



Lesson 8 April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020

## Injustice Will Be Punished

Study Scripture – Esther 7:1 - 10

Background Scripture – Esther 3; 5; 7

**Key Verse:**

*“They hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king’s wrath pacified.”*

**Esther 7:10**

### INTRODUCTION

Context in examining Scripture Texts is shown in our Lesson to be critically important. As we examine the Lesson in the book of Esther we see and must approach the fact that chapters 7 and 9 deal only with the climax and the ending of the story.

We are therefore examining how people become twisted when they chose to live outside of the Commandments of God. They do not love people. Their hatred, arrogance, evil desires of the flesh, and pride make them blind to what God the Father wants.

Then there are those rulers who are also unaware of God’s and as they pursue their own goals of reaching and maintaining power they fall in line with the evil desires and motivations of power seekers around them.

People therefore can be easily shown that they live in dangerous times. They know that bondage is bad, but they know that death is worse, and so they are constantly accommodating themselves to their evil environment.

Our task therefore is to teach others as this new Queen learned that there is whole of deliverance because there is such a thing as divine mercy. This divine mercy is based on divine promises. It provides the means and the pledge of the gift of pardon and the gift of life.

We should also learn that human hunger, though it is sometimes, writers must always be treated with suspicion. We do get angry sometimes but in doing that we hurt ourselves and destroy the proper sense of our rights and our dignity. We therefore must ask ourselves on these occasions where there is anger in us if our anger is justifiable and in line with divine righteousness or whether it is mere selfish passion.

There they as we see the results of evil in the world as Satan works through evil men we must learn that there must be a real sense of a precious sacrifice that we must often make. In this

story the new Queen Esther was herself the sacrifice and she knew it well. So she took the risks that was prepared to sacrifice herself.

But note that she did it skillfully and she engaged in real intercession for herself and her people. But before that she joined with them in fasting and prayer. So we know from this that God was involved for the appeal for mercy was made to God. We therefore know that God requires wisdom and application of understanding from us.

“It happened by chance that ...”; “coincidentally at the same time...”; are phrases we often hear to explain some unexpected, unforeseen interjection in planned or expected course of events that significantly alter outcomes. Any connected number of these unforeseen interventions lead to “... this is more than coincidence”.

Christians have a term for these seemingly ‘chance’ occurrences which we call providence. Often in our experiences these events first appear as ‘setbacks’ and only in retrospect we see the providential ‘hand of God’ in our affairs. Providence may be seen as foresight manifesting divine care or direction.

The Study Text is the climax of a number of seemingly unconnected events that end with an unknown, Jewish, orphan girl becoming Queen of the then most powerful nation and at a time to be the instrument to avert the annihilation of Jews in the Persian Empire.

The people of God sometimes experience His discipline and often after this discipline long for forbearance on His part. The Book of Esther provides a dramatic recall of a very eventful period for Jews in the Persian Empire during the reign of King Ahasuerus, (Xerxes). The story eventually ends in triumph and celebration when disaster and annihilation seemed the more likely outcome.

The story of Esther is one of several in the Old Testament to portray the success of Israelites living in foreign surroundings who started out in very unfavorable circumstances. In a few noteworthy cases, these Israelites rose to influential positions (Genesis 41:40–43; Nehemiah 1:11; Daniel 2:48, 49). These accounts illustrate God’s providential care for His covenant people. They also illustrate His resolve to use them as agents of influence even when (or especially when) they faced opposition, criticism, and even death.

*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. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.* (Esther 8:17).

Interestingly the Book of Esther has the somewhat dubious distinction of being the only book in the Bible that does not mention God’s name. However the story does much to illustrate God’s sovereign control of human events; His intervention to preserve His people and underlines the truth that “...Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee:” (Psalm 76:10).

