



**BETHEL**  
PRESBYTERIAN

# **MINISTRY OF THE WORD**

---

**Volume 21 Issue 41**

**October 9, 2022**

## **The Scope of God's Providence**

Esther 3

Esther was written to communicate to God's people the glory of God's providence, it behooves us that we keep in mind what is meant by providence. Theologically speaking, the Westminster Shorter Catechism gives a formal definition, "God's works of providence are, His most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all His creatures, and all their actions." (Divines, 2019, p. #11)

From this definition we note the following: God's care for us:

- Is unlike man's care which is conditional, capricious, and most often done with

an eye toward self. In contrast, God's care is holy.

- Is according to His perfect wisdom. What God ordains for our lives is always the best and for our best.
- Is according to His almighty power — and so it is unthwartable by man or Satan.
- Encompasses “all His creatures and all their actions”- from the monumental to the most insignificant.

Matthew 10:29-30, “Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”

Before the world began, God ordained the number of hairs you have growing on your head at this very moment.

Micaiah informed King Ahab that the king would die in battle. So, the king donned the uniform of a foot soldier and stayed well-away from the conflict. Yet you know what happened:

2 Chronicles 18:33, “And a certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel in a joint of the armor.”

Do you understand? God's providence determined the flight of an arrow shot at random!

Truly, God governs all His creatures and all their actions! This raises the question: How far does God's providence reach? What is Its Scope? Does it include even the evil actions of man? How about our sinful actions?

Esther 3 reflects upon the scope of God's providence by showing us a day in the life of two ungodly men.

### [A Day in the Life of Two Ungodly Men, vv. 1-6.](#)

Esther 3:1, “After these events<sup>1</sup> King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite<sup>2</sup>, and advanced him and established his authority<sup>3</sup> over all the princes who were with him.”

We learn here two things about Haman: (1) He was promoted to the office of Grand Vizier (what we would call Prime Minister), and (2) He was a descendent of the Amalekite King, Agag of 1 Samuel 15.

Recall, when Israel was journeying from the wilderness to the Promised Land, the Amalekites attacked God's people on more than one occasions. The first was at

Rephidim (Exodus 17) where Israel beat them back. As the Amalekites passion was to wipe Israel out on account of their hatred of God, the Lord placed the nation under the ban and so cursed them unto their destruction. Years later, when Israel was headed finally to the Promised Land at the end of their wilderness wanderings, the Amalekites attacked again. But this time they did NOT attack the battled hardened warriors of Israel, BUT the weak, hurting, and ill, in their attempt to thwart God's Redemptive program. Moses told God's people as they were about to enter the Promised Land:

Deuteronomy 25:17-18, "Remember what Amalek did to you along the way when you came out from Egypt, how he met you along the way and attacked among you all the stragglers at your rear when you were faint and weary; // AND he did not fear God."

This cowardly action made the Amalekites NOT only the enemy of Israel, BUT the enemy of God. And so, God placed this wicked nation "under the ban" for destruction.<sup>4</sup> Moses continues:

Deuteronomy 25:19, "Therefore it shall come about when the Lord your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you must not forget."

Family of God, this is justice! There are many who do NOT have a problem with the Last Judgment BUT have a problem with a Holy War. A Holy War is nothing more than the Last Judgment before the time! And so, because of Amalek's wickedness, approximately 400 years later God approached the first King of Israel, Saul, and told him that the time had come for Amalek to be judged and so "blotted... from under heaven." And do you recall what Saul did? He disobeyed the Lord, essentially seeking to forge an alliance with the Amalekite King Agag and his people. Accordingly, God sent the aged prophet Samuel to Saul. After Samuel disciplined Saul for his rebellion, we read this:

1 Samuel 15:32-33, "Then Samuel said, 'Bring me Agag, the king of the Amalekites.' And Agag came to him cheerfully. And Agag said, 'Surely the bitterness of death is past.' But Samuel said, 'As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women.' And Samuel hewed Agag to pieces before the Lord at Gilgal."

