

**The Book of
Esther:
For Such a Time
As This**

by

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Esther Session 1: Introduction & the State of the Empire

We might wonder at times how involved God really is in our lives. We know He is involved directly working with us and within us with His Word and manifestations of holy spirit, but He is also involved indirectly yet intricately behind the scenes providing, protecting and preparing us for what lies before us.

Indeed, life may occasionally be a struggle, but we are never alone in it. The Book of Esther, like so much of the Bible, tells the story of God's involvement with His people. However, it shows God's work indirectly. God's name is not mentioned once in the entire 10 chapters.¹ Yet God is not absent from the story of Esther; He is just disguised, working undercover, hidden in plain sight. In fact, the very fact that he isn't named prompts us to look for him more intentionally and when we do, we find Him. He is hidden in five acrostics which act like a handprint to indicate His influence in the narrative. Truly His providence permeates the whole narrative. The book of Esther demonstrates how God works in the lives of His people, both with and without their awareness.

I call these 5 acrostics the hand print of God because my hand provides an illustration of how they function. Just like my hand has five fingers and each one is different so these 5 acrostics are each different and unique. My hand properly has 4 fingers and a thumb. Similarly 4 of the acrostics spell out Jehovah and the 5th spells out the name "I am." Of the 4 fingers representing Jehovah 2 are spelt forward and 2 are spelt backward. Each of these pairs has 1 which uses the initial letters and 1 which uses the final letters in the words of the acrostic. The picture of a hand below demonstrates how each is different. I may refer to each one individually as a fingerprint, but collectively they show us the hand of God at work in the Book of Esther.

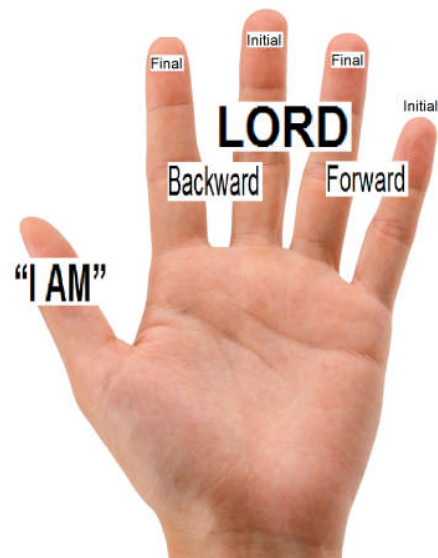
The Bible speaks figuratively of the hand of God in several places. Let's look at a few of those occurrences to get an idea of how His hand shapes the Book of Esther.

Ecclesiastes is one of the greatest books on wisdom ever written, and it says in Ecclesiastes 2:24.

Ecclesiastes 2:24:

There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God.

God's mighty hands like the potter shape us, like the husbandman provide for us and like a skilled warrior deliver us. I Peter tells us how we are to react to God's mighty hand.



¹ This is also true of the Song of Solomon.

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I Peter 5:6:

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

As we will see, the lives of Mordecai and Esther certainly bare testimony to the truth of this verse. The books of Ezekiel, Daniel, Esther, Nehemiah and Ezra are all interwoven and pay tribute to the mighty hand of God at work on the behalf of His people. They are interwoven and deal with the time of the captivity and the return from it.

We see the hand of God working for His people in them. Sometimes the narrative of the Word talks about the hand of God being upon people. Ezra 7:6 informs us that the king granted Ezra “all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him.” Ezra 7:9 describes Ezra’s blessings as being “according to the good hand of his God upon him.” Thus, the record in the narrative of the Word records the hand of God at work providing for His people. God having had it written so we would not miss it.

Sometimes the people realize it and speak of it themselves. Ezra recognized God at work and praised Him for His involvement. Saying in

Ezra 7:27-28:

Blessed *be* the LORD God of our fathers, which hath put *such a thing* as this in the king’s heart, to beautify the house of the LORD which *is* in Jerusalem:

²⁸ And hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king’s mighty princes. And I was strengthened as the hand of the LORD my God *was* upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me.

In Ezra 8:18 Ezra continues to recognize God at work with him and his comrades noting “the good hand of our God upon us,” and in Ezra 8:31 Ezra declares that “the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy.”

Nehemiah 2:8 records that Nehemiah acknowledged that all the king granted him was due to “the good hand of my God upon me.” Nehemiah rallied the people to build the wall when he “told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me” (Nehemiah 2:18). Indeed the psalmist declared what great comfort he had in musing on the work of God’s hand (Psalms 143:5). In Psalms 31:14-15 the psalmist trusts God for his deliverance declaring, “I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou *art* my God. My times *are* in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.” Jesus after he had said, “It is finished.” just before he “gave up the ghost,” confidently and victoriously committed his spirit into the hands of God. We, too, can find great comfort recognizing that our times are in God’s hands.

In Daniel 4:35 even the great Nebuchadnezzar admits God “doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” Daniel also testifies that God “hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown” (Daniel 9:15). His renown continues unto this day.

Sometimes His hand upon us goes unrecognized. However, James 1:17 tells us every good and perfect gift comes from God. Job, like us, wonders about God’s hand at work.

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When pondering all he went through he comments in Job 12:9, “Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the LORD hath wrought this?” We are certainly not always aware of all His ways and works,

In Isaiah 41 God speaks of many mighty things He does for His people and ends by saying, He did it so:

Isaiah 41:20:

That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

In this verse God uses the figure of speech polyptoton to build toward a crescendo. We see, know, consider and understand. First we observe it. Then we believe it. Then we ponder and meditate upon it, until grasp it and incorporate it into our life-style. As we read and consider and understand the Book of Esther we’ll see the hand of God at work to deliver His people. These five acrostics will point to Him acting behind the scenes. We’ll see His mighty hand working a mighty deliverance which was to be recorded and memorialized yearly with joy, gladness and feasting.

Esther records events that happened during the Jews Babylonian captivity. God told Moses about His people going into captivity long before they did.

Deuteronomy 31:16-18:

And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go *to be* among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. ¹⁷ Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God *is* not among us? ¹⁸ And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods.

God had declared that if His people forsook Him, He would hide His face from them. In Esther God hides His face. Yet even though He was hidden from them, He was still working for them and the Book of Esther reveals Him providing and protecting.

Esther is a name which originates in Old Persian language and means “star-like.” Some sources also suggest it is derived from Ishtar, the Babylonian goddess of love. However, the Hebrew consonants for “Esther” *’str* are the same consonants as a Hebrew verb form which means “I am hiding.” The name “Esther” creates a double entendre for the verb “I am hiding.” A double entendre is a word or expression used in a given context so that it can be understood in two ways, especially when one is risqué.

It is not a coincidence that the name Esther means *hidden* while the Hebrew name for Scroll, *Megila*, means *reveal*. Thus the real name for the Book of Esther or The Scroll of Esther is “Revealing the Hidden” or “The Revelation of the Hidden.” Something that is uniquely hidden in this scroll is the mention of God. His name and His presence are hidden, though easily discerned by those who look and have eyes to see.

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Either the entire story is one of chance, happenstance, and coincidence or God is involved working behind the scene in a very stealth way (Proverbs 16:33; Ephesians 1:11). This explains the orthodox Jewish custom of wearing masks and costumes in the celebration of Purim in which the scroll of Esther, the revelation of the hidden is read. This is done to promote the idea of “hiddenness.”

This masquerade fosters the essential message of Esther – things are not as they seem. The elegant Persian Queen Esther is really the Jewish girl Hadassah; the man who saves Ahasuerus from a plot against his life is Hadassah’s relative Mordecai; a day devised for the slaughter of God’s people turns into a day of victory and celebration by them. God’s hidden activity is made clearly evident as His people are preserved through many twists, turns, and reversals of fortune which only proves that “the Most High God ruleth in the kingdom of men” (Daniel 4:25).

The author of Esther is unknown, but it is clear, from the tone and details throughout the book, that the author is a devout Jew. Mordecai, Ezra, or Nehemiah are likely candidates. Jewish tradition ascribes the book to Ezra as does Augustine. The Talmud ascribes it to the Great Synagogue which completed the Jewish canon of scripture, of which Ezra was the founder and president.

Esther is a strange book, and it has been largely ignored, sometimes altogether disregarded. If you go to The Shrine of the Book in Jerusalem, Esther is the one book from the entire Old Testament that isn’t found—not even a fragment—in the Dead Sea Scrolls in the Qumran community. John Calvin didn’t include Esther in his biblical commentaries, and he only referenced it once in the *Institutes*. (See 4.12.17) Though Martin Luther included it in his Bible, he was very ambivalent about it saying, “I am so great an enemy to Esther that I wish it had not come to us at all, for it has too many heathen unnaturalities.” (*Table Talk* 24). In one exchange with Erasmus Luther said it “deserves. . . to be regarded as noncanonical.”

The truth is many people are uncomfortable with this book. We’re alright with that part where Mordecai tells her, “You’ve come to the kingdom for such a time as this, it’s time for you to step up and do what’s needed.” But the rest of it is just strange. Frankly, it lacks the moral clarity of Daniel. Although it was written regarding roughly the same time period, the period of the exile it doesn’t have the same ethical fervor. Daniel is so clear, so clean. He and the Hebrew children refuse to eat the king’s food; they want to eat according to law. Not only does Daniel admit he is a Jew, he demands concessions because of it. When a law is passed that you cannot pray, it doesn’t affect him one bit. There is not even a description in the text of Daniel agonizing over whether or not to do it. He just goes home as usual, opens up his window and prays like always, and he’s willing to face the consequences. There’s great moral integrity in Daniel. Esther lacks that kind of devotion to the truth.

Her real name is Hadassah but she goes by Esther. She doesn’t admit she’s a Jew; she’s hiding that reality. In fact, one might infer from the text that Mordecai encourages her to enter into this beauty contest, which is no ordinary beauty contest. She’s taken directly into the harem and prepared for her night with the king. She does not refuse the king’s food enjoying the best of it for at least a year. She’s put on a beauty regimen and goes through a purification process.

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Esther is one of the few women in the Bible renowned for her beauty. It talks about her figure. She is so enticing, so alluring, so appealing, so attractive that in that night she spends with the king she wins his favor and he makes her queen. That wasn't just because she had a great smile.

I think we want to read into the text that somehow it was her purity and her chastity that won the king over, but that's really not honest. This one night with the king was intended to be precisely what we think it was. No wonder those uptight guys at Qumran didn't include her book in the Dead Sea Scrolls. They were uncomfortable with it. We are comfortable with moral clarity. We like a Daniel. We scratch our heads when it comes to Esther.

One commentator remarks that the Book of Esther “neither praises nor recommends their [i.e. Esther & Mordecai's] actions or behaviors, but simply relates what took place without blame or approval.”² Now, I'll confess to you, I can relate to Esther's imperfections and moral compromises. I understand them. I'm not ready to sit in judgment on Esther because I remember compromises that I've made. I'm just so thankful that God works with us in spite of our mistakes and compromises. He can bring His good, acceptable and perfect will to pass working with people like us who are not always so good acceptable or perfect.

