

Esther Saves the Jews

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Esther pleads for the king to save her people, and Mordecai leads the day of salvation
2. aim – to cause us to recognize that God will save his people against their enemies through Christ
3. passage – Esther 8:1-9:16

b. outline

1. Esther Pleads Before the King (Esther 8:1-8)
2. Mordecai Issues a New Edict (Esther 8:9-17)
3. The Jews Destroy Their Enemies (Esther 9:1-16)

c. opening

1. the **death** of Haman
 - a. the evil man is hanged because he tricked the king and attempted genocide against the Jews
 - b. however, the death of Haman does not end the threat, so a *resolution* is needed
2. the **direction** of our exposition of the book
 - a. **chapters 1-2** lay out *in detail* how it is that Esther (a Jewess) was able to rise to Queen of Persia
 - b. **chapter 3** is the “center” of the book – the plot by Haman to destroy the Jews
 - c. **chapters 4-7** outline the *response* to the edict instituted by Haman
 - d. **chapters 8-10** outline the *resolution* to the edict and how it is overturned (positively)

I. Esther Pleads Before the King (Esther 8:1-8)

Content

a. the elevation of Mordecai (vv. 1-2)

1. the king gives “*the house of Haman*” to Esther
 - a. all of his possessions, but also his power, his name, his position, his title
2. the king elevates Mordecai to the (former) position of Haman – the **viceroys**, #2 in the empire
 - a. Esther *reveals* to the king who Mordecai is to her – **i.e.** her cousin
 - b. Esther *transfers* all of Haman’s possessions to Mordecai – probably because she does not need them for herself, being the Queen and living in the palace
3. the “prophecy” of Zeresh in **6:13** regarding Mordecai is now complete
4. and, the king *completes* the “prediction” of Haman himself in **6:11** = Mordecai “*has it done*” to him as the man the king wishes to honor (note the irony of Haman’s own position now given to his enemy)

b. the request of Esther (vv. 3-6)

1. **note:** at the feast (where she reveals Haman’s plot; **7:3-4**), Esther does not actually ask for anything concretely (other than the life of her people) – her “request” is designed only to reveal Haman’s evil
2. **now:** Esther comes into the king’s “royal presence” (note the “*golden scepter*” held out to her in **v. 4**) to make a more *specific* request – the king moves to his throne to make this an *official* audience
 - a. she wraps the request in *great emotion* before the king (**e.g.** “*fell at his feet*”, “*wept*”)
 - b. she frames the request in *great humility* before the king (**e.g.** “*if I find favor*”, “*if I am pleasing*”)
 - c. she couches the request in *great caution* before the king (**e.g.** “*how can I bear to see ...*”)
 - d. she molds the request in *great specificity* before the king (**e.g.** “*an order ... revoke the letters*”)
 - e. **question: would this mirror your prayer life – prayer that is honest and not cliché, prayer that is humble in approaching the true nature of God, prayer that is cautious in seeking God’s will first, and prayer that is specific and not loaded down with superficialities?**

c. the response of the king (vv. 7-8)

1. three (3) things to keep in mind in regards to the king’s response
 - a. although Haman is dead, his edict does not die with him – all edicts are authorized *by the king*, so Haman’s death does not automatically revoke what was established (**i.e.** the king is still alive)
 - b. as the king says here, no royal edict can be revoked by just *saying it is so*
 1. this is *bad news* in that the original edict cannot just be “unspoken”
 2. this is *good news* in that any *new* edict issued against the first cannot be undone either
 3. **question:** is this a *legal* quandary for the king (how is that possible) or something else?

- c. even if the edict was “unspoken,” those *sympathetic to Haman* throughout the empire are already preparing to destroy the Jews – simply saying “don’t do it” will not stop those intent on doing so
 - 1. **IOW:** the king (probably) recognizes that Haman’s edict has awoken a great amount of anti-Jewish sentiment throughout the empire, which will not be stopped without drastic action
 - 2. thus, he allows Mordecai to write a *new* edict (one that will *counter* the original; **see below**)

II. Mordecai Issues a New Edict (Esther 8:9-17)

Content

a. Mordecai issues a new edict (vv. 9-14)