According to Esther 3, Haman was a direct descendent of Agag. Now of all things he inherited from Agag, Haman got his hatred for the people of God; his passion to wipe them out! That brings us to Mordecai.

Esther 3:2-4, : "And all the king's servants who were at the king's gate<sup>5</sup> bowed down and paid homage to Haman; for so the king had commanded concerning him. But Mordecai neither bowed down nor paid homage. Then the king's servants who were at the king's gate said to Mordecai, 'Why are you

transgressing the king's command?' Now it was when they had spoken daily to him and he would not listen to them, that they told Haman to see whether Mordecai's reason would stand; for he had told them that he was a Jew."

With this we are introduced to Mordecai who as we have seen at the start of this book was a compromised, compromised Jew. And here we see it more fully. From this text we note the following two things:

1. Twice in these verses we read that the lawful authority of Persia, Ahasuerus, called upon his nation to give honor to his prime minister, Haman. In other words, this was NOT a matter of Haman's pride; it was the law, and as such came with this Biblical exhortation.

Romans 13:1-2, "Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore, he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves."

2. Yet, Mordecai refused to bow before Haman.<sup>6</sup> Now because Mordecai becomes a hero of this story, many commentators want to make Mordecai a hero here and so assume that it was NOT lawful for a Jew to bow the knee before an earthly authority. Isn't that what Mordecai himself intimated in v. 4, "...for he had told them that he was a Jew"? Yet consider, throughout the Bible we read of godly men bowing before others: Genesis 23:7; 27:29; 33:3; 1 Samuel 20:41; 24:8; 2 Samuel 14:4; 18:28; 1 Kings 1:16. Clearly, Judaism had no problem with this gesture of honor.<sup>7</sup> For Mordecai to become Prime Minister of Persia- Grand Vizier --- he would have had to bow the knee before Ahasuerus. It came with the office!<sup>8</sup>

Accordingly, we conclude that Mordecai's refusal to bow had nothing to do with God or his religion, BUT Mordecai's pride! in the words of F. B. Huey Jr.:

It also is unlikely that Mordecai could have been elevated next to the king if he had refused to kneel before Xerxes. The most probable reason was, as a Targum suggests, Mordecai's pride; no self-respecting Benjaminite would bow before a descendant of the ancient Amalekite enemy of the Jews. (Huey, 1988, p. 4812)

Esther 3:5-6, "When Haman saw that Mordecai neither bowed down nor paid homage to him, Haman was filled with rage.<sup>9</sup> But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him who the people of Mordecai were; therefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus."

And so began the tragedy of this book! Yes, what we read here is a massive overreaction on the part of Haman toward God's people. BUT don't let this fact escape your notice: Haman's wickedness was fed by the sinful pride of Mordecai, who refused to kneel.

And isn't that where God's people as a whole stood during the events of this book? They were where they were NOT because God did them wrong, BUT because they rebelled against God — AND THEY KNEW IT! That is why as a people they felt alienated from God. As such, God did NOT factor much in their lives at this time — NOT because they weren't His servants, BUT because they believed God had let them go — which the next point would NOT have helped.

### Planning for the Destruction of God's People, vv. 7-11.

Esther 3:7, "In the first month, which is the month Nisan, in the twelfth year<sup>10</sup> of King Ahasuerus, Pur,<sup>11,12</sup> that is the lot,<sup>13</sup> was cast before Haman<sup>14</sup> from day to day and from month to month, until the twelfth month, that is the month Adar."

Because of Mordecai, Haman sought to wipe out the Jews. Notice what he was thinking.