Most sermons on Esther focus on that phrase, “For such a time as this.” If you do any research on sermons on Esther, most of them will be called, “For Such a Time as This.” But I think it's really the preceding phrase that catches my attention. It reads, “Who knows but that you've come to the kingdom for such a time as this.” Whatever time it is in our lives God is big enough, He is sovereign enough that he can use even our tragic circumstances, even our bad decisions, even our sinful choices, even the dire circumstances of our life for His glory. He can accomplish His good, acceptable and perfect will even with imperfect people like us in the process.

Esther was written to provide a historical record of the events leading to the establishment of the Jewish observance of Purim, which records the great deliverance of God's people from extermination during the Babylonian captivity. Purim was yet another attempt by Satan to eliminate the Christ-line and prevent the coming of the Messiah.³ It is a vivid assurance of God's protection of His people. Esther was written in Persia, and the account takes place during a 10-year span during the Babylonian captivity of the Jews.

As we read through Esther we will see God's faithfulness to provide for His people even though they have turned away from Him and gone into captivity. Though the tragic events and the deliberate attacks upon God's people by the adversary are dire, God's involvement in the life of His people is what sustains them. We will look at the

² Keil & Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, Esther p. 197

³ Satan was at work, using Haman to blot out the Nation, as once before he had used Pharaoh for the same purpose (see the Companion Bible Appendix 23 and 25). Jehovah's counsel must stand. His promise of Messiah, the coming “Seed” of the woman (Genesis 3:15), must not fail. Therefore He must overrule all for the preservation of His People, and of the line by which that “Seed” was to come into the world. (Companion Bible, Appendix 60)

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willingness and commitment of Mordecai and Esther to sacrifice themselves for the benefit and blessing of God's people.

Esther, along with the Old Testament books Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, and Ecclesiastes, are five scrolls that are read on various Jewish holidays.⁴ Esther provides us with the history of the Jewish holiday Purim, or "lots," named because Haman, the Jews enemy, cast lots to determine the day of the Jews' annihilation. Esther is the Jewish heroine who, along with her adoptive father, Mordecai, reversed Haman's plan by influencing the King of the Persian Empire.

I believe this is an excellent follow up on "*I Shall Pour Out My Spirit: Dreams, Visions and the Desires of the Heart.*" Like Nehemiah we studied in it, Esther and Mordecai also had a specific and very important mission to fulfill. We see God's sovereign hand in preparing them for it and helping them execute it.

When it comes to missions from God, I believe we all have some. The "*I Shall Pour Out My Spirit*" teaching series showed how God works with dreams, visions and the desires of our hearts so show us what they are. Often times we are tempted to settle for less than what God has asked us to do: Succumbing to this temptation denies God the opportunity to show us how great He is and how willing He is to work with us in extraordinary ways.

The Book of Esther is a story of characters given a choice. As people choose, destinies get formed, and the world gets changed. All because people allow God to work with them to will and do of His good pleasure. We see their attitude, commitment, determination, perseverance and hard work making significant contributions.

In Esther chapter one, we are introduced to the state of the empire and the pride and ego of the king. It paints quite a picture of the condition of the empire in which God's people found themselves. They had gone into captivity because they forsook their God, and the situation they find themselves in is far from ideal.

Esther 1:1:

Now **it came to pass** in the days of Ahasuerus, (this *is* Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, *over* an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:)

"It came to pass" is the figure pleonasm. It is used several times in the story and functions to introduce a different scene in the drama. This one introduces the state of the empire and the character of the king. It's like the curtains opening in a play. It will mark the different scenes.

Ahasuerus was a title like Pharaoh. "This" implies that others were called the same thing and this one should be distinguished from the rest. This one was especially renowned. This is quite a topic in Biblical chronology.

Esther 1:2-3:

That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which *was* in Shushan⁵ the palace,

⁴ See Companion Bible, Appendix 1.

⁵ Shushan occurs 21 times and all but two are in Esther. The other two are in Nehemiah 1:1 and Daniel 8:2.

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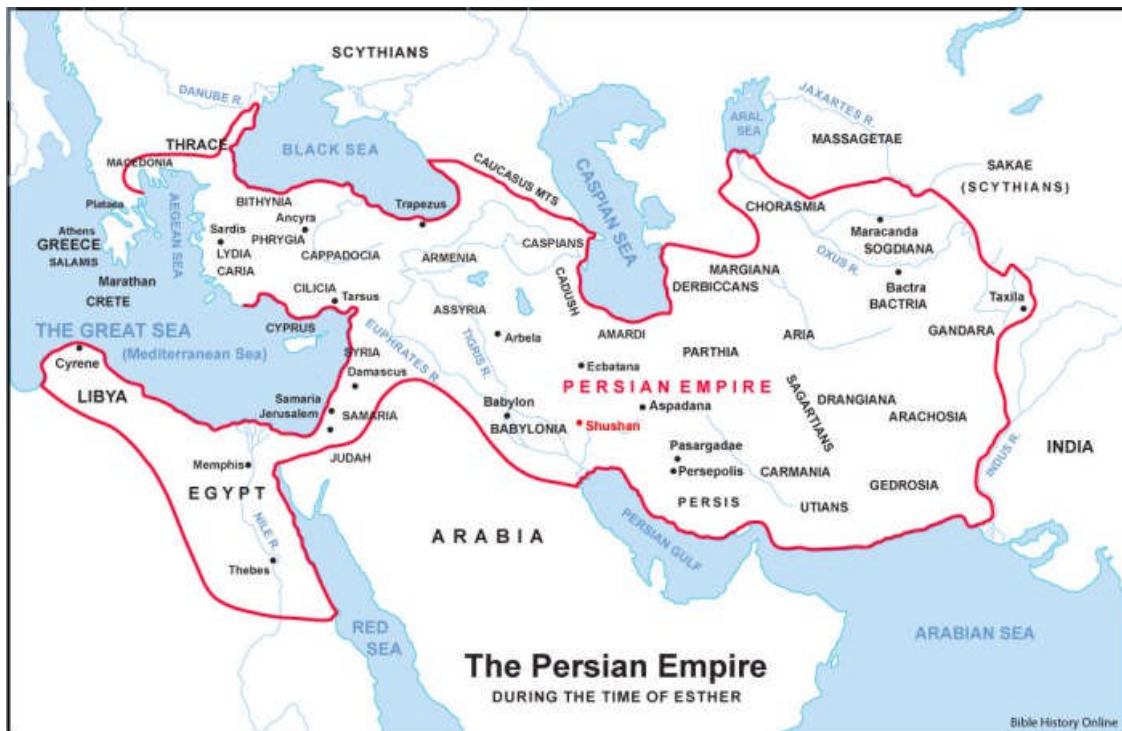
³ In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, *being* before him:

The word “power” is a military word, and it indicates a military presence. It is most often translated “army” in the KJV, but it is also used of elite special forces translated “men of valour.” They were there to protect and maintain order. He had his special forces there to make sure everything stayed copasetic.

Esther 1:4:

When he shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, *even* an hundred and fourscore days.

That’s quite a party—180 days, about 6 months. It was like a World’s Fair where all the princes and nobles from the whole kingdom, which comprised so much of the known world at that time, came to see the vast wealth of the kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty.



Esther 1:5-9:

And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king’s palace; [After the initial 180 days with the big shots, he invited all the people in Shushan to join him for another seven days.]

⁶ *Where were* white, green, and blue, *hangings*, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble: the beds *were of* gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black, marble.

⁷ And they gave *them* drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king.

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⁸ And the drinking *was* according to the law; none did compel: for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure.

⁹ Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women *in* the royal house which *belonged* to king Ahasuerus.

How's that for a mission—to make the world see how grand and glorious you are. The reason for the parties was to show off the riches of his kingdom and promote great glory and honor upon Ahasuerus. He's very ostentatious and revels in the attention he solicits. The first twelve verses record three banquets. The first was for his princes, servants and nobles and lasted 180 days—six months of serious partying. Then when it's over, in verse 5, he has another party for the whole capital, open to the common people so that they'll be overwhelmed by his immense power and wealth. The text notes that the goblets were not only outrageously expensive (made of gold), but each one was unique. It's noted that the drinking was literally without restraint. While the men were drinking themselves into a stupor Queen Vashti has a third banquet for the women. To dine separately was the custom at that time in the Eastern culture.

Esther 1:10-12:

On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king,

¹¹ To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she *was* fair to look on. [It may have been only the crown she was to be wearing.]

¹² But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by *his* chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him.

On the seventh day of the banquet, the drunken King decides to put his wife on display before all the common people of the capital. He sends his seven chamberlains to parade Vashti before all his people. These chamberlains were eunuchs, emasculated persons, who had charge of the harems of oriental monarchs. They also functioned as confidential advisers and were frequently men of great influence with political position, power and prominence.

This was an unusual demand for an oriental king to make of his queen. To expose her to a company of drunken revelers was not only unbecoming to her as a woman, but also to her station as queen. According to Persian custom, the queen more than the wives of other men, was to be secluded from public gaze. But the king's pretentious attitude prompted him to break with custom so everyone would see the beauty of his wife. This was just one more thing to bring him glory and honor. Had the king not been so drunken he may not have tolerated this exposure which was not only an insult to the queen, but to himself also.

Queens and concubines were subject to the complete will of the monarchs just as were slaves. For her to refuse him before his subjects was humiliating and angered the king greatly. With everyone drinking without restraint and capital was in chaos. When we add to the party scene the queen's refusal to appear before the king as requested, the

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situation is really getting out of hand. To rein in the chaos and save face the king asks for help from his advisers to reestablish order.

Esther 1:13-22:

Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for so *was* the king's manner toward all that knew law and judgment:

¹⁴ And the next unto him *was* Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, *and* Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king's face, *and* which sat the first in the kingdom;) [His top advisors, like the Supreme Court or Executive Cabinet]

¹⁵ What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains? [That's the second time that phrase appears. It must be important to the proper understanding of the incident. The king sent those in charge of the harem to get the queen. That was very indecorous.]

¹⁶ And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that *are* in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus. [He made this a big deal.]

¹⁷ For *this* deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not.

¹⁸ *Likewise* shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king's princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus *shall there arise* too much contempt and wrath. [We don't want to let this go unaddressed or it will encourage other women to do the same thing.]

¹⁹ If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered [Where have we heard that before? Book of Daniel.], That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she.

²⁰ And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) **all the wives shall give** to their husbands honour, both to great and small.

²¹ And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan:

²² For he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that *it* should be published according to the language of every people.

Now in the seventh day of his banquet, "when King was in high spirits from wine" (v. 10), he sent for Queen Vashti. He'd been showing off all of his possessions. Now he wants to show off his ultimate possession. What do you think he wanted to show the people about her? Think it was her brains? Or her personality? I don't think so..