The events in the Book of Esther take place in the Persian citadel of Susa during the reign of Ahasuerus, (485–465 BC; Esther 1:1, 2). The king's capital city was located in today what is the



western part of Iran. The decreed seventy-year exile of Judah to Babylon had just expired and at that time King Cyrus (601 – 530 BC) the pagan despot of the then greatest empire issued a surprising decree: *Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, <sup>2</sup> Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. <sup>3</sup> Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem, ....* (Ezra 1:1-3). Clearly, what we have here is divine intervention. God may discipline His people, but He never abandons them.

As it turned out, not all Jews in the Empire took the opportunity to return to Judah to rebuild Jerusalem. Many choose to remain in the relative comfort of Babylon rather than deal with the challenges of reconstruction in Judah. This is the group the book features and the period is the interval between Ezra chapter six and seven or between the return of exiles under Zerubbabel and the return under Ezra.

Key figures in the account are the close relatives Mordecai and Esther (Jewish name 'Hadasseh'). They were part of a Jewish community that remained in the area after Cyrus' decree in 538 BC allowed them to return home (Ezra 1:1–4; Esther 2:5–7). Following a series of providential events triggered by the un-heard-of defiance of the Persian queen Vashti who flatly refused the king's request to come to a likely wine laden drunken banquet he was hosting the king was advised to depose the queen for her insolence.

The personality of this king Ahasuerus or Xerxes 1 who took over the Persian throne and ruled the Persian Empire from 486 B.C. to 465 B.C. after his father Darius was murdered by one of his advisers shows a weak person ruled by his passions and who was easily manipulated. History regards him as being a ruler with having a very inconsistent or spotty record and this led to him spending many years fighting the Greeks with poor military strategy and losing.

To replace the reigning queen Vashti this king of Persia went along with the recommendations of the courtiers to have a beauty contest to get a new queen. This of course gives us an insight into the rather in opposition to the instructions of the Lord God behaviour of the powerful rulers of old. They did not go about choosing companions in the way that God wished. The same ungodly attention to and resulting cavalier behaviour to important matters of life is exhibited by our own powerful rulers.

But note also that they were not ignorant for after the king remembered what Queen Vashti had done to him he issued a decree that all wives in the kingdom must honour their husbands. So he clearly knew that wives had a responsibility to their husbands well and the corollary that husbands had the responsibility to protect and treat their wives well. We will see later that he



very well knew that for he was upset that anybody would intrude and apparently put his new wife in danger.

Esther won the subsequent beauty pageant to replace the deposed queen, (Esther 1:10–22). An orphaned, obscure, Jewish virgin was now the Queen! (2:1–18).

We now see the hand of God operating from the shadows. But note God is nowhere mentioned in this book.

So note carefully that whether you know it or not or care to pay attention to it, God works quietly and sometimes publicly to fulfill His plan and to protect the people who are His no matter where they are and the times in which they live.

We may note that Esther's beauty was considerable. But it turns out that her beauty went beyond the physical. She was chaste and her inner beauty made her more attractive to the king than the other contestants. It seems clear that the king fell in love with her and chose her as his queen.

While God can use any kind of person to accomplish His purpose; were it not for her chaste lifestyle, she would not have been in the pageant in the first place.

We should therefore take note that living according to the ways of God will make you beautiful and desirable. There is much to be said for Christians to live lives of purity and so not disqualify themselves from being useful to the Master. Sometimes God requires a 'clean' vessel! At His first advent; Jesus 'was born of a virgin'.

The book is a dramatic narrative full of strange coincidences, love, passion, anger and betrayal, intrigue and good finally triumphing over evil. It relates how the life of a beautiful and winsome young girl took a sort of Cinderella path that catapulted her from obscurity to the highly political and dangerous Persian court.

Do not therefore underestimate the danger of life in this court.

The powerful men in the royal court were ruthlessly ambitious, intent on power at any price and willing to do whatever was necessary to that end.