Esther 3:8-9, "Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus<sup>15</sup>, 'There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from those of all other people, and they do not observe the king's laws, so it is not in the king's interest to let them remain. [In other words, their presence would harm Persia if they were allowed to remain] If it is pleasing to the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed<sup>16</sup> [Whoa! NOT censored, deported, enslaved... BUT executed? Now the only objection that might be raised is that of the lost revenue due to taxes if so many were taken from Persia. So, Haman added...] and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver [a massive amount of money<sup>17</sup>] into the hands of those who carry on the king's business, to put into the king's treasuries.'"

Such was Haman's plan which, according to v. 7, took an entire year of casting lots to determine the right time! Clearly Haman here is NOT in a rage. What he is doing is cold and calculated which makes it that much eviler!

Later in this book we are going to read about the protection afforded to the Jews. At that time, we will read of hundreds of Persian deaths which liberals use to attack Judaism and this book. And lest a critical thought cross your mind at that time, remember what we just read. Haman didn't want to kill a few hundred Jews... he wanted to kill them all!!! Where is the liberal outcry at this point?

Esther 3:10-11, "Then the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. And the king said to Haman, 'The silver is yours, and the people also, to do with them as

you please.”

As to “the signet ring,” this effectively gave Haman carte blanche authority when it came to his plan.<sup>18</sup> He could do whatever he wanted without recrimination! Note also that Ahasuerus’ rejection of the “gift of silver” was according to the social confines of the ancient world. The King’s rejection would have been followed up with an insistence on the part of Haman and its eventual payment.<sup>19,20</sup> With that we are brought to levity in the midst of pain.

### Levity in the Midst of Pain, vv. 12-15.

Esther 3:12-15, “Then the king’s scribes were summoned on the thirteenth day of the first month, and it was written just as Haman commanded to the king’s satraps, to the governors who were over each province, and to the princes of each people, each province according to its script, each people according to its language, being written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king’s signet ring. And letters were sent by couriers to all the king’s provinces [in other words, it did NOT take months for word to travel. The decree was written and would have been distributed to the entire nation in less than a week! And what was the decree?] to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar [in other words, in a little less than a year from now], and to seize their possessions as plunder. A copy of the edict to be issued as law in every province was published to all the peoples so that they should be ready for this day. // The couriers went out impelled by the king’s command WHILE the decree was issued in Susa the capital; and WHILE the king and Haman sat down to drink, the city of Susa was in confusion.”

So, two things happened simultaneously upon the announcement of the genocide of God’s people.

1. There was no lag time from when the order was issued and when the nation received it. Normally there would have been a delay so that the order could be entered into the official record. Yet in our text, the order went out by courier “while” the command was ratified, only later to be recorded in the “book of the records” (cf. Esther 6:1), the official record of the king’s commands.
2. Now as the decree was being proclaimed throughout Persia, we read secondly that the mourning cries of the Jews — the tearing of clothes, the weeping, and the wailing- could be heard throughout the entire kingdom of Persia, including Susa which “was in confusion.” Yet what was going on in the palace at this time?

Esther 3:15b, “...the king and Haman sat down to drink...”

The text is written to demonstrate the indifference and coldness of both Ahasuerus and Haman. From the palace the cries could be heard. Yet that didn't bring about even a pause amongst these men. They were lifting their glasses in celebration! Talk about "out-of-touch"!

This event came NOT by "permission" from God. God ordained it! Consider, in response to Ahasuerus' edict, Mordecai appealed to Esther to go and talk to the king. When she equivocated, Mordecai's walk with God was revived, leading to some incredible statements on the part of Mordecai which we'll examine next week. Yet, notice one of them:

Esther. 4:14b, "...and who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?"

Literally, "for this time"... for this event! Because you all are so familiar with this text, you may miss what Mordecai is saying here. IF Esther was placed on the throne "FOR THIS TIME", THEN this particular event was according to the sovereign will of God and therefore ordained by God before the world began! That is the implication behind Mordecai's statement here!

Truly, God's providence encompasses the evil and sinful acts of man — Mordecai's sinful pride and Haman's maniacal attempt to wipe out Judaism! All of this was in accordance with God's eternal decree! Does that at all make you feel uncomfortable?