He wanted her to come "in order to display her beauty to the people and nobles, for she was lovely to look at" (v. 11). We don't know the details of this, but apparently it

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was going to be done with poor taste in a very humiliating way. And then, in verse 12, this extraordinary thing happens: Vashti says, “No. I don’t think so.” Come and parade myself before a crazed mob after seven days of drunken partying? No way!”

So, how does the king respond? Does he say, “You know, you’re right, that would have been really awkward, I’m so sorry I mentioned it”? No. “The king became furious and burned with anger” (v. 12). He was the grand and glorious king, and this was affront to his position and ego. Vashti’s response made him look weak. Her defiance attacked his sense of power, dominance and self-promotion. He has to do something.

In verse 13, he consults sages who know the law: “Since it was customary for the king to consult experts in matters of law and justice, he spoke with the wise men who understood the times and were closest to the king. . . .” The writer here is poking fun at the king in a moment of irony. This is the most powerful man in the world, but he can’t control his wife. So he goes to the “Supreme Court” or the Executive Cabinet and makes this a matter of state. We might say, “He made a federal case out of it.” He asks, “What am I going to do with my wife?” They advise him to issue a royal order. Verse 19–20: “Therefore, if it pleases the king, let him issue a royal decree and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed (remember Daniel 6:8), that Vashti is never again to enter the presence of the king.” That’s sort of what she had already decided. “Also, let the king give her royal position to someone else who is better than she. Then when the king’s edict is proclaimed throughout all his vast realm all the women will respect their husbands, from the least to the greatest.” The writer is showing us how the flatterers that the king surrounds himself with just keep pumping him up. So the king deposes Vashti and makes it a federal crime for a woman to disobey her husband.

We find the first of the hidden acrostics in Esther 1:20. God is pointing His finger to what Memucan said. Some of the texts have the letters that spell out Jehovah written in larger letters than the rest of the letters in the words forming the acrostic. This acrostic is unique in that it is the only one not a complete sentence. This shows us that what it deals with is not just one event or thought, but rather an entire course of action. It is also the only one formed by the initial letters and spelt backward. It appears in the *initial* letters, for the event intended to initiate a course of action to subjugate women and honor the men. However the name is spelt *backward* because Jehovah intends to *turn back* or reverse Memucan’s counsel and bring a woman, Esther, into a position of honor and authority.

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| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| הִיא | וְכָל- | הַנָּשִׁים | יִתְּנֵנָּה |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Hi' | V'kal | Hannashim | Yitt'nu. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| it | and-all | the-wives | shall-give |
| “Due Respect Our Ladies | | | |
| shall give to their husbands, both to great and small.” | | | |

Our lives are aimless without a mission. We fill them up with ways to entertain or numb ourselves, which leads to damage in relationships, forfeiting our responsibilities, and missing out on doing anything really meaningful. Chapter two sets the stage for the entrance of two more of the main characters Mordecai and Esther.

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In chapter two, Esther and her cousin/guardian/adoptive father Mordecai enter the scene. They are a great contrast to the characters we met in chapter one and Haman whom we will meet in chapter 3.

In chapter 2 of Esther, the king sobers up. His anger subsides, and he realizes he doesn't have a queen. He's advised, this time, by his personal attendants. These are not the sages we encountered in chapter 1 headed by Memucan. Rather they are his bodyguards, youthful men, who give the king their idea of what to look for in a new queen. This was the original Bachelor TV show before there ever was TV.

What do you think their number one criterion is going to be? They suggest that he hold a Miss Mede and Persia beauty contest, where every province would contribute to the royal harem the best-looking woman in that province. There were 127 provinces under the king. That's a lot of women to choose from. In the end, the only criterion is pleasing the king, which most likely means she will turn heads. She will become the ultimate trophy wife.

Beauty is still revered and idolized today. Both men and women aspire to it, are judged by it and are promoted because of it. Men still succumb to the same mindset as the king as they think about women, and the media today continues to reinforce the same mindset.

Esther 2:1–18.

After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her.

² Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king:

³ And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hege the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given *them*:

⁴ And let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so.

⁵ *Now* in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name *was* Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite; [Please remember this as it will be important for the intrigue that follows.]

⁶ Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.

⁷ And he brought up Hadassah, that *is*, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid *was* fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter.

⁸ So **it came to pass**⁶ (figure pleonasm), when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women.

⁶ This introduces the beginning of gathering of the maidens for the Miss Persia contest.

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⁹ And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, *which were* meet to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best *place* of the house of the women. [This favor was due to her upbringing and God's hand upon her.]

¹⁰ Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew *it*. [We don't know if this was revelation or just wisdom.]

¹¹ And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her. [What concern and love he had for her.]

¹² Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, *to wit*, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with *other* things for the purifying of the women;)

¹³ Then thus came *every* maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house.

¹⁴ In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name.

¹⁵ Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her.

¹⁶ So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which *is* the month Tebeth, in the **seventh year** of his reign.

¹⁷ And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti. [Guess what's next! Another party!]

¹⁸ Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, *even* Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king.

The king had enough wealth and power to bring the most beautiful young women in the kingdom to him. What a way to find a beautiful wife. One of the contestants was a young Jewish girl named Esther. She's an orphan who was raised by her cousin Mordecai. She knew hardship and loss. They had a very tender relationship.

We learn that Mordecai was Jewish, adoptive father to an orphan, from the tribe of Benjamin living in exile. We learn that Esther's was also a Jew whose Hebrew name is Hadassah; cousin of Mordecai who raised her as his own. She was an orphan, strikingly beautiful and able to win over people easily.

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Esther is told to hide something very core to her identity—the fact that she was a Jew. In this chapter, Esther goes from being an orphan, a Jew in exile, and a sex slave to the king, to becoming queen. What a wonderful quality of life and character she must have had. She won favor from everyone she met.

We're told Esther was fair and beautiful. She was a good-looking woman who could turn heads. She made it through the prelims and she's one of the finalists selected to go before the king. So she began to prepare to go in before him. I think we want to read into the text that somehow it was her purity and her chastity that won the king over, but that's not what kings were like. This one night with the king was intended to be precisely what we think it was.

How many of you women have ever spent more than an hour getting ready for a date? How many of you have ever spent more time getting ready for a date than you actually spent on the date itself? How about a whole year? That's how long it took Esther to prepare for her one night. It would be the only opportunity she had to make an impression.

Esther not only makes an impression, she wins. She outshines them all. She won the favor of all who saw her, we're told. She was truly an amazing woman. And the king, in typical fashion, throws another party.

Esther 2:19-23:

And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king's gate.

²⁰ Esther had not yet shewed her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him. [She was obedient and well-trained.]

²¹ In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.

²² And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told *it* unto Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king *thereof* in Mordecai's name.

²³ And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out; therefore they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king.

Chapter two shows us how committed Mordecai and Esther were to each other. They worked together and made significant contributions to the kingdom. Although their contribution went without recognition, it was another step in preparation for what God had in store for them both. In chapter three we will meet the last major player in the story, Haman, the Agagite.

Esther Session 2: Haman's Decree & Mordecai and Esther's Response

Chapter two showed us how committed Mordecai and Esther were to each other. They worked together and made significant contributions to the kingdom. Although their contribution went without any initial recognition it was still another step in preparation for what God had in store for them both.

In chapter three we meet the last major player in the story, the antagonist, Haman, the Agagite. Calling Haman an Agagite was a way of associating the struggle in Esther with the one in I Samuel 15. Agag was the Amalekite king Saul spared in I Samuel 15 from which Haman was descended, and Mordecai was a Benjamite, the tribe of Saul, Israel's first king. Saul began the war with the Amalekites (I Samuel 15:2-33), but he never finished it. He allowed Agag, the king, to live. Although Samuel did execute Agag at that time, Saul obviously lied to him about destroying all the Amalekites because here many years later is Haman, an Agagite seeking retribution on God's people.

Exodus 17:16 warned that there would be war with Amalek from generation to generation. Haman being an Agagite was necessarily an Amalekite, and Josephus called him such in his book, *Antiquities*. Mordecai, a Benjamite ends the conflict assigned to Saul. He did not make the mistake that Saul did for he never took any spoil from the conflict. The account mentions that 3 times so we would be sure not to miss it (Esther 9:10, 15 16). Of course Haman's plan was to take spoil when they slaughtered the Jews (Esther 3:13).

Esther 3:1-3:

After these things [It took another five years after Esther became queen before Haman was promoted.] did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that *were* with him. [He became the Grand Vizier, second only to Ahasuerus. Look at whom Satan brings to a position of prominence. He's the king's right hand man.]

² And all the king's servants, that *were* in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did *him* reverence.

³ Then the king's servants, which *were* in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment?

The king's servants couldn't imagine why Mordecai would do something like this. It's amazing they never turned him in to the king. He must have been well liked and respected. They will tell Haman though after they find out the real reason Mordecai won't bow, but it is going to take some persistent action on their part to pry it out of Mordecai.

Esther 3:4-6:

Now **it came to pass**, [This introduces the reason of the enmity between Mordecai and Haman.] when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman [They finally do betray him but not to the king, they betrayed him to Haman.], to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand: for he had told them that he *was* a Jew. [Now the plot really begins to thicken as the spiritual adversaries begin to square off.]

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⁵ And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath. [This happened only after being told Mordecai was a Jew.]

⁶ And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for [the figure aetiological, cause shown] they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that *were* throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, *even* the people of Mordecai.

This Hebrew word for “thought” is translated “eye” or “sight” 7 out of 8 times. It is used of mental and spiritual faculties. Haman pictured what he wanted to do to Mordecai. His mind picture fomented his scorn. However he wasn't satisfied with only destroying Mordecai; he wanted to eliminate all the Jews. This was another attempt to destroy the Christ-line.

Esther 3:7:

In the first month, that *is*, the month Nisan, in the **twelfth year** of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that *is*, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, *to* the twelfth *month*, that *is*, the month Adar. [That's about a year.]

It was the custom to use monthly prognosticators to speculate, promote and fix on unfortunate times. These individuals forecasted evil by consulting the occult. Isaiah speaks of them.

Isaiah 47:13:

Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from *these things* that shall come upon thee.

After Haman settled on the date he went to see Ahasuerus to negotiate.

Esther 3:8-10:

And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws *are* diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it *is* not for the king's profit to suffer [allow] them.

⁹ If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring *it* into the king's treasuries. [Haman's willing to pay for it himself, but the next verse records that the king is willing to foot the bill to have it done. So the king gives him the money to hire the mercenaries to do the dirty work.]

¹⁰ And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, **the Jews' enemy**.

This is the first of 4 times he is so called, and no one else is so called in the Bible. His name is mentioned 50 times in Esther. During modern day celebrations of Purim, it is customary to boo, hiss, stamp feet and rattle noisemakers whenever the name of Haman is mentioned in the service. The purpose of this custom is to “blot out the name of Haman.”