The plot which unfolds revolves around a scheme to destroy the Jews. It is set in motion when Ahasuerus' (known in modern scholarship as Xerxes) chief advisor and highest official, Haman an Agagite, had developed a fierce animosity for Mordecai a middle level Jewish court official that had a prominent place in the Jewish community (Esther 3:1–5).

The Agagites were considered by the Jews as belonging to the house of Amalek and though this is not known for certain, they had a historic and enduring hatred of the Jews passed down from generation to generation and Haman kept the tradition well. The word **Agag** is taken by one scholar as related to the Assyrian agagu which means "to be powerful", "vehement", "angry". He deviously sought an edict from Ahasuerus for the annihilation of all Jews throughout the



Persian Empire (3:6). Haman cleverly secured this edict without revealing to Ahasuerus which people he had targeted for destruction. A date for their eradication was set, and the Jews found themselves in grave peril (3:7–15).

We may note the cavalier attitude of ungodly rulers to loss of life as long as it is not theirs or that of their loved ones. Money is the god of people who are essentially pagans. For them in those days as in our days the death of innocent people in pursuit of policy goals is simply considered to be “collateral damage” The king showed a quite evil and unquestioning acquiescence to the specious request of Haman. Today’s rulers exhibit this same trait.

Initially, the Queen hid her nationality while at the royal palace and it was only under some duress and following a stern warning from her guardian, that she changed and took steps to reveal her nationality. It was clearly dangerous to be known as a Jew.

Mordecai convinced Queen Esther to act at the risk of her own life, to save her people (Esther 4). A key part of his appeal was for her to consider the possibility that divine providence was at work. This possibility can be seen in his question, “*Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*” (4:14).

Esther’s subsequent resolve is seen in her reply, “*So will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish*” (4:16).

Now consider carefully whether you would have a behaviour such as this. You say you're a believer, and you look forward to being in the New Heaven and New Earth and the New Jerusalem. But would you be prepared to sacrifice yourself for the survival of the people of God?

This matter might be of critical importance if you have the misfortune of living in the days of the Antichrist, days which most believers feel will shortly come to pass.

Esther then sent out this message: “*Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise;*” (Esther 4:16). We can reasonably assume that prayers accompanied the fast.

After three days of fasting, Esther went before Ahasuerus and received his favor, (Esther 4:16–5:2). We must note carefully that this action of approaching the king when he was in court was something that Queens never did. She was taking a massive risk. She was clearly depending on the mercy, guidance, and the protection and security promised by God.

She asked that he and Haman join her in a banquet, where she would answer the king (5:3, 4). When prompted at the meal to offer her petition, she requested only that they come to another feast the next day (5:5–8).



The requested banquet followed and the Study Text presents another dramatic, ironic twist and plot reversal. Suddenly Haman's plot is turned upside-down; in a matter of hours he is hanged on the gallows he constructed for Mordecai.

We often hear the phrase 'there is no justice'. God is however a God of justice and if not in this life then the next but justice will be done and injustice particularly against God's people will receive its due recompense.

### **THE TEXT**

Verse 1. *So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen.*

Esther's invitation to the king and Haman results from Mordecai's telling her about Haman's plan to slaughter the Jews (Esther 4:7, 8, 15, 16). The banquet hosted here is the second the two men attend at Esther's request.

We must remember now that the king had had a sleepless night and He had called for the royal records for he remembered that there had been an attempt on his life and someone had revealed the plot. That person had not been rewarded properly and so the king determined now that he should honour the person that saved his life, his Saviour. That Saviour turned out to be Mordecai, and the king had his chief advisor Haman who hated Mordecai, to take Mordecai all around the city in a robe of honour.

The incredible hatred of Mordecai had been heightened because Mordecai had personally offended Haman by refusing to bow down to him as the king had commanded the people of the court to do when he appointed Haman as his chief advisor among the princes.

We note therefore that Haman was not in a good mood. But the king was not predisposed to let anything bad happen to his Saviour Mordecai and probably the Jews in the city. So that is the immediate context of the banquet.