We are talking here about The Doctrine of Concurrence. The Westminster Confession of Faith V.4 states the doctrine plainly, "The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God so far manifest themselves in His providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men; and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering, and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to His own holy ends..."

Does this make God the author of sin? No! And to say otherwise is to contradict Scripture.<sup>21</sup> Then how do we explain how God in His providence ordains sin BUT is NOT the author of it?

First and foremost, we must understand that sin is NOT an object and so something that is created. It is an act which is committed willfully by all who sin. And that is the key! The origin of sin is the heart of man — NOT God.

James 1:13-14, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted [and so sins] when he is carried away and enticed by HIS OWN lust."

Clearly, God is NOT the author of sin, man is! It is in the heart that a sinful act/desire arises. That being said, it is important that we note that to the praise and glory of God, the Lord works His eternal purpose through the decisions we ourselves make. NOT just in our mistakes BUT also in our evil desires and choices God brings about His good purpose and pleasure! That clearly is one of the more prominent messages of Esther!

That being said, there is more to this chapter. As we read it, we must do so against the overall message of this book and so the work God is doing as He establishes/expands His Kingdom. With this, notice some of the redemptive principles revealed in this chapter.

### [This World is not a Friend to Grace, Esther 3:1-6.](#)

With Haman's passion to destroy the Jews, redemptively we've just stumbled upon an ancient war that has and will continue to rage until Christ casts the Devil and his followers into the Lake of Fire (cf. Revelation 19:20)! Isaiah ultimately speaks of Satan:

Isaiah 14:12-15, "How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' Nevertheless, you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit."

Sometime during creation BUT before the completion of the physical world, Satan began a war with God. And that war — as it has raged throughout redemptive and world history — has had as its objective the destruction of Christ and His people.

Revelation 12:4, 13, "And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven, and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child... And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *child*."

So, lest we think that this world is a friend of grace — or even neutral — we must open our eyes and be sobered. This world is a battle ground, and in Christ we have become part of "The Resistance"!<sup>22</sup>

### [Satan has and will Always Endeavor to Crush Christ and His Followers with the Use of Bribes, Esther 3:7-9.](#)

In Esther 3, it is with 10,000 talents of silver. In Matthew 26:15 it was with 30 pieces of

silver. Satan is NOT very creative and so he is rather predictable. As he cannot touch any in Christ (1 John 5:18), he resorts to bribing those enslaved to him with the promise of money, power, prestige, and more.

So, understand, the world has a vested interest in attacking the children of God; they perceive that it is in their best interest; Satan makes sure of that!

[Along with Haman's Proclamation of Death, the Letter Detailing Our Demise Also was Taken Away by God, Esther 3:12-13; Colossians 2:13-14.](#)

Imagine living at this time as a child of God and hearing that on a specific day next year any and all who wish can "destroy... kill... and annihilate" you and your family with the full backing and support of the government (Esther 3:12-13)?

That would be awful! Yet let me share with you even worse news, when you were conceived a "Certificate of Debt" detailing your guilt before God on account of your and Adam's sin was drawn up! Yet, just like the certificate in Mordecai's day, the Lord has taken away this Certificate of Debt as it relates to all in Christ.

Colossians 2:13-14, "And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us *and* which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

Gloriously, the text before us points to this truth.

[Notice the date when the decision was ratified, and the announcement went forth:](#)

Esther. 3:12a, "Then the king's scribes were summoned on the thirteenth day of the first month, and it was written just as Haman commanded to the king's satraps..."-

You may not realize it, BUT the very next day on the Jewish Calendar was Passover (cf. Exodus 12:6)!<sup>23</sup>

Coincidence? No Way! God wanted His people then and now to consider "the hostile decree which was against them" against the backdrop of the Passover Lamb!<sup>24</sup> Truly, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1)!!!