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Esther 3:11-15.

And the king said unto Haman, The silver *is* given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee. [The king provided the money and the people.]

¹² Then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day ["Thirteenth day" occurs 3 times. I wonder if it was a Friday. It was the day before the Jewish Passover which was to start Nisan 14. "Thirteen" stands for rebellion, disintegration and revolution.] of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that *were* over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province according to the writing thereof, and *to* every people after their language; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring.

¹³ And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, [Figure synonymia to emphasize the utter destruction contemplated.] all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, *even* upon the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and *to take* the spoil of them for a prey. [The Jews were to be killed and their property taken by those who carried out the order.]

¹⁴ The copy of the writing for a commandment [King's decree which could not be changed.] to be given in every province was published unto all people[s], that they should be ready against that day.

¹⁵ The posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink [They were celebrating the decision.]; but the city [put for the people of the city] Shushan was perplexed.

"Perplexed" is a very rare word used only 3 times in the OT. It means perplexed, confused or entangled. This is the effect it had on the Persian townspeople. They didn't understand it. Chapter 4 will tell us of the effect on the Jews.

Mordecai was Esther's guardian. He sat at the king's gate, which meant he was one of the royal officials. He had once saved the king's life from an assassination attempt. But he won't bow down to Haman, and Haman becomes obsessed with the one man who will not bow before him. It grates on him. So he offers the king a plan for the destruction of the Jews, and in typical fashion (verses 10–11 in chapter 3) the king agrees.

Things are sure stacking up against the Jews. Mordecai and Esther definitely have obstacles to overcome. Esther was tempted to hide in the palace thinking that she as the queen would have been spared the coming destruction. She successfully became queen, and she could have stopped there and not gone any further, but Mordecai wouldn't let her. He encourages and challenges her to rise to the occasion.

Esther shines in chapters 4–8. She realizes that the fate of a whole nation, the dream of the people of God, is in her hands. She understands that she has not been brought to this point in her life for the sake of accumulating servants, an exquisite wardrobe,

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precious gems, and exotic fragrances. She's part of God's plan to redeem the world. We all need to find the courage to fulfill our mission in spite of the obstacles.

Esther 4:1-7:

When Mordecai perceived all that was [being] done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry;

² And came even before [as far as] the king's gate: for none *might* enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.

³ And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, *there was* great mourning among the Jews, **and** fasting, **and** weeping, **and** wailing; **and** many lay in sackcloth and ashes. [Polysyndeton, to emphasize the greatness and universality of the mourning.]

⁴ So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told *it* her. [They told her what Mordecai was doing, which was against the law. He might have been severely punished for it.] Then was the queen exceedingly grieved; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him: [So he wouldn't still be breaking the law.] but he received *it* not.

⁵ Then called Esther for Hatach, *one* of the king's chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and gave him a commandment to Mordecai, to know what it *was*, and why it *was*. [She wanted to know why he refused her offer of clothing and chose to remain in sackcloth mourning.]

⁶ So Hatach went forth to Mordecai unto the street of the city, which *was* before the king's gate.

⁷ And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and of the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them.

⁸ Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to shew *it* unto Esther, and to declare *it* unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her people.

⁹ And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

¹⁰ Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai;

¹¹ All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, *there is* one law of his to put *him* to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days. [He must have had a lot of concubines and remnants from the Miss Persia contest still hanging around.]

¹² And they told to Mordecai Esther's words.

¹³ Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. [She said going to the king might get her killed and he responded that not going to the king could also get her killed.]

¹⁴ For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, *then* shall there enlargement [respite or space, only used twice from a verb only used three times

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which means to be refreshed or have room to breathe. It was used of Saul being delivered from evil spirits when David played the harp for him.] and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this? [This question is an erotesis, a rhetorical question, asked to make one think and hope and trust in God's grace to deliver.]

¹⁵ Then Esther bade *them* return Mordecai *this answer*,

¹⁶ Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan [They knew who they were, and they worked together with unity of purpose as much as could be allowed.], and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day [The Hebrew day began at sunset so night appears before day.]: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which *is* not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.

¹⁷ So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

See how they worked together. This was from the lips of Esther. It was her counsel not Mordecai's, but he respected her request and complied. Keil & Delitzsch note that "fasting was a penitential exercise and the only form of common worship practiced by Jews dwelling among Gentiles." This "penitential exercise was always accompanied by prayer."⁷

Haman's lineage was in opposition to Mordecai's lineage. Their families had been enemies for generations. This provides us insight into what we might otherwise be viewed as Haman's overreaction to Mordecai's refusal to honor him, as well as into why Mordecai refused to do so.

Mordecai's cry in verse 1 was not simply an expression of grief, but it was also a political act, an act of protest. It's like the young man who stood in front of the tank at Tiananmen Square in China. It's an act of extraordinary courage. This is a remarkable man. But it becomes quite clear to him that if anything productive is going to be done, if the people are to be saved, it's going to be up to Esther. However, Esther does not want to do this. The king is pretty careful about protocol and doesn't like it when somebody openly defies him; Esther knows what happened to Vashti. The king has but one law: a person can be put to death if he comes before him unsummoned. Remember the king had already foiled one attempt on his life (2:21-23).

Esther explains to Mordecai that she may not be as close to the king as he thinks she is. After all it has been thirty days since she was called to go in to the king. He's her husband, and she hasn't seen him for 30 days. This is not an outwardly or overly devoted husband. She has very good reason to question how much influence she's got.

Mordecai is basically saying: Esther, the fate of a whole nation, the dream of the people of God, is in your hands. You didn't ask for it, but you got it. Esther, you have not been brought to this point in your life for your personal benefit alone. You have been brought to this point in your life to be a part of what it is that God is doing on this earth,

⁷ Ibid p.198. See also I Kings 21:27-29 and Joel 1:14.

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to work for justice, to spare your people great suffering, and to oppose a man who is vile and evil and supremely powerful. You have been brought to this point in your life to be a part of God's plan to redeem the world. So do not let your success and status blind you to what God says your life is really about.

I wonder if she ran Proverbs 24:10-12 through her mind.

Proverbs 24:10-12:

If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.

¹¹ If thou forbear to deliver *them that are* drawn unto death, and *those that are* ready to be slain;

¹² If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider *it?* [You can't make excuses.] and he that keepeth thy soul, doth *not* he know *it?* and shall *not* he render to *every* man according to his works?

In other words, don't be distracted or faint. Mordecai helps her to discern God's hand upon her life. He helps her see clearly God's calling in her life. He issues this very strong challenge: If you say no here, if you miss this, as frightening as it may be, you miss the reason you are on this planet. Who knows but that you have come to your position for such a time as this? This is your moment, Esther. What are you going to do?

Esther was raised to regal honors, by the overruling providence of God. Therefore she need not fear the miscarriage of the enterprise, for if God brought her to it, he would surely see her through it successfully. Mordecai spoke prophetically, when he modestly conjectured that Esther came to the kingdom that she might be the instrument of the Jews' deliverance. Mordecai thoroughly believed that it was a cause which one way or another would certainly be carried, and which, therefore, she might safely venture upon. Instruments might fail, but God's covenant cannot. There is a wise design in all the providences of God, which is unknown to us till it is accomplished; but it will prove in the issue that all is intended for and center in the good of those who trust in Him.

And Esther gets it. She tells Mordecai she wants three days to withdraw with her closest friends to fast and pray. And she asks him to gather all the Jewish people in Shushan to fast and pray three days for her, because she will not try to achieve this mission based on her own beauty, cleverness, and influence. Her only hope is God.

What a woman! She's going to the king, even though it's against the law. She's willing to perish if need be. This king, has no idea what he signed up for when he made Esther his queen. He doesn't have a clue. She's an amazing woman, and she goes hard to God for the answers she needs. Just think about the significance of those three days and everything riding on them.

I think it is very intriguing that there is no handprint of God recorded here. The handprint recorded in 1:20 and is still being played out here. The handprint indicated that God would reverse the counsels of Memucan to subjugate women more profoundly. This opened the door for Esther to come to center stage. However Esther was still a secret agent so to speak. Satan had Haman identify Mordecai as the real threat and he actively and purposefully opposed him. All the time God was moving Esther into place to bring Haman down.

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Haman was totally unaware of the threat Esther posed to him. He had no idea where the real battle was going to be engaged. So don't ever give Satan too much credit. Yes he has been around for a long time and he has honed his skills well, but he does not know the future and he cannot read our minds. He didn't see Esther coming. Haman was focused on Mordecai and Esther, a woman, turns out to be the savior of God's people. She is a type of the Christ. Just as Esther kept her ethnicity hidden from Haman, God also kept a secret hidden from ages and from generation. He called it the great mystery or the sacred secret, and because Satan didn't know it he crucified our Lord and now we have Christ is us the hope of glory. Secrets can be good and secrets can be kept.

This story has been pushing God's reluctant people into dangerous places ever since it was first told. It was to be reread every year at the festival of Purim. The phrase "for such a time as this" is a kind of biblical code for, "If not you, who? If not now, when?"

Let's have the same resolve that Isaiah had and declared in Isaiah 6:8. Isaiah had a magnificent vision in chapter 6. It was very glorious and Isaiah reacted with sin consciousness confessing he was a man of unclean lips dwelling among a people of unclean lips. That was until a seraphim flew to him and touched his lips with a live coal declaring his iniquity was taken and his sin was purged. After this Isaiah heard the Lord say, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" To this Isaiah relied, "Here *am* I; send me." The very next words from God were, "Go, and tell this people. . . ." Vision given — assignment received.

Esther 4:14 teaches us that the Lord promises us not only a deliverance from every dilemma, but also an enlargement in our particular calling and station in life. God provides deliverance or liberation from any trouble or captivity and enlargement or expansion of one's sphere of influence. Every time we faithfully trust the Lord for His deliverance, two things happen: He sets us free, and He enlarges our capacity. We will not stay in the same trying circumstances perpetually. We will come out of every difficulty delivered with an increase in our sphere of influence. The deliverance is worth pursuing in order to reap the reward of enlargement!

Esther 4:14 is a verse that has planted its hand firmly on the backs of God's people—maybe each of us—and pushed us forward into leadership we didn't want, to blow the whistle on behavior in a company or community that had to stop, to stand up against unscrupulous people and practices at great personal risk, to come to the aid of the powerless when we want nothing more than to mind our own business.

We each come to these times when we cannot evade a daunting, even threatening, responsibility. Look again at Esther to see where such courage comes from, because few people understand the source of godly courage. Courage starts when you realize, "I am uniquely positioned to help the helpless, to stop a terrible wrong, to stand in the way of a tyrant." Courage grows when we see that we are positioned to be part of God's "relief and deliverance" for others.

Do you remember the siege of Samaria in Elisha's day? After Elisha announced that by tomorrow there would be an abundance of food, it was four leprous men who said, "Why sit we here until we die." They had the courage to go to the Syrian camp and they

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found it empty. Then they returned to the city to proclaim victory to God's people because the enemy had fled.