*... banquet with Esther the queen...* this banquet likely occurred in the evening, depending on whether Haman is executed the same day. Haman already led Mordecai on a horse around the city earlier in the day and Haman had enough time to seek advice afterwards (6:11–13).

Verse 2. *... What is thy petition, queen Esther? ...* overindulgence of wine seems to have been a big contributor to Queen Vashti's deposition (Esther 1:7–10). At Esther's banquet, however, the king seems much better behaved. We are told however that at this Persian banquets not much food was served. It was mainly a banquet of wine and deserts.

*... even to the half of the kingdom...* Ahasuerus once again expressed his willingness to hear Esther's petition. Having been asked to wait during the banquet of the night before, he is no doubt intensely curious about what's on Esther's mind. Thus his exaggerated offer of up to *half of the kingdom* (Esther 5:3; 9:12; compare Mark 6:23).



Verse 3. In ordinary circumstances, Esther may have drawn out the process over more days with more banquets and wine. Ahasuerus himself may have expected the process to draw out further, given the custom of multi-day banquets (Esther 1:5). But for Esther and her people, time was running out. At least two months had elapsed since the king's extermination order was issued, leaving less than nine months before it was to be enacted (3:7; 8:9, 12). That may seem like plenty of time in a modern sense. But it's not, given the vast expanse of the Persian Empire and the limitations of ancient methods of communication.

Therefore Esther does not waste time on any multi-day etiquette of presenting a request, beyond the single-day delay so far. She had a history of modesty in her requests (Esther 2:15), so she probably knew that the king will assume that she will not ask for anything extravagant now. Esther has been Queen for several years at this point (compare 2:16 with 3:7), so it's quite likely that she has developed a sense of when to push the king and when not to!

Note that sometimes to get things done you have to "butter up" people in power and stroke their ego.

It's a dangerous thing to confront people who are powerful. Note that the prophet Nathan did not come to King David a man of God with a blunt rebuke and he did not come hard with the sin that David had committed. It is called for wisdom in many circumstances. We are sure that both wives and husbands know how to approach each other with some delicacy to get what they want.

... *If I have found favor in your eyes...* Esther strategically negotiates with the king, using his own opinion of her as part of the bargain (2:9; 5:2). Building on the language the king used—of a petition (or wish) and a request—Esther answered the king with a twofold response. She first petitioned the king for her own life to be spared, on the basis of him favoring her and then requested the lives of her people be saved.

Verse 4. Esther begins to expose Haman's plot to destroy the Jews (Esther 3:9). Esther is a Jew! Her statement *we are sold*, phrased in the passive voice, avoids implicating the king (4:7). The heaping up of phrases—*to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish*—emphasizes the dire consequences of her people being sold.

... *I had held my tongue ...* Esther could mean that she would have kept silent if her people were "only" sold into enslavement rather than to death. This would not have been important enough to require the king's attention. Esther was thinking of herself, her people, and her king!

Esther conveyed the idea that she seriously weighed the situation before seeking audience with the king. She may not have realized that Haman withheld the identity of the people he had targeted for destruction (Esther 3:8–11). One would think that the king himself would be curious about the identity. The fact that he did not indicates his absolute trust in Haman. The



decree by now was all over the Persian Empire, one wonders if the king was still unaware of the identity of the group being targeted (compare 3:12–15 with 8:9). Such lack of awareness could indicate the isolation of the king or his rather cavalier attitude to the affairs of state.

... *have been sold*... likely a reference to the money Haman promised the king upon acceptance of his original proposal to annihilate the Jewish people (3:9). Mordecai had shared this insider information with Esther (4:6–7).

... *to be destroyed and killed, to be annihilated* ... the same words used in the king's decree. This appears to be public information at this point, even though the king is unaware of just how public the information is (3:13; 15). The repetitious nature of the decree emphasizes its severity—Haman's plan was to commit genocide.

