2). "This does not mean exclusively Jewish cities, but cities where the Jews constituted an element in the population. At this point in history, there were no exclusively Jewish cities outside of Judea.

"**gathered in cities.. to defend themselves**" (Esther 9:2). "Retaliation was limited to those who actively sought to kill the Jews, but they were ready for any hostile acts.

"**All the princes ... helped the Jews**" (Esther 9:3). I doubt that any military help was involved here because that could spell disaster creating a civil war within the Persian Empire because if certain nationalities were killed, this could have caused a revolt by the populist at large.

"The fear of Mordecai had fallen upon them" (Esther 9:3). It was clear to all the Persian authorities that both the king and Mordecai favored the Jews, and those who attacked the Jews would surely have brought wrath upon themselves because Mordecai's fame grew throughout all the 127 provinces of the Persian Empire.

"And the Jews struck down all their enemies" (Esther 9:5). "There were many Persian citizens who foolishly took full advantage of the first decree and attacked their hated Jewish neighbors; but, deprived of government support, and faced by a newly encouraged people, they were totally defeated.

"They killed Parshandatha ... the ten sons of Haman" (Esther 9:7-10). "These names are Persian and traceable to old Persian roots. This fact alone makes it impossible to accept the unsupported allegation of critics that, "The Book of Esther is fiction." Such critics attempt to identify Esther as a fiction written in the times of the Maccabees which was a time when the Jews were subjugated by the Greeks; but who on earth, three hundred years after the events related would have remembered, or could have invented, ten authentic Persian names for the sons of Haman? Moreover, the question has to be asked why did they kill all of Haman's family? Haman was the enemy of the Jews and therefore the entire house of Haman was considered an enemy also and that bought the wrath of the Jewish people upon the house of Haman leading to his entire family being destroyed.

"But they did not take the plunder" (Esther 9:10). This statement occurs no less than three times in this chapter, appearing also in Esther 9:15 and Esther 9:16. The Jews had a right to take the spoil, but they waived it, because they were fighting for survival, not for material gain; they had already been hoarding money anyway. They were not the aggressors in this conflict, but they were defending themselves from their enemies who sought to destroy them.

Verse 11-16

SUMMARY OF CASUALTIES IN Susa AND THE PROVINCES

"**11** That evening, when the king was informed of the number of people killed in the fortress of Susa, **12** he called for Queen Esther and said, "The Jews have killed five hundred people in the fortress of Susa alone and also Haman's ten sons. If they have done that here, what has happened in the rest of the provinces? But now, what more do you want? It will be granted to you; tell me and I will do it." **13** And Esther said, "If it please Your Majesty, give the Jews in Susa permission to do again tomorrow as they have done today, and have the bodies of Haman's ten sons hung from the gallows." **14** So the king agreed, and the decree was announced in Susa. They also hung the bodies of Haman's ten sons from the gallows. **15** Then the Jews at Susa gathered together on March 8 and killed three hundred more people, though again they took no plunder. **16** Meanwhile, the other Jews throughout the king's provinces had gathered together to defend their lives. They gained relief from all their enemies, killing seventy-five thousand of those who hated them. But they did not take any plunder."

"**Let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows**" (Esther 9:13). These had been slain on the previous day; "This is a request that their dead bodies be exposed, such exposure being both a mockery of all that was Haman's and an example to others of what evil intentions can lead to."

"**And a decree was given out in Susa**" (Esther 9:14). This decree did not regard the exposure of the bodies of Haman's sons. It granted permission to the Jews to fight against their enemies on the morrow also.

Verse 17-19

EXPLANATION OF THE TWO DIFFERENT CELEBRATIONS

"**17** Throughout the provinces this was done on March 7. Then on the following day they rested, celebrating their victory with a day of feasting and gladness. **18** But the Jews at Susa continued killing their enemies on the second day also, and then rested on the third day, making that their day of feasting and gladness. **19** So to this day, rural Jews living in

unwalled villages celebrate an annual festival and holiday in late winter, when they rejoice and send gifts to each other."