Do you remember David who took supplies to his brothers when the children of Israel and the Philistines had the battle set in array? He was aghast at how God's people were quaking in fear. David was ridiculed for his pompous, highfalutin attitude, but he asked every one who demeaned him "Was this not a cause worth fighting for?" He went to face the giant at great personal risk, but he wrought a great victory that day. Jonathan, when he spoke up to his father Saul on David's behalf when he sought to kill David said in I Samuel 19:5 "For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest *it*, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?"

Remember how Nehemiah responded when he was urged to hide out in the temple because of the threats upon his life? He said, "Should such a man as I flee? and who *is there*, that, *being* as I *am*, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in." He refused to fear and reconstructed the wall and reinstructed God's people (Nehemiah 6:11).

Even when Paul was wrong to go to Jerusalem, he responded courageously as he unequivocally declared, "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13). Such is the story of so many of God's people who realized that they were brought "to such a time as this." I dare say each one of us have been brought unto "such a time as this."

Remember, Esther wasn't born to royalty. She had no training in leadership. She was an orphan raised in an exile community. She was young and sheltered. But she knew that God made a covenant with His people and would, as Mordecai reminded her, never forsake His people. But she also knew there was no divine assurance that she would come out of such a confrontation alive. Stephen in Acts 7 knew the same thing. There were martyrs then, as there are martyrs today.

Courage grows when we realize that our sovereign God has very likely quietly positioned us "for such a time as this." The very reason we have our job, the very reason we've been given each friendship, the very reason we live in our neighborhood or attend our school, the very reason we attend this fellowship is so that God will have His operative, His agent, "for such a time as this." Though we may have never thought of it before, God mapped our lives so that we stand at this crossroads by His plan, and we play an intricate part in that plan.

Courage demands that when it is our time to step up, we do so. When courage is called for, we may not fast and pray as Esther did, but we must do whatever it takes for us to accept the challenge before us. We must go hard to God. He can clearly guide us. He has promised to supply all we need (Philippians 4:19).

We must see the vision. We must let God paint the vision on the canvas of our hearts. Once He does we can be sure He'll fulfill that vision. Then we step into the moment that has been waiting for us, and "if we perish, we perish" (4:16).

Esther Session 2: Haman's Decree & Mordecai and Esther's Response

For Esther, after three days of prayer and fasting, she was ready. The time had come for action. God had given her a plan; now she must faithfully work it. That's how things continue to move; one step at a time until we reach our goal. That's what we will see in our next session.

The most quoted verse of Esther is 4:14. Do you remember it? It would sure be a good one to keep in our memory.

Esther 4:14:

For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, *then* shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?

How many times in our lives has the evidence of God's presence gone completely unnoticed? Many are the miracles we never knew to look for, the provided divine protection we didn't know we needed, the seemingly meaningless encounters that led to significant, strategic relationships, the "fortuitous coincidences" that happened all the time, the everyday details of living that occurred under our radar—all shaped and implemented by the hand of God.

Whether we give God the glory or not, His fingerprints on us are undeniable. He fights for us. Who we are; where we're placed; what opportunities we have — all are intended to move and shape the Father's plans to further His kingdom — not only for us, but for the entire world around us.

When Mordecai, Esther's adopted father, spoke the words of 4:14 to her he was making at least 2 important points.

1. She was completely prepared for this moment, but she got to decide if she would rise to the occasion. I believe the same is true for each one of us.
2. Mordecai didn't need to remind Esther that the "enlargement and deliverance" would be arranged by God. The only hope for God's people has always been the loving and gracious favor of our Father. We don't limit Him when we say, "No". We limit ourselves. We lose; we are destroyed. His promises will remain true, even when we do not. He just reminded her that not going to the king would not eliminate the danger and threat of death.

Throughout scripture we see glimpses of great people's lives, like Esther. We read of their defining moments which are recorded. However, there was much that went on between them that we know nothing about. But those humdrum seemingly unimportant moments also mattered a lot to God, and He was involved in them preparing us for the defining moments that were on the way.

Have you ever felt that you were in the right place at the right time, and were being asked by God to do something dangerous? Have you ever decided to do something that you were initially scared to do? What gave you the courage to do so?

Esther Session 2: Haman's Decree & Mordecai and Esther's Response

Is there a Mordecai in your life? Who is the spiritually wise person who knows you and helps you discern God's activity and calling in your life, and who loves you enough to challenge you when you're ready to settle for a second rate mission?

Who are you a Mordecai to? Who do you do that for? It's important that we are obedient to what God is calling us to do. He's prepared us for such a time as this; let's step up and meet the challenge. We may not know why, but we have been blessed with what we have been given and we are where we are for a reason. It may not be as dramatic as Esther's, but we have a mission. We have a challenge. The bad news is, we can ignore it, we have freedom of will. But the good news is, we can do all things through Christ; we can fulfill our mission.

Are you clear on what your mission is. Why not take some time and go to God to find out. You may find it helpful to sit with a brother or sister and talk it through.

Activity: Break into pairs and ask each other what God is most impressing upon you to do right now. It could be something such as pausing to faithfully pray for someone he brings to mind, agreeing to teach a Bible study, or sharing your faith with another person.

Esther Session 3: Esther Eliminates The Enemy of the Jews

When we ended last session Esther had committed herself to act. She and Mordecai addressed the problem, and she has the plan. Now she needs to proceed. She will need to be wise and humble in the way she fulfills her mission. Let's see how the pieces of this puzzle fit together.

Esther 5:1-3:

Now **it came to pass** [This introduces the drama of Esther's unwarranted approach to the king.] on the third day, that Esther put on *her* royal *apparel*, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against [right opposite] the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house.

² And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, *that* she obtained [won] favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that *was* in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre. [Whew! The first hurdle has been cleared. The threat of death is past.]

³ Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what *is* thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.

He understood that she came because she wanted something and that it must have been important because of the risk she took to come to him unsummoned. Bullinger says, "To the half of the kingdom" is an orientalism meaning a year's revenue. MyBible dictionary says it is an idiom for a very liberal gift. This is the first time he said it, and he says it a couple more times.

Esther 5:4:

And Esther answered, If *it seem* good unto the king, **let the king and Haman come this day** unto the banquet that I have prepared for him.

"**Let the king and Haman come this day**" is the second acrostic spelling out Jehovah. It is formed, by the *initial* letters, for Jehovah is initiating this action, and it is spelt *forward* because He is *moving forward* not ending or reversing something. He is causing Esther to act; and take the first step, which was to lead up to such a wonderful outcome. This is the second pivot on which the account develops as we see the Lord initiating the plan with his secret agent Esther.

| | | | |
|---|----------|----------------------|----------|
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| י | ב | ו | א |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Yabo' | Hanmelek | V ^s Haman | Hayyom |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| let-come | the-king | and-Haman | this-day |
| "Let Our Royal Dinner this day be graced by the king and Haman." | | | |
| The name of Jehovah is read in the invitation, intimating that there would be a fourth at that banquet." | | | |

Esther 5:5-8:

Then the king said, Cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther hath said. So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

⁶ And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine, What *is* thy petition [question]? [He was smart enough to know Esther wanted something quite important if she took such a great risk.] and it shall be granted thee: and what *is* thy request [wish]? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed. [This is king-talk for: "What do you want; I am in a really good mood today." This is the second time he said this, so it's established.]

⁷ Then answered Esther, and said, My petition and my request *is*;

⁸ If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do to morrow as the king hath said.

Esther Session 3: Esther Eliminates The Enemy of the Jews

No reason is given as to why she delayed another day. Perhaps she just was not ready yet or she was not convinced about the timing. Rather she just requested they come to another banquet tomorrow at which time she would tell them. This banquet must have been quite delightful. They seem pleased to come back.

Esther 5:9-12:

Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: [He was so happy to be honored and to be invited back until...] but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai.

¹⁰ Nevertheless Haman refrained himself [He bit his tongue and controlled himself.]: and when he came home, he sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife.

¹¹ And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all *the things* wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king. [He had a bragging session, very self-promoting.]

¹² Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and to morrow am I invited unto her also with the king. [He had no idea who she was and what she was up to. Why? Because she had kept it a secret.]

Haman said Esther “did let no man in,” except he and he king, but Jehovah was also in attendance as the fourth guest. Remember His name was hidden in the invitation recorded in 5:4.

Esther 5:13:

Yet all **this availeth me nothing** [Referring to his promotion and his being honored by Esther to come to this special dinner.], so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.

“**This availeth me nothing**” is the third acrostic spelling out Jehovah. It is formed with the final letters of the words indicating an ending instead of a beginning. It also appears backward indicating that Jehovah was changing, reversing or overruling. It was Haman's gladness, boasting and promotion that was being overturned, and his authority and plan to kill Mordecai were being ended, and these words came out of his own mouth. He declared it himself. Now that's irony.

Perhaps this was the reason for the delay and the second banquet.

God points out that Haman's plans were being brought to an end by the words of his own mouth. Back in verse four God's fingerprint points to the plan initiated by Esther moving forward and here in verse 13 it indicates that Haman's plans were being reversed and brought to an end.

Esther 5:14:

Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, Let a gallows [stake to which a criminal was fastened] be made of fifty cubits high, and to morrow [Not wasting any time] speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon: then go thou in

| | | | |
|--|----------|---------|-------|
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| ל | ש | נ | ה |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| zeH | 'eynennV | shoveH | l'Y |
| 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| this | availeth | nothing | to-me |
| The English may be freely rendered “Yet am I | | | |
| saD; foR, nO avaiL | | | |
| is all this to me.” | | | |

Esther Session 3: Esther Eliminates The Enemy of the Jews

merrily with the king unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman; and he caused the gallows to be made.

He did this without ever consulting with the king and getting his permission to have Mordecai killed on it. It never entered his mind that the request would not be granted. After all, all the Jews would be facing extermination soon enough, and he was the Grand Vizer. Who would mitigate his plans?

God always makes a way for his people in a crisis. The very night before Haman was to ask the life of Mordecai Jehovah was working invisibly behind the scenes to save Mordecai.

Chapter 6 verse 1 begins with “on that night.” That’s the night before the second banquet, the night after Mordecai built the gallows, the night before he was going to the king to request the head of Mordecai. Talk about timing. The whole account pivots on this point. This is not a coincidence. Now we see God going into action to reverse Haman’s gladness and end Haman’s authority.]

Esther 6:1:

On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king.

The word “read” in Hebrew is a participle that indicates a long continuance in the reading. It continued until they read what God wanted read and what the king needed to hear. This is a detail we learned about at the end of chapter 2 that had apparently gone without recognition and reward.

God often allows things to occur and then be apparently forgotten for the purpose of using them at a later period as links in His providential plan. The little incident of Mordecai saving the life of the king which was allowed to pass by without recognition was in due time and at the most opportune moment acknowledged. Not only was it acknowledged, it will become the turning point in Mordecai’s life.