Unlike the King of Persia, our King is not Disconnected when it Comes to our Sorrow and Pain, Esther 3:15; Hebrews 4:15; Psalms 56:8.

Talk about hard hearts... while the capital city writhed in anguish over the decree, Ahasuerus and Haman offered a toast (Esther 3:15)! Sadly, that is how we often think of Christ/God when bad things happen to us.

Yet we are so wrong. Our Lord and Savior is a compassionate and sympathetic High Priest (cf., Hebrews 4:15) who knows and understands our pain. Consider David. During the time he was fleeing from Saul, David eventually came to the point in his life where he gave up on trusting God (just as the people had in Esther's day)! It wasn't getting him anywhere as Saul kept pressing down hard upon him. And so, David fled to the Philistines where as bad as it was in Israel, things got rougher still.

When he was brought back to his senses (like the Prodigal), he was comforted by the promise of God. And so, he wrote this:

Psalms 56:8, "Thou hast taken account of my wanderings; put my tears in Thy bottle; are *they* not in Thy book?"

This is speaking of the Hebrew practice of capturing in a bottle the tears that were shed over the loss of a loved one. That is how precious we are to God; He doesn't miss a tear!

And yet it is bigger than this! For we are talking here about tears wept on account of David's folly and sin. Even these God "stores in His bottle."

And so, unlike Ahasuerus, our Lord is a compassionate King connected with the sighs and tears of His people! How glorious!

How many of God's people living at this time felt alienated from God, distant from Him? They had sinned and were compromised. Certainly, God must have stopped caring! Yet, they couldn't have been more wrong! Against the cruel backdrop of Ahasuerus and Haman stands the Lord ever near to His children- loving them, guiding them, protecting them. And this remains our God!

## References

- Baldwin, J. G. (1985). *Esther: An Introduction and Commentary*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.
- Breneman, M. (1993). *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture (The New American Commentary Book 10)*. Nashville: Holman

## Reference.

- Divines, W. (2019, July 20). *Westminster Shorter Catechisms*. Retrieved from Orthodox Presbyterian Church.
- Duguid, I. M. (2005). *Esther & Ruth (Reformed Expository Commentary)*. Grand Rapids: P & R Publishing.
- Huey, F. B. (1988). *Esther*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Moore, C. A. (1995). *Esther (The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries)*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

## End Note(s)

<sup>1</sup> In the seventh year of the reign (2:16) and before the twelfth year (3:7).

<sup>2</sup> "Haman is introduced as 'the Agagite,' an intentional reference to the tension between the Israelites and the Amalekites." (Breneman, 1993, p. 326)

<sup>3</sup> "Though Haman may have been ambitious enough to angle for high office, there is a remarkable absence of racial prejudice in this appointment. Although the king owed his life to Mordecai, promotion went to Haman." (Baldwin, 1985, p. 72)

<sup>4</sup> Take in how serious this was. At one of the more important points of Redemptive History when God was bringing His people to the Promised Land, a wicked nation rose up to oppose this redemptive event. Imagine at the heyday of temple worship endeavoring to compromise the worship of God by switching out the prescribed incense?! That person would lose their life! Yet Amalek endeavored not to compromise God's worship, but the entirety of God's Redemptive Plan!

<sup>5</sup> "To judge by the gate at Persepolis, which was approached by a spacious stairway and was guarded by huge lion-like figures, and which measured sixty by thirty metres, there was room for all the king's servants and others besides in the shady recesses of the gate at Susa's palace. Those officially appointed by the king to his service had to stay within the gate of the royal palace." (Baldwin, 1985, p. 72)