1. about three (3) months have elapsed since the original edict was issued (**8:9 cf. 3:7**)
 - a. **i.e.** the process of the empire preparing to carry out Haman’s edict is well underway
2. the new edict is a **mirror image** of the original:
 - a. it is to be carried out *on the exact same date as the original* (**8:12 cf. 3:13**)
 - b. it authorizes the Jews to *defend themselves* against any attack that might come against them
 - c. it is written under the king’s authority and sealed with his signet ring
 - d. it is sent throughout the empire by couriers of the king himself
 - e. it is designed to be seen by everyone in the kingdom and is well-published for a purpose
3. **note:** although the new edict is largely *defensive* in nature (**i.e.** to counter any attack that might come under the auspices of the original), it’s *real* intention was to **threaten** anyone who might attack in the hope that they would relent by recognizing that they would be out-resourced
 - a. Mordecai could have issued a decree that authorized the Jews to make a *preemptive strike*, but he chose to make the edict defensive to counter the original
 - b. **IOW:** it was designed to spread a *fear of the Jews* throughout the empire (**see v. 17b below**)
 1. Haman is no longer in power to provide resources for any attack on the Jews
 2. a Jew and a Jewess are clearly ensconced in power in the empire, and would provide strong resources and leadership against any who would attack the Jewish people
 3. the king clearly appears to favor the Jews (now), and he could bring his resources to bear
 - c. **thus, any who would attack the Jews at this point would be doing so purely out of malice**
 1. in **chapter 9**, those who do attack are called “*enemies*,” implying that they hated the Jews even before Haman’s edict was issued (**i.e.** an anti-Semite underground in the empire)

b. Mordecai appears in the capital city (vv. 15-17)

1. in his sovereignty, God has “turned the tables” completely – he has raised up a viceroy to replace Haman, given him the same “favor” of the king (and queen!), and used him to issue a replacement edict against any who would come against his chosen people
2. Mordecai goes out to present himself in royal array in the capital city
 - a. to show that he is (indeed) the new viceroy replacing Haman
 - b. to show the Jews that they now have a great defender in the palace (which results in great “joy”)
3. **note v. 17b** – many of the peoples of the country “*declared themselves Jews*”
 - a. the edict of Mordecai, along with his and Esther’s positions, frightens many into “joining” the Jews
 - b. **today, this would be known as virtue signaling**
 1. virtue signaling = declaring by word or action that you are *sympathetic* to a particular cause, especially if you are not directly a member of those affected by the situation
 2. **i.e.** declaring yourself to be (in some way) “for” the oppressed, the minority, the marginalized, or the disenfranchised – making a public statement that you “feel” for these groups even though you are not a part of them *nor are actually doing anything concretely to help them*
 - a. **e.g.** in politics, making a public statement (via social media, typically) that you “feel” for the plight of immigrants or ethnic minorities or the “LGBTQ community”
 - b. in order to “appear” favorable to these groups (and others!) and prevent attacks, even though you are *probably* not doing anything specific to help them (other than talk!)
 3. the problem with virtue signaling for followers of Christ
 - a. the modern (liberal) way – co-opting the words and works of Christ to suggest that “he” would favor such groups, thus “modifying” the gospel to be primarily about “helping” them
 1. **IOW:** a social-justice gospel, where Jesus is **caricatured** to defend the “rights” of certain groups while ignoring aspects of Christ’s teachings that are inconvenient to the cause
 2. **i.e.** overlooking serious breaches of God’s law in the rebelliousness of those in focus
 - b. the biblical (gospel) way – to declare allegiance to the *biblical* Jesus and to his gospel – to be his *true* disciple by an **intentional life of repentance and faith** (**see below**)

III. The Jews Destroy Their Enemies (Esther 9:1-16)

Content

a. the Jews destroy their enemies

1. it would appear that there were still those who still felt “compelled” to carry out Haman’s edict
 - a. **(as above)** they are *fundamentally* anti-Jewish to begin with; Haman’s edict is only an excuse
2. it would appear that the Jews were supported by many in this quest (though they are a *minority*)
 - a. Mordecai’s own power is brought to bear **(see v. 4)**
 - b. the officials of the provinces joined the Jews **(see v. 3; out of fear of Mordecai)**
3. it would appear that the Jews vastly out-smart their enemies, and **75,000** are killed **(v. 16)**
 - a. even the king recognizes the power of the Jews in this battle **(v. 12)**
 - b. including the ten (10) sons of Haman **(see vv. 7-10)**, who were later hanged *in effigy* **(v. 13)**
 1. Esther requests this of the king (probably) to send a message of her own power **(vv. 11-13)**
4. it would appear that the Jews in Susa needed an *additional* day to fend off the enemy **(v. 13)**
5. it would appear that the Jews did not *plunder* their enemies **(see vv. 10, 16)**
 - a. although (I suspect) that their enemies *would have* plundered them if successful
 - b. this is (probably) to show that this was an entirely *defensive* tact on their part

b. the application of this war to us

1. **obvious:** just as the sovereignty of God had established the Jews to defeat their enemies, the sovereign decree of God stands to defeat all of the enemies of his chosen ones now and forever
2. **principle: there is no virtue signaling *into* the kingdom of Christ**
 - a. the Father has established a *specific day* on which Christ will return (wearing *his* royal robes)
 - b. on that day, Christ will (through judgment) cast down in defeat all who are his enemies
 - c. thus, only those who *now completely identify* with this Jesus (not in lip-service) will be found to be “on the right side of history” – only those who follow this Christ now, in absolute allegiance, through faith and repentance, and in an absolute pursuit of holiness, will be considered on his side