We’ll see as we continue that this arouses the sympathy and recognition of the king and the people and promotes Mordecai to a place of great trust and service. So don’t be concerned if acts of obedience, faith and sacrifice go unrecognized. We may even forget all about them, but in due time the wheel of providence turns round and they come to the front and God makes them the occasion of some high calling, some marvelous opening, some grand reward. Lets learn to count nothing as insignificant. God is working in everything and far in advance of all that we can see. They will eventually come up in the fulfillment of His plan for our lives.

Esther 6:2-3:

And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. [We read that at the end of chapter 2.]

³ And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king’s servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him.

The king decides right then and there to do something about it. I can’t tell if what happens next was in the middle of the night or if the reading and discussion lasted until morning. The later is probably the case.

Esther 6:4-9:

And the king said, Who *is* in the court? [Look at this timing.] **(Now Haman was come into the outward court of the king’s house, to speak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.)** [This is the figure of speech parenthesis to point out the irony of the situation. Look at how God is going to change this.]

Esther Session 3: Esther Eliminates The Enemy of the Jews

⁵ And the king's servants said unto him, **Behold** [asterismos], Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him **come in**.

⁶ So Haman **came in**. [Anadiplosis: ending one sentence with the same verb that begins the next sentence]. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself? [This is just so typical; he is so full of himself.]

⁷ And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour,

⁸ Let the royal apparel be brought which the king *useth* to wear, **and** the horse that the king rideth upon, **and** the crown royal which is set upon his [the horse's] head:

⁹ **And** let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man *withal* whom the king delighteth to honour, **and** bring him on horseback through the street of the city, **and** proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

Haman suggested this thinking he was the one who was going to get the honor. However his nemesis Mordecai was going to receive it. All the glory he intended to be lavish upon himself was instead lavished upon his enemy Mordecai. Not only did that happen, but Mordecai received from the hand of Haman, himself.

Now that's irony. I know I keep saying that. I use "irony" when referring to the combination of circumstances and their results when they are the opposite of what might be expected or considered appropriate. When I say something is ironic I mean the outcome was unexpected by those who took the action. In this case what is happening is the opposite of what Haman wanted to happen.

Esther 6:10-13:

Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, *and* take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to **Mordecai the Jew**, that sitteth at the king's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken.

¹¹ Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour. [Mordecai had refused Esther's change of raiment, but he graciously accepts this from the hand of the king by way of Haman.]

¹² And Mordecai came again to the king's gate. [He went back to work.] But Haman hasted to his house mourning, and having his head covered. [Having the head covered is a token of great shame, confusion and mourning. You'll find examples in Jeremiah 14:4 and II Samuel 15:30.]

¹³ And Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends every *thing* that had befallen him. [Now this is quite a different story from the one he told the day before.] Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto him, If Mordecai *be* of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him.

God certainly has a great reputation, doesn't He? We may not always be aware of it or believe it, but the other kingdom knows it all too well. James 2:19 says the devils believe that there is one true God and they tremble before Him. Those working for the other kingdom use fear to control and motivate others, and because they do, they are susceptible to it themselves. If this was a TV drama we would all hear in dolby surround sound: Dun, dun, dun, dunnn! Dun, dun, dun, dunnnnnnn!]

Esther Session 3: Esther Eliminates The Enemy of the Jews

Esther 6:14:

And **while** they *were* yet talking with him [Things were moving along quickly.], came the king's chamberlains, and hastened to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared.

Things had not progressed like Haman had planned. Haman went to the king to request the head of Mordecai, but he could hardly make his request now. Things were moving very quickly, and they had to rush off to the banquet. The king, by coming to Esther's second banquet and acknowledging his favor of her, has already almost agreed to her request. Esther shows great skill and is outmaneuvering everybody. Remember, the fingerprint points to God's hand behind her plan.

Often pride is not as obvious as what we see in Haman. Esther 5:9–14 showed it clearly. Haman was not satisfied with all he had; he wanted more. More wealth, more power, more applause, more success—and when one lives to always get more there is never enough; one is never satisfied.

The Bible says pride cometh before a fall, and that's about to happen to Haman, big time. We all need to see and identify pride when it sticks up its ugly head. We may see it more easily in others, but we must get better at eliminating pride when it shows up in our lives.

The timing of the honoring of Mordecai in chapter 6 is pretty interesting. After all, he's mourning, distressed, and waiting for Queen Esther to plead on behalf of the Jews. He has publically protested and almost got himself arrested and all of a sudden the king honors him greatly. Of course none of us have ever experienced confusion or amazement over God's timing on something?

As we begin chapter 7, Haman's wife, Zeresh, has already pronounced Haman's doom, and things are rushing to its fulfillment.

Esther 7:1-5:

So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen.

² And the king **said again** unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What *is* thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what *is* thy request? and it shall be performed, *even* to the half of the kingdom. [This is the third and final time he says so, and Esther is ready to make it known.]

³ Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request: [in other words, save my life and the lives of my people.]

⁴ For we are [have been] sold [Remember the bribe?], I and my people, **to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish**. [That's the figure synonimia emphasizing the utter destruction that was contemplated.] But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, [not bothered the king about this] although the enemy could not countervail [make good, compensate or reverse] the king's damage.

⁵ Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, **Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume** [This demonstrates that the king and Haman never knew she was a Jew.] in his heart to do so?

When the king asks "**Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume** in his heart to do so?" he unconsciously gives the name of the great "I am that I am." This is the fourth acrostic and the only one to form the name, "I am that I am." It is formed by the final letters meaning the "I am that I am" (or the "I will be what I will be") is ending Haman's life and preserving the Christ line. It is also spelt backward to indicate that Haman's plan was being changed or reversed. (See chart on next page.)

Esther Session 3: Esther Eliminates The Enemy of the Jews

God was hiding Himself, but still working on His people’s behalf. This specific name of God is used to bring to mind the only other place it’s used in scripture.

Exodus 3:13-15:
And Moses said unto God,
Behold, *when* I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What *is* his name? what shall I say unto them?

¹⁴ And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

¹⁵ And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this *is* my name for ever, and this *is* my memorial unto all generations.

Just as God came down to deliver His people out of the hand of Pharaoh, He now comes down again to deliver them out of the hand of Haman, “the Jews’ enemy.” Haman, like Pharaoh, sought to destroy the whole nation. Haman’s attempt to destroy Queen Esther and her people was just another attempt to eliminate the Christ-line and prevent the Messiah from coming.

Ahasuerus wanted to know the man who presumed to do such a thing. Haman was the human agent who dared to do so, but there is recurring Satanic agency behind it.⁸ The Acrostic is in the final letters of his question “Who is he, and where is he?” Only the great “I am that I am” could know the real cause behind the attack, and could answer that question. Esther and Mordecai knew the human instrument, Haman, but it was bigger than just him. Had Saul done his job this threat may have never arisen.

Here was a “generation” in Persia who experienced the truth and the power of this Name, as a former “generation” had done in Egypt. Jehovah, Israel’s covenant God had indeed come down to deliver them from Haman; as He had from Pharaoh, and from the great “enmity” (of Genesis 3:15) which instigated both to accomplish the Satanic design of exterminating the Nation of Israel.

Esther 7:6-7:

And Esther said, The adversary and enemy *is* this wicked Haman. [Look at that boldness, “This wicked Haman.”] Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen.

⁷ And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath *went* into the palace garden: [It must have been a shock to hear that his trusted Haman whom he had promoted was the one. He left in a rage and went to think his response over.] and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw **that there was evil determined against him** by the king.

“**That evil was determined against him**” is the fifth and final acrostic spelling out Jehovah. It is formed by the final letters representing that Haman’s end had come. However, it is spelt

| | | | |
|--|-------------------|--------------|----------------|
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| הַרְצֵה | אֱלֹהִים | כָּל־הַיּוֹם | כִּי |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| <i>kY</i> | <i>kal e thaH</i> | <i>elayV</i> | <i>hara'aH</i> |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| that | was-determined | against-him | evil |
| “For he saw that there was eviL tO feaR determineD against him by the king.” | | | |

⁸ See Appendix 23 of the Companion Bible. It documents several of the attempts.

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forward indicating that Jehovah was initiating, causing or bringing it to pass, and it would be happening shortly.

Esther 7:8-10:

Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther was. [The king could hardly believe this indignity.] Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in

the house? As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. [Covering the face was a sign of condemnation and death.]

⁹ And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, [How's that for irony.] who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon.

¹⁰ So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.

| | | | |
|--|-------|------|-------|
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| הַיְ | וְאֵל | הַיְ | וְאֵל |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| hu'E | zeH | v'eY | zeH |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| [who is] he this [man] and where [is] this [man] | | | |
| “WherE dwelleth the-enemy that-dareth presume in his heart to do this thing?” | | | |

In these five Acrostics we have something far beyond a mere coincidence; we have divine design. When we read the denunciation in Deuteronomy 31:16-18, and see it carried out in Persia, we learn that though God was not *among* His people there, He was still working on their behalf. He was initiating and ending. He was moving some plans forward and reversing other plans. Hence, though His name, as well as His presence, is HIDDEN, yet, it is there, in the Word; and so wonderfully interwoven that no enemy will ever know how to extract it.

I think God's most common miracle—if there is such a thing—is the coincidence. It's all in the timing, and God has impeccable timing. I think God favors miracles of timing because he can stay incognito, visible only to those who believe in him.

Everything in this story, and so many others, looks ordinary. No one does anything particularly remarkable—but if you see behind the scenes, you see astonishing things. God clearly manipulates these events, yet he does so without ever coercing anyone. Mordecai told Esther if you don't do this then deliverance and refreshing will come some other way. It was done by freedom of will, and some amazing courage. I think Esther's planning and execution of the two banquets was inspired. Her exchange with Mordecai and the prayer and fasting was just them doing the best they could with what they knew. If it was revelation Mordecai would not have said, “Who knows” he would have said, “You're here for such a time as this.” No one does anything out of character. No one acts inconsistently. That is the way our sovereign God works. It's miraculous. The reversals in this account are amazing. The Book of Esther is full of reversals of fortune.

When Nebuchadnezzar demanded that the wise men of his kingdom make known to him his dream and its interpretation (Daniel 2:5), they responded incredulously that no man on earth could do as he requested only the gods could (Daniel 2:10-11). However, Daniel and his companions who were threatened to die with the rest of the wise men of the kingdom (Daniel 2:12-13) desired mercy from God to reveal the secret unto them. God did, and Daniel responded in praise and thanksgiving to God saying:

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Daniel 2:20a-23:

. . . Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his:

²¹ And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding:

²² He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what *is* in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him.

²³ I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast *now* made known unto us the king's matter.