<sup>6</sup> I found the following survey helpful, "When Israel came out of Egypt, the Amalekites attacked them in the wilderness, for which God cursed them and condemned them to extinction (Exodus 17:8-16). Because of that assault, God declared that there would be a lasting enmity between the two peoples, and he committed himself to blot out all remembrance of Amalek from the face of heaven. In the time of King Saul, God sent Israel to carry out that sentence on Amalek, destroying man and beast (1 Samuel 15). But Saul failed to carry out the terms of holy war, as God had commanded him to do. Instead, he spared the best of the animals and King Agag himself, the best of the people. Saul claimed that he had the best of motives, of course. He said that he simply wanted to offer the animals as sacrifices before the Lord (which, of course, left unanswered the question of what he intended to do with King Agag; a king's ransom is perhaps the most obvious goal in leaving him alive). In God's sight, however, obedience is better than sacrifice. Doing what God says is better than creatively attempting to produce our own plan to serve him. For this act of disobedience, Saul was abandoned by God and rejected (1 Samuel 15:28). ¶ So for Mordecai, whose genealogy links him to King Saul's family (see Esther 2:5), to bow to Haman, a descendant of King Agag's family, was just too much to swallow. It would have seemed to be giving in to a hated enemy, whom God had cursed." (Duguid, 2005, pp. 33-34)

<sup>7</sup> "Mordecai apparently had no qualms about bowing down before Ahasuerus, the king. In chapter 8, Esther likewise would throw herself down at the king's feet to beg for her people to be spared. It was only bowing to Haman that Mordecai found problematic." (Duguid, 2005, p. 33)

<sup>8</sup> "The king had commanded it, and everyone else was doing it- but not Mordecai. He alone was refusing to bow. Why? Some scholars have thought that Mordecai didn't want to bow down before any human being, giving worship to man that is due to God

alone. Yet Mordecai apparently had no qualms about bowing down before Ahasuerus, the king. In chapter 8, Esther likewise would throw herself down at the king's feet to beg for her people to be spared. It was only bowing to Haman that Mordecai found problematic." (Duguid, 2005, p. 33)

<sup>9</sup> "The narrator plays on the similarity of sound between Haman and *hēmâ*, 'wrath'." (Baldwin, 1985, p. 73)

<sup>10</sup> Five years after Esther had become queen (cf. Esther 2:16).

<sup>11</sup> "The word *pur* is a Hebrew form of the Babylonian *pūru*, meaning 'lot.' Secondly, it meant 'fate.' The magicians used pebbles or broken stones for dice, thus the relation between the root and the meaning as 'lot.' Both Herodotus and Xenophon spoke of the Persian custom of casting lots. ¶ Haman used the lot to select a favorable day to carry out his plot. This represents a view toward life that was part of the ancient world. Thousands of ancient Mesopotamian texts are omen texts. Kings decided whether or not to go to battle according to these omens, which were read from the livers of sacrificed animals. Astrology, magic, and a series of pagan practices were prohibited in the Old Testament. They were prohibited because the biblical viewpoint is diametrically opposed to the pagan worldview." (Breneman, 1993, pp. 328-329)

<sup>12</sup> "The names of the months are those that were adopted from the Babylonian calendar by the Jews after the Exile. The non-Hebraic word *pūr* (probably the Akkad. word *puru* ['die' or 'lot'], which is explained by the Hebrew *gōrāl* ['lot']) anticipates the institution of Purim (i.e., 'lots') in chapter 9." (F. B. Huey Jr., *Esther*, EBC, p. 4813)

<sup>13</sup> "The casting of lots was a common practice throughout the ancient East and in certain specified situations it was employed by Israel as a means of guidance (e.g. in the allocation of Canaan to the tribes, Joshua 15:1 ff.). By legitimate use of the lot the Lord would make his will known (Proverbs 16:33). Haman was also seeking guidance, but in his mind the important thing was to choose the lucky day, favoured by the omens, for his enterprise, even though it meant waiting a whole year before he could act." (Joyce G. Baldwin, *Esther*, TOTC, p. 73)