This continuation of the conflict for an extra day in Susa resulted in two different days being celebrated by the Jews. In the capital, they celebrated the 15th of Adar, and in the provinces they celebrated the 14th. It is not known exactly why there were two days of fighting in Susa. Evidently, a strong band of Jewish enemies had not been defeated that first day; and therefore the king granted an extra day in which three hundred more Jewish enemies were destroyed.

Verse 20-25

MORDECAI RECOMMENDED THE ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF THE FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH DAYS OF ADAR

"**20** Mordecai recorded these events and sent letters to the Jews near and far, throughout all the king's provinces, **21** encouraging them to celebrate an annual festival on these two days. **22** He told them to celebrate these days with feasting and gladness and by giving gifts to each other and to the poor. This would commemorate a time when the Jews gained relief from their enemies, when their sorrow was turned into gladness and their mourning into joy. **23** So the Jews adopted Mordecai's suggestion and began this annual custom. **24** Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews, had plotted to crush and destroy them on the day and month determined by casting lots (the lots were called purim). **25** But when Esther came before the king, he issued a decree causing Haman's evil plot to backfire, and Haman and his sons were hanged on the gallows."

These verses recount how the Jewish people come to celebrate Purim. The verses retell the story of the evil plots by Haman, how he arrived at the date of destruction for the Jews by the casting of Purim stones that fell on a specific date 1 year later after they were cast. Purim is celebrated on the 14th day of Adar, which is usually in March. The 13th of Adar is the day that Haman chose for the extermination of the Jews, and the day that the Jews battled their enemies for their lives. On the day afterwards the 14th, they celebrated their survival. In cities that were walled in the time of Joshua, Purim is celebrated on the 15th of the month, because the book of Esther says that in Susa (a

walled city), deliverance from the massacre was not complete until the next day. The 15th is referred to as Susa Purim.

Verse 26-28

THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME FOR THE FEAST OF PURIM

"**26** (That is why this celebration is called Purim, because it is the ancient word for casting lots.) So because of Mordecai's letter and because of what they had experienced, **27** the Jews throughout the realm agreed to inaugurate this tradition and to pass it on to their descendants and to all who became Jews. They declared they would never fail to celebrate these two prescribed days at the appointed time each year. **28** These days would be remembered and kept from generation to generation and celebrated by every family throughout the provinces and cities of the empire. These days would never cease to be celebrated among the Jews, nor would the memory of what happened ever die out among their descendants."

The feast of Purim is today observed by the Jews; and it has been continually observed throughout history, from the times of Xerxes (who was assassinated in the year 465 B.C.) until the present day, for almost twenty-five centuries; it appears as an absolute impossibility that such a sequence of observances could have been initiated, or kicked off, by some unknown writer's fictitious story. It takes twenty times as much faith to believe that allegation as it takes to believe the Bible.

"**They called these days Purim, after the name of Pur**" (Esther 9:26). The word Pur is the Persian word for "lot." which is a reference to Haman's casting lots to decide the day when the Jews would be destroyed. "The Jews took the Persian word Pur, and gave it a Hebrew plural Purim, either because the Persian method of casting involved several lots, or because Haman cast Pur several times (Esther 3:7).

Verse 29-32

THE SECOND LETTER ESTABLISHED THE FEAST OF PURIM

"**29** Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, along with Mordecai the Jew, wrote another letter putting the queen's full authority behind Mordecai's letter to establish the Festival of Purim. **30** In addition, letters wishing peace and security were sent to the Jews

throughout the 127 provinces of the empire of Xerxes. **31** These letters established the Festival of Purim -- an annual celebration of these days at the appointed time, decreed by both Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther. (The people decided to observe this festival, just as they had decided for themselves and their descendants to establish the times of fasting and mourning.) **32** So the command of Esther confirmed the practices of Purim, and it was all written down in the records."

"The queen ... and Mordecai ... wrote with all authority" (Esther 9:29). The teaching here is that the feast of Purim was established in Israel, not by religious authority, but by authority; and there is no way that such a thing could have been allowed in Israel, except as a consequence of such events as are related in Esther and at a time closely associated with those events.