The Lord definitely set up Esther and Mordecai and brought down Haman in a most unusual way. God often works in unseen and creative ways beyond our comprehension that are unbeknownst to us until we see them blossom and bring forth their fullness in our lives. It's often fruitless to even try to figure out how everything is supposed to happen. The ways God works in the world to bring about His will and purposes is not often revealed to us. All we know from Scripture is that the things that God has planned and promised will absolutely come to pass.

But we must not presumptuously think that we can decipher how and when and under what circumstances and for what reasons God chooses to act and intervene in our lives. All we need to know is that regardless of the ways that God is present and moving, or seemingly absent and distant, He is always with us, and for us, and we simply must wait patiently to see the power and glory of the Lord God revealed in this world and in our lives, even if it takes until the trumpet sounds.

It takes great courage to confront evil and intervene for God's people. Especially when the evil is in foment by people with power and authority over you. Esther doesn't hesitate, when asked by the king, "Who is he and where is he who presumes to do so?" she answers, "The adversary and enemy *is* this wicked Haman." The second most powerful man in the kingdom was brought down by a woman. . . a fearless woman walking with the power of God. She was brought to the kingdom for such a time as this and she did her part wisely and courageously.

So far we have seen that Mordecai's life has been spared for now and that Haman, the Jews enemy, has been eliminated. But what about the threat to the Christ line? That hasn't been dealt with yet. That's what we will get into as we finish up the Book of Esther with chapters 8-10 in our next session.

Esther Session 4: Purim Arrives & Its Memorial Is Established

We begin chapter eight with Esther & Mordecai replacing Haman and receiving Haman's estate. Although Haman has been dispatched, we still have to deal with the biggest problem, the king's decree to exterminate the Jews which could not be changed. Let see how God provides the enlargement and deliverance Mordecai spoke of in chapter 3.

Esther 8:1-3:

On that day [Both "on that night" in 6:1 and "on that day" here mark these two occasions as particularly significant.] did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman **the Jews' enemy** [Second of 4 times he is so called] unto Esther the queen [She in turn will give it to Mordecai.]. And Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he *was* unto her. [She finally tells the king who Mordecai was to her.]

² And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman [He gave it to him in 3:10.], **and gave it unto Mordecai**. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman. [Mordecai now becomes the Grand Vizer, the #2 man in the kingdom.]

³ And Esther spake yet again before the king [like she did in 5:1-2], and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief [same as evil v6.] of Haman the Agagite, and his **device** that he had **devised** against the Jews. [thought, plan, purpose, invention, etc.]

I'm glad they kept the figure paregmenon using words derived from the same root. "Device" also could have been translated thought, plan or purpose. Here both the noun "device" and the verb "devised" are related in Hebrew as the English translation indicates.

Haman ends up being hanged on the very gallows he had built for Mordecai. So the king needs a new right – hand man, and who is better for the job than Mordecai, the man whom the king delighted to honor. I don't know about Memucan and the rest of the sages, but I'm sure Mordecai would have been Esther's recommendation.

It is amazing to me how God honored godly Jews in foreign courts. Joseph, a man in whom the spirit of God worked, was made second to Pharaoh. Moses was raised in Pharaoh's house and was heir to the throne until he left Egypt. Then God brought him back to the Egyptian Court to negotiate with Pharaoh for the release of His people. Daniel and his three friends were exalted in Babylon and Persia to high rank. We just read of Mordecai who becomes number two next to Ahasuerus. Excellence gets rewarded.

Esther 8:4-8:

Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. [She makes it through a second time.] So Esther arose, and stood before the king,

⁵ And said, If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing *seem* right before the king, and I *be* pleasing in his eyes [Esther is consistently gracious and respectful when she speaks.], let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy [some mss add "all."] the Jews which *are* in all the king's provinces:

⁶ For how can I endure to see the evil [Same as "mischief v3] that shall come

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unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?

⁷ Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, **Behold** [figure asterismos], I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, **because** he laid his hand upon the Jews.

⁸ Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh [pleaseth] you, for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse.

The king tried to make amends. He did the best he could. He allowed Esther and Mordecai to do whatever they wanted in his name, and seal *it* with his ring. The king was sorry he couldn't change the initial decree, but he allowed them to add whatever they wanted to it. They then legislate the best possible outcome they could figure out.

Esther 8:9-10:

Then were the king's scribes called at that time in the third month, that *is*, the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth *day* thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which *are* from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language.

¹⁰ And he wrote in the king Ahasuerus' name, and sealed *it* with the king's ring, and sent letters by posts on horseback, *and* riders on mules, camels, *and* young dromedaries:

Haman's decree went out the thirteenth day of the first month, Nisan, and Mordecai's went out the 23rd day of the third month, Sivan. That's 2 months and ten days later. Haman's runners went on foot, but time was even more of an issue now, so Mordecai dispatched the posts on horseback. These guys had to cover a lot of territory, from Ethiopia to India. He wanted to be sure the Jews were notified in plenty of time.

Esther 8:11-15:

Wherein the king granted the Jews which *were* in every city to gather themselves together, and **to stand for their life** [Remember that phrase; it will come up later.], **to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish**, [Figure synonymia] all the power [force] of the people and province that would assault them, *both* little ones and women, [Remember this. It is going to come up again.] and *to take* the spoil of them for a prey, [The king also granted them the spoil which they refuse to take.]

¹² Upon one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, *namely*, upon the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month, which *is* the month Adar.

¹³ The copy of the writing for a commandment [Imperial decree] to be given in every province *was* published unto all people(s), and that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.

¹⁴ *So* the posts that rode upon mules *and* camels went out, being hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment. And the decree was given at Shushan the palace.

¹⁵ And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue

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and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad.

Less than 3 months ago Mordecai was in sackcloth and ashes. Now he's in royal apparel, riding on the king's horse. The city also reacted differently this time, after Mordecai's decree, than it did in 3:15, after Haman's decree. In 3:15 it was perplexed and troubled, and now in 8:15 it is rejoicing and glad.

Esther 8:16-17:

The Jews had light, **and** gladness, **and** joy, **and** honour.

¹⁷ And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. [They faced the same threat, but now they had the right to fight and defend themselves.] And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them. [They became proselytes because they wanted to join such an honored people.]

In Esther 8:8, Mordecai and Esther wrote legislation in the king's name that provided for the best possible outcome they could think of. The people of Israel are so blessed and favored, that many people of other nationalities committed themselves to the God of Israel. All this happen because Esther and Mordecai worked together to bring enlargement and deliverance to God's people.

Well, the day of Purim finally arrives.

Esther 9:1-4:

Now in the twelfth month, that *is*, the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them;) [Figure parenthesis. That's just another of the many reversals in this account pointing to the irony of the situation.]

² The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand [That's for the purpose of killing. See 2:21 and 3:6.] on such as sought their hurt: and no man could **withstand [stand before;** this is how things were when Israel took the promised land as recorded in Joshua in Joshua 10:8 & 21:44] them; for the fear of them fell upon all people. [That was repeated from 8:7.]

³ And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews; because the fear [reverence or respect] of Mordecai fell upon them.

⁴ For Mordecai *was* great in the king's house, and his fame [Like in Joshua 6:27; 9:9 and Jeremiah 6:24] went out throughout all the provinces: for **this man Mordecai** waxed greater and greater. [Just like Jehoshaphat did, II Chronicles 17:12]

Stating it this way, "this man Mordecai," is to emphasize the splendor of the person. Numbers 12:3 talks of Moses this way saying, "Now the man Moses *was* very meek, above all the men which *were* upon the face of the earth." I Kings 11:28 speaks of

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Jeroboam this way, and Daniel 9:21 speaks of Gabriel this way, too. The man Mordecai was revered and respected which only got greater and greater as time passed.

Esther 9:5-6:

Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, **and** slaughter, **and** destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them. [They had their way. They were successful. They retaliated against their enemies at their discretion.]

⁶ And in Shushan the palace the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men.

They did not slay the women or little ones, which they were granted the right to do. Why? Because they were defending themselves. Those that attacked were destroyed. Unless women and children attack there is no need to defense against them. This is unlike the Middle East these days where women and children strap bombs to themselves.

Esther 9:7-9:

And Parshandatha, **and** Dalphon, **and** Aspatha,

⁸ **And** Poratha, **and** Adalia, **and** Aridatha,

⁹ **And** Parmashta, **and** Arisai, **and** Aridai, **and** Vajezatha,

In the Hebrew each one of these names had suffixes attached. It would have read “this Parshandatha himself,” thus calling attention to each of them.

Esther 9:10-26:

The ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews [Third of 4 times he is so called], slew they; but on the spoil laid they not their hand. [Remember that was granted them but that was the mistake Saul made, and they wouldn't repeat it.]

¹¹ On that day the number of those that were slain in Shushan the palace was brought before the king.

¹² And the king said unto Esther the queen, The Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace, and the ten sons of Haman [LXX omits this phrase.]; what have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? [What's the rest of the report?] now what *is* thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: or what *is* thy request further? and it shall be done.

¹³ Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which *are* in Shushan to do to morrow also according unto this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows. [Please give us another day to finish up, and put the dead bodies of Haman's children on stakes. Deuteronomy 21:22 & Ezra 6:11]

¹⁴ And the king commanded it so to be done: and the decree was given at Shushan; and they hanged Haman's ten sons.

¹⁵ For the Jews that *were* in Shushan gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day also of the month Adar, and slew three hundred men at Shushan [in addition to the 500 from the day before]; but on the prey they laid not their hand. [Second time that is said.]

¹⁶ But the other Jews that *were* in the king's provinces gathered themselves together, and **stood for their lives** [Remember this phrase, too], and had rest from their enemies, and slew of their foes seventy and five thousand, but they laid not

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their hands on the prey, [Third time that is said.]

¹⁷ On the thirteenth day of the month Adar; and on the fourteenth day of the same rested they, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. [That's a genuine Thanksgiving Day celebration—big time party.]

¹⁸ But the Jews that *were* at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth *day* thereof, and on the fourteenth thereof; and on the fifteenth *day* of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. [In Shushan they had to wait until the 15th because they needed two days to get rid of their enemies.]

¹⁹ Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwelt in the unwalled towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar *a day of* gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another.

²⁰ And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that *were* in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, *both* nigh and far,

²¹ To stablish *this* among them, that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly, [This established the Purim celebration.]

²² As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day: that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.

²³ And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them;

²⁴ Because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews [Fourth of 4 times he is so called], had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that *is*, the lot, to consume them, and to destroy them; [Deuteronomy 2:15]

²⁵ But when *Esther* came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked **device**, which he **devised** [figure polyptoton] against the Jews, should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.

²⁶ Wherefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur. Therefore for all the words of this letter, and *of that* which they had seen concerning this matter, and which had come unto them,

Why call the memorial Purim after Pur, the lots that were cast against them to divine the most opportune time to destroy them? Why remember the name of the devilish device used to bring evil upon them? It was done to remind them that there is no enchantment against Israel and that even the greatest devilish plot could not be allowed to stand. Numbers 23:23 says, “Surely *there is* no enchantment against Jacob, neither *is there* any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!” We see that very sentiment in Esther—“What has God wrought!” in that so many people recognized the glory of the God of Israel and wanted to be a part of it.