The language might sound obtuse to modern ears but was polite court language at the time. But let us remember that the same thing happens nowadays and we can point to several cases where peoples have been killed because those who should be protecting them have been bought.

Verse 5. *Who is he, and where is he*... some wonder about the king's apparently ignorance of the situation. The questions however might be reasonable given the facts that (a) it's been several weeks since he was involved in this issue (Esther 3:7, 12; 8:1, 9); (b) kings are busy people and therefore delegate tasks to subordinates (3:10, 11); and (c) the king is just now being made aware that Esther is part of the target group. In any case, the king is still trying to put together the bigger picture.

Scholars tell us that the verse with the question asked to Esther loses a love for us in the translation from Hebrew to English. If it were to be read in Hebrew, it comes across with the force of machine gun fire, says one scholar.

So we know from the tone of the king's words that Haman was in trouble.

Verse 6. ... *adversary and enemy* ... if Esther were concerned that Ahasuerus would become defensive, here she is probably relieved to be able to point the finger squarely and only at Haman. She does not identify him as her personal enemy but as *adversary and enemy*. Still her choice of terms described the depth of her animosity toward Haman. She implied Haman was not just as an enemy of the Jewish people but of the state.

Esther has stated her concern with respect for the king, humility and deference, following the expected protocol of the royal court. Tact is of utmost importance (Daniel 2:14), given that she is accusing the king's most trusted adviser of treachery that involved misuse of the king's own power. She was careful to level this accusation at Haman without implicating Ahasuerus himself.

*Haman was afraid before the king and the queen*... Haman's reaction is like that of many who are caught in wrongdoing: his once steely exterior becomes a "deer caught in the headlights"



look. Interpreters often identify this moment as the climax of the entire story. Haman knew he was exposed; the only question was how the king would react. Esther completed her speech and spoke no further in this chapter.

Verse 7... *arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath...* this shows how alcohol accentuates the emotions. The king was furious (Esther 1:12) and stormed out into the garden; no need to hear from Haman. He has put the pieces together and Haman's guilt was obvious. The king's highest official had abused royal authority. The king might not have known Haman's motive but he knew it was not in his best interest! The man Mordecai who had saved his life and who had only just been rewarded could not be so easily thrown away.

As well, the fact that his enemy sat in his presence at that very moment evidently made the king pause before issuing his obvious verdict. He wanted to think about it and walked out into his garden to do so.

... *he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king...* the king's reaction told Haman all he needed to know; it was 'game over'! (Proverbs 20:2). Just as Esther was forced to make a plea for her life (v. 3), Haman was forced to plead for his life.

He must do something, but there was no good option. He cannot follow the king outside, nor can he add to his guilt by fleeing. The warning from his wife and friends, thematic of the book as a whole, should have been heeded:

*"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"* (Esther 6:13).

Their words are certainly coming true. Even the ungodly will at times and unbeknown to them pronounce God's purpose! (John 11:50, 51; Acts 5: 38, 39).

Verse 8. ... *and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther was...*

Persian royal banquets involved reclining on beds, like couches, instead of sitting at a table (Esther 1:6). Desperate for mercy, *Haman* approached the queen's couch or bed to plead for his life. Her silence may have increased his desperation, for he fell onto her couch and maybe under the influence of wine he had even grabbed her feet to beg for mercy.

Ironically, Haman was enraged earlier when a Jew would not bow down to him (3:5), but now he will find himself at the feet of one of those same Jews.

... *Will he force the queen also before me in the house?* How the king might have handled Haman's treachery before seeing this no longer mattered. Haman's begging was misunderstood as assault (Gen 39:7–20). According to customs of the time, Esther would have been reclining on a couch during the banquet.