<sup>14</sup> "Haman was wrong when he thought that the future lay in the stars, to be discerned by the casting of lots. As Proverbs 16:33 puts it: 'The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.' So it transpired. The date selected by lot was far enough away that God's rescue plan had plenty of time to unfold. Similarly, Ahasuerus was wrong when he said to Haman, 'The people also [are given to you], to do with them as it seems good to you' (Esther 3:11). The people were ultimately not his to give into Haman's power. They were God's people, and he would not allow them to be destroyed at the whim of the empire. Proverbs 16 addresses this fundamental reality too: 'In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps' (Proverbs 16:9 NIV)." (Duguid, 2005, pp. 41-42)

<sup>15</sup> "Haman's accusation of the Jews (v. 8) was diabolically clever in its construction, proceeding as it did from the truth ('dispersed and scattered') to half-truth ('customs are different') to an outright lie ('who do not obey the king's laws')." (Moore, 1995, p. 42)

<sup>16</sup> "The planned massacre, gruesome though it was, was not without precedents. In 522 BC, at the time of King Cambyses' death, Smerdis the Magus usurped the throne. When he was put to death in a conspiracy, every Persian in the capital took up his weapons and killed every Magus he could find. If darkness had not put an end to the slaughter, the whole caste would have been exterminated." (Baldwin, 1985, p. 74)

<sup>17</sup> "It is impossible to determine the value of the silver in current monetary equivalents. It was a fabulous sum that is estimated to weigh approximately 375 tons. It has also been estimated to represent the equivalent of two-thirds of the annual income of the Persian Empire (Paton)." (Huey, 1988, p. 4813)

<sup>18</sup> "His signet ring was the seal of executive power, recognized throughout the empire. Haman had a free hand to put into effect his far-reaching plot." (Baldwin, 1985, p. 74)

<sup>19</sup> "The king may appear to be refusing the money, but it is more likely that he is still expecting Haman to pay it to him, so carrying out the plan as it seemed good to him." (Baldwin, 1985, p. 74)

<sup>20</sup> “The king’s rejection of Haman’s silver may have been only an example of Oriental politeness that did not actually mean he rejected the payment (cf. 4:7, where it seems that the bribe was paid; cf. Genesis 23:3–18).” (Huey, 1988, p. 4814)

<sup>21</sup> Cf. James 1:13-15; John 2:16; Psalms 50:21.

<sup>22</sup> “The reason that this conflict is so often part of our earthly experience as Christians is that there is a hidden spiritual conflict that has been going on since the beginning of the world. Haman’s enmity toward God’s people was merely the latest manifestation of Satan’s ongoing warfare against the people of God. The struggle for the hearts and minds of mankind that began in the garden continues on throughout time and space, and those who belong to the people of God will frequently feel the assaults of the Evil One. Our expectation of life ought to be of a constant spiritual battle in which unseen spiritual adversaries are constantly ranged against us, against whom we need to be on our guard, protected by the whole armor of God (see Ephesians 6:10–20).” (Duguid, 2005, p. 37)

<sup>23</sup> “The date, possibly part of the contents of the official wording, was memorable to any Jew because it was the day before the slaying of the Passover lamb (Exodus 12:6). That memorial celebration, with its rehearsal of God’s deliverance from the Pharaoh, could scarcely fail to provoke the question, can our God not save us in an equally decisive way from death under Ahasuerus? Because faith believed the answer to be in the affirmative, the liturgy year after year was relevant (Exodus 12:24–27), but it faced a decisive test.” (Baldwin, 1985, p. 75)

<sup>24</sup> “Again, the author provided information that adds to the artistry of the narrative by giving a date only a Jew would know. The fourteenth day was the first day of Passover, the celebration of deliverance from Egypt. The irony is unmistakable. The day before celebrating freedom from Egyptian oppression, a decree had been made for their very destruction. In the ancient world things that were considered important were written down, so officials had their secretaries record events and transactions. This decree was a type of death document.” (Breneman, 1993, p. 331)