Esther 9:27-32:

The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them [These were all the people who became Jews

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because of Mordecai and Esther.], so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing, and according to their *appointed* time every year;

²⁸ And *that* these days *should be* remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and *that* these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed.

²⁹ Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all authority, to confirm this second letter of Purim.

³⁰ And he sent the letters unto all the Jews, to the hundred twenty and seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, *with* words of peace and truth,

³¹ To confirm these days of Purim in their times *appointed*, according as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had enjoined [ordained] them, and as they had decreed for themselves and for their seed, the matters of the fastings and their cry.

³² And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim; and it was written in the book.

All the Jews throughout the entire kingdom learned that the Persian Queen was a Jewess and had been brought to the kingdom for the very purpose of saving the Jewish nation. This woman walking with God preserved the seed of the woman that was to come which was spoken of in Genesis 3:15.

The Book of Esther shows us that God is with us in trouble. There are many promises in Psalms about God being with us in trouble. I wonder if Esther and Mordecai and the Jews sang any of these psalms after Haman's decree went out. Look at what God says in Psalms 91:15.

Psalms 91:15:

He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: *I will be* with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.

We certainly saw how Mordecai and the Jews were honored in this record of deliverance. It is very important that we note how the deliverance came. Deliverance comes in many ways. In Psalms 91:15 God promises to be with His people in trouble and deliver and honor them. The word "deliver" in Psalm 91:15 means *to equip, to arm for war, to make strong, to brace up or invigorate*. To deliver here simply means to *equip for the fight*. God will equip His people for their battles.

His will is always to deliver us. We just need to ascertain by the spirit how He wants to do it. Sometimes he removes us from the situation (like when Jesus passed through the crowd when they were going to throw him off the cliff [Luke 4:29-30] or when the 4 leprous men went into the camp of the Syrians to find them gone) and sometimes He intervenes with miraculous works of power (like parting the Red sea or the Jordan and dropping the walls of Jericho), but often He just gives us the equipment to slug it out right where we are and win.

Many times we get tired of the people we work with, or tired of our job, or tired of the house or neighborhood we live in. Then we make decisions to get out of the situation

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based on the frustration we feel. However, it may be that God wants us to stand right where we are. He wants to equip us to slug it out and win right there. But He will not leave us to do it alone; remember He said, “*I will be with him in trouble.*”

A good example of this kind of deliverance is found in Deuteronomy 28 which says our enemies will come out against us one way and flee before us seven ways. Why do they flee? What are we doing? We are standing. We’re not running; we’re not being removed. We are standing. That’s what the Jews did in 8:11; 9:2 & 16. We are equipped by God, and we overcome any obstacle and defeat any circumstances or situations that we face. With God’s help our enemies run off in every direction to get away from us.

Why are we to put on the whole armor of God? So that we can stand. Stand and what? Stand and fight, that’s what armor is for.

Sometimes the Lord says, “Stay and fight.” Other times he has other plans. He will let us know if we ask. We need to know what His direction is for us whenever we face a difficult situation. We can be confident in God that when He says to stay, that means He will equip us with all we need to win the battle and win every time.

Psalms 50:15 is much like Psalms 91:15 that we read earlier.

Psalms 50:15:

And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

The Hebrew word for deliver is the same. God is there to equip us to win. Here it indicates the results of staying and fighting: we glorify Him. Isn’t that what Esther records? When we understand this we can handle our attitudes better.

David understood this. It seems he was always fighting. He even stopped asking God to take him away from problems. Rather he asked God to give him the victory in it. His attitude was, “I don’t want to go anywhere. I am staying right here where the heat is on, and I’m going to win.” Read his song in Psalms 3. When he was encouraged to flee as a bird to the mountains in Psalms 11:1, he refused.

Let’s be like David. Bring on the heat. Let’s fight and win and bring glory to God. Let’s expect God to show us what to do, what adjustments we need to make. Then fight there until we win. We serve a mighty God who’s able to deliver to the uttermost.

In Psalm 140:1, David says, “...deliver me, O Lord...” (That’s the same Hebrew word again.) He is asking God to equip him for the fight. He is not saying “get me out of here.” He is saying “load me up and give me deliverance. . . .” and he will surely give God glory because of his victory. David didn’t whine he asked God to equip him for his fight.

God said that He would be with us in trouble. While He is with us, He has provided us the wherewithal to win. Let’s put on the whole armor of God. What’s armor for? It’s for protection in battle. We need to use the manifestations and the wonderful Word of God we have been given so we can fight and win. Let’s use the sword of the spirit, the Word of God. It’s a double-edged sword, sharp enough to pierce and penetrate any

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enemy. The fight is usually between our ears. The battlefield is our mind and that's where we win or lose.

We all face adversity in our lives. However, it's not the adversity, but how we react to it that will determine the joy and happiness in our lives. How did the Jews react in Esther upon finding out they got the right to fight and defend themselves? It said they had light, and gladness, and joy, and honor. In every province, and in every city, whithersoever Mordecai's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day.

Like the Jews in the Book of Esther, if we want the word and will of God to come to pass for us, it going to take a willingness and thankfulness to fight. Even when we are in the center of God's will we will still have adversity. It will probably be more likely then, than at any other time. We always need to put on the whole armor of God and stand ready to engage in battle.

Do you remember what happened when Jesus told the disciples to cross the Sea of Galilee and meet him on the other side? What was God's will? Were they trying to do God's will? They sure were, but the winds were contrary. A storm came up, and many times that's just the cards that life deals us. Often times we can be right in the middle of God's will, doing everything we are supposed to and it's going to be a tough fight. The wind will be contrary. But it's the set of our sails and not the gales that determine where we end up.

When Jesus went unto them walking on the water, he made as though he would pass them by. He required them to ask for help. This is still a freewill fight we engage in. God promises to be with us in trouble, but we must invite Him into it. As long as we are in this world we will be in a fight. The good thing is, we are guaranteed success.

Life is not about waiting for the storms to pass. . . it's about learning how to sing and dance in the rain! During tough times, let's not spend too much time feeling sorry for ourselves; let's enjoy singing and dancing in the rain? Destiny is not a matter of chance; it is a matter of choice. It is not a thing to waited upon; it is a thing to be grasped and achieved.

Let's be like the Psalmist who sang;

Psalms 30:10-12:

Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be thou my helper.

¹¹ Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness;

¹² To the end that *my* glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

Let's finish up chapter 10.

Esther 10:1-3:

And the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land, and *upon* the isles of the sea.

² And all the acts of his power and of his might, and the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai, whereunto the king advanced him, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia? [They sure are!]

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³ For Mordecai the Jew *was* next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, [Jeremiah 38:4] and speaking peace [Psalms 35:20] to all his seed.

We saw how The Book of Esther, like so much of the Bible, told the story of God's involvement with His people. However, it showed God's work indirectly. God's name was not mentioned once in the entire 10 chapters, yet God is not absent from the story of Esther. Rather He was disguised, working undercover, hidden in plain sight.

He hid His name in five unique acrostics which acted like a handprint to indicate His influence in the narrative. We saw each of the acrostics like fingerprints identifying God's action behind the scenes. Each of them designated pivotal points upon which the history developed. Truly His providence permeated the whole narrative. The book demonstrates how God works in the lives of His people, both with and without their awareness.

We found the first of the hidden acrostics in Esther 1:20 spelling out Jehovah. It was contained in Memucan's words, "**all the wives shall give.**" God pointed His finger to what Memucan, the wisest Of Ahasuerus' sages said indicating that He would reverse the plan Memucan and the king were initiating.

"**Let the king and Haman come this day**" in Esther 5:4, is the second acrostic spelling out Jehovah. God pointed His finger to Esther's invitation to the king and Haman. In it Jehovah is initiating His plan for the deliverance of His people and advancing it quickly.

"**This availeth me nothing**" in Esther 5:13 is the third acrostic spelling out Jehovah. God pointed His finger to Haman's own words showing that He was ending Haman's gladness, boasting and promotion. God was terminating Haman's authority and plan to kill Mordecai.

When the king asks "**Who is he, and where is he**, that durst presume in his heart to do so?" in Esther 7:5, he unconsciously gives the name of the great "I am that I am." It is hidden in the words "**Who is he, and where is he.**" This is the fourth acrostic and the only one to form the name, "I am that I am." This specific name of God is used to bring to mind the only other place it's used in scripture. It likens God deliverance from bondage in Egypt with His working here in the Book of Esther.

"**That evil was determined against him**" in Esther 7:7, is the fifth and final acrostic spelling out Jehovah. It is formed by the final letters representing that Haman's end had come. However, it is spelt forward indicating that Jehovah was initiating, causing or bringing it to pass, and since it's the second reference to it, it would be happening shortly.

Here was a "generation" in Persia who experienced the truth and the power of this Name, as a former "generation" had done in Egypt. Jehovah, Israel's covenant God had indeed come down to deliver them from Haman; as He had from Pharaoh, and from the great "enmity" (of Genesis 3:15) which instigated both to accomplish the Satanic design of exterminating the Nation of Israel.

As long as we are in this world we will be in a fight. We must just remember God promises to be with us in trouble and He guarantees our success. To enjoy that success

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requires us to fight. In the last epistle Paul wrote, II Timothy, Paul said, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (II Timothy 4:7-8). Fought is past tense, it was over for him. We all have the right to decide that for ourselves. As long as we are willing to fight we are always guaranteed success.

In Esther God’s people lived in an alien society under despotic rulers. They often felt social and political pressure to betray their faith. The challenge was formidable, but they fought. Both Mordecai and Esther broke laws of the empire for which the penalty was death. Mordecai had refused to bow down to Haman, and Esther dared to enter the king’s throne room without being summoned.

God’s plan to deliver his people depended on the choices Mordecai and Esther would make. We know from the story that God’s plan to deliver the Jews from annihilation succeeded. God is still calling men and women to stand and fight for what’s right. He might seem hidden, but He is active, in ways often invisible, to deliver and honor His people and bring glory to Himself.

In Esther we saw God’s hand working behind the scenes to bring deliverance to His people. God’s hand is not so short today that it can no longer save. His reach is extended all the way to our lives. Whether we see Him or not, He is at work in our lives right now. Even on the most uneventful days He works in some of the most unusual ways. He specializes in transformation. The mundane can become meaningful. Recognizing God’s hand in our lives will bring comfort and courage. Psalm 31 has some poignant words.

Psalms 31:14-17:

But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou *art* my God. ¹⁵ My times *are* in thy hand:

deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.

¹⁶ Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies’ sake.

¹⁷ Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon thee. . .

May we ever call upon the name of the Lord and rejoice in his salvation remembering our times are in His hands.