Ahasuerus indicted Haman for violating harem protocol and, even worse, appearing to force himself on the Queen (Genesis 34:7; 39:14). In the Persian system, the only men



allowed near the Queen or the king's other wives and concubines were eunuchs. (They are referred to in the book of Esther as "chamberlains"; Esther 2:3, 14; 7:9. Otherwise, an advance on any member of the harem was considered an affront to the king himself (2 Samuel 16:21, 22).

... *they covered Haman's face* ... The king's rhetorical question prompted the response of punishment by his guards or officials who are now implied to be present. The king's officials thus acted on what they recognized as a capital offense. They covered Haman's face because he was no longer worthy to see the king. Covering the face of a condemned person was probably customary as well.

One writer notes: **"Having multiple wives and concubines was common among the nobility of the ancient world (2 Chronicles 11:21). These women were kept from contact with men other than their master. Centuries later, the Arabic word *harem* came into use to describe these women and their living spaces.**

**Harem etiquette was governed by royal edicts. Wives and concubines were not supposed to be seen in public. They were guarded by eunuchs and could only leave the harem when appropriately covered. The women of the harem lived in seclusion.**

**It is easy to understand the outrage of the king when he thought he saw Haman attempting to assault the queen. If the man's fate wasn't sealed before, it was then! And it all traced back to a personal vendetta against an honorable man: Haman's grudge against Mordecai. How do we stop such a vicious cycle before it starts?"**

Verse 9. Esther had taken some of the king's chamberlains into her confidence during the passage of years (Esther 2:8, 9, 15; 4:4, 5). One of them knew of her difficulty, probably from joining in her fast (4:16). Esther was a wise woman and had learned the politics of alliance and survival in the royal court and of course God's favor was on her.

... *Behold also, the gallows* ... the chamberlain Harbonah informed the king that Haman had erected a high structure for a humiliating execution of Mordecai.

Haman had left the first meal in high spirits. But after another confrontation with Mordecai on the way out, he once again became enraged. At the suggestion of his wife and friends, he had a gallows built for Mordecai's hanging (Esther 5:9–14). The height of fifty cubits (about 75 feet) reveals Haman's intent for Mordecai's demise to be a brazen public display.

...*Hang him thereon*... if the king had any remaining notions of sparing Haman's life, those thoughts now leave him permanently. Mordecai had saved the king's life previously (Esther 2:19–23; 6:1–11); the king now returned the favor.

There is justice with God!



Verse 10. *So they hanged Haman ...* the execution takes place immediately, given the time indicator in Esther 8:1. For Haman to meet his end in the manner he had prepared for Mordecai is the supreme irony of the book (Prov 11:5, 6; 26:27); it is a prime example of poetic justice. Thus ended the life of one of the most hostile anti-Semitic Jew-haters that ever walked the stage of history (Ps. 9:15-16).

Jesus' warning in that regard still applies: *"With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again"* (Matthew 7:2).

*... the king's wrath pacified ...* once justice was served, the king calmed down.

The outcome points to God's work on behalf of His covenant people. God brings Haman's wickedness down on his own head in the same way the Bible often declares (Psalm 9:16; Matthew 7:1, 2). Before that day's end, Ahasuerus will give Mordecai the signet ring that he had entrusted to Haman, along with the position and authority of Haman's office, (Esther 8:2; 10:2, 3). The Jews find deliverance by a second decree of the king (8:11, 12). The Feast of Purim (derived from the word *pur*; 3:7; 9:24, 26) commemorates this deliverance each year.

One writer provides a concluding thought: **"The nets of evil plotting and malicious enterprise swing far out in the tides of human life, but never far enough to enmesh God. He remains beyond them all and gathering them in the hands of His power He makes them include the men who weave them to destroy others."**

## **CONCLUSION**

Though the Book of Esther famously does not mention God by name anywhere, its many twists and turns unmistakably point to God's providential hand with His covenant people. From Esther's selection as Queen, to Haman's execution, to the Jews' deliverance, the eyes of faith clearly see these events as much more than luck or happenstance. Rather, God was at work behind the scenes.