"This second letter of Purim" (Esther 9:29). "This was a new letter, not the one mentioned in Esther 9:20; and this one included a period of fasting (Esther 9:31). That first letter was merely a recommendation; but its favorable reception prompted Esther and Mordecai to make the feast official. Evidently, the incorporation of a day of fasting into the feast of Purim was due to suggestions from the provinces upon their reception of that first letter. Moreover Esther and Mordecai remember what had happened between the two of them in regards to courage to go and see the king without being called for she told Mordecai to tell all the Jews in town to fast for 3 days along with herself and Mordecai.

"And it was written down in the records" (Esther 9:32). This is probably talking about the book of Chronicles of which all the historical artifacts and laws were written. Additionally, the author of Esther probably drew on the written sources outlined in the Persian Chronicles and included it in the book of Esther

Chapter 10 Commentary

A FINAL NOTE ON THE GREATNESS OF MORDECAI

"**1** King Xerxes imposed tribute throughout his empire, even to the distant coastlands. **2** His great achievements and the full account of the greatness of Mordecai, whom the king had promoted, are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Media and Persia. **3** Mordecai the Jew became the prime minister, with authority next to that of King Xerxes himself. He was very great among the Jews, who held him in high esteem, because he worked for the good of his people and was a friend at the royal court for all of them."

The purpose of the author in this very short chapter is that of stressing the greatness of Mordecai. The key words being that, "he was very great among the Jews" signified his greatness among a small court in the Persian Empire not as a slight, but done as not to override the greatness of the king Xerxes among the Persian people. There was none higher in stature to the king than Mordecai. The Persian-Median Empire was the greatest in the world. Having said that, Mordecai was renowned throughout the world from India, throughout Mesopotamia all the way into Eastern Africa.

Not only was Mordecai next to king Xerxes, but also his mighty deeds were written in the book of the chronicles of the Medo-Persian Empire, along with that of their mighty kings. Incidentally, we have here the most conspicuous evidence that the Medo-Persian Empire was never two empires, but only one; the record of all their kings was in the same book.

"Seeking the good of his people, and worked for the good of his people" (Esther 10:3). "The meaning of these two phrases is that Mordecai procured both by word and deed the good and prosperity of his people. This is the way in which honor and fortune are attained; the way indicated in the 34th Psalm (Psalms 34:13-15), when teaching the fear of the Lord.

Epilogue

To show the reader how wonderful God works in the believer's heart, as I did my research and study in the book of Esther, I was at times perplexed as to how a cannon of scripture becomes part of the bible without ever mentioning the name of God? However, while working out at my favorite gym, God told me what this wonderful book meant. *God will save a remnant even if that remnant does not believe in Him specifically in the last days. God could have chosen to allow that remnant in Babylon to perish and just dealt with the 50,000 that returned to rebuild the temple along with the wall only. The book of Romans said:

“I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. **2** God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah--how he appealed to God against Israel: **3** "Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me" ? **4** And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal." **5** So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace” (Romans 11:1-5).

God chose seven thousand Jews who did not believe in Him nor humbled themselves before another god and saved them nevertheless. Also ref. Revelations 14:10-12 concerning a remnant from each nation that will be saved after the great tribulation comes if they believe in the Lord, which many of them will.

Now, if many you who were once ignorant in the faith and believed that only Christians would be saved for heaven, that was the wrong thought process. God will give every nation (who are alive) on earth a chance to accept Him after the 7-year tribulation period (remnant) has ended, but those nations have to throw away their false God (s) and believe upon the God of Israel of which Jesus Christ is king and they will be saved.

I hope this commentary helped you in your Christian walk with God and His Son Jesus Christ along with the Holy Spirit Who is working on behalf of every human being in the world. God does His part by offering salvation to every person in the world, but you have a part to play as well and it is a simple one. Accept Christ into your life, repent of your sins and you will be part of something even more glorious and that is living for all eternity in peace and tranquility with Jesus Christ. Amen!

There are many Hamans in the world who are self-seeking, evil, wrought with getting ahead by stepping on whatever and whomever. These Hamans are the drug dealers, the murderers, the crooks, the thieves who just want to take, be honored by other men and to be worshipped by them as well and have a harem of their own through being a player. God destroyed that Haman and He will destroy all future Hamans as well. Therefore, choose you this day whom you will serve, the Xerxes and the Hamans of yesteryear and today or Jesus Christ. For me and my house, we will serve the Lord! May God bless you!