We should see God as the main character in the account. It is really most critically important that you really don't understand this one writer sums up the lesson for us:

**"Esther 7 then is a lesson about two types of people.**

**About who gets life and who does not.**

**It is a lesson about divine providence on the righteous and divine retribution on the wicked.**

**It is about a blessing being given to the people of God and judgment on the people against God.**

**Ultimately the righteous will win, and ultimately, the wicked will be destroyed.**

**When God works in the life of the righteous, He is very skilled in what He does. It is like watching a Master Carpenter build a cabinet, or a Master at Chef chop vegetables. It seems easy... until you try it.**

**God is like that here. It is a wonder to behold his works and see how he skillfully manipulates the strands of time and the threads of human life and history to carefully weave his purpose and accomplish his goals. It is obvious in Esther.**



But it is not so easy to see God's hand at work in our lives. We watch these Bible characters live their lives, and we think that it was easy for them to trust God. We think that because they are in the Bible, they must have had this great faith in God, which helped give them confidence in the severest trial.

But we say and think that it is harder for us to trust God. Due to the stress and pace of life it is hard to see where God is working and what he is doing. If that is how you feel, God's work can often only be seen through the eyes of faith.

And so how can we see God at work? If you want to see God at work in your life, you have to begin looking for Him. You have to develop eyes of faith.

Here is one way how. Let your spouse, or a friend, or myself as your pastor know that you are looking for God. Then, every morning, when you get up, let God know through prayer that you are watching for him that day as well. Then, keep your eyes, and your heart and your mind open!

I guarantee you that if you do these things, God will show you how he is working tiny miracles in your life. (Your wife) like my wife, likes to call them, "kisses from God". Us men might prefer, "slaps on the back".

Then, when you see God's hand at work, let whoever you told know where and how God is working in your life. It may be a faith- growing experience for both of you as you see the Master-Craftsman providentially working in your life. They may not be big things you see. Maybe just little, tiny miracles, which some people might call coincidences.

But as you go through life, these tiny miracles add up, like little grains of sand, until many years from now, you have millions and billions of grains of sand, and you look back at your life, and see miles and miles of gleaming white beach. This is how to develop eyes of faith as a Christian and see God at work in your life.

Of course, if you're not a Christian today, you have a different problem. Just as it is certain that God's providence will come upon the righteous, so also is it certain that his retribution and judgment will come upon the wicked, as it came upon Haman.

Most of us don't think we are as bad as Haman, and we are right-- we are probably not. We don't have plans to kill and massacre millions and millions of people and so some of us think that since we are not as bad as Haman, we don't have anything to worry about.

But God says in James 2:10 that even if somebody keeps the whole law, and yet stumbles at just one point they are guilty of breaking all of it.

So it doesn't matter, from God's perspective, if you sin 10 million times, or just once. Either way, you are a sinner. And it doesn't have to be a "big" sin, but can be a single lie, or one-time cheating on your taxes, or one lustful thought, or stealing one thing from work. A sin is a sin, and one sin makes you a sinner and God does not let any sinners into heaven.

So all of us are doomed. But God loves us, and so has provided a way for sinners to get into heaven. This way is through Jesus Christ. God promises us, that even though we are sinners, we can have everlasting life if we are believing in Jesus Christ for it. You don't have to become righteous on your own-- for no one can do that. Christ, who was righteous, became sin for us, so that all who believe in Him, might gain His righteousness as a free gift".

The actions of its human characters are of mixed quality. Ahasuerus consistently acted under the influence of alcohol and with a hot temper. Haman always acted in self-interest and pride.



Esther and Mordecai seem not to have resisted Esther's participation in a contest that resulted in marriage to a pagan king (Ezra 10). But God worked His will through all parties nonetheless.

Like Esther and her relative Mordecai, we are God's imperfect servants providing light in the world as God does His work through us. We must always consider the possibility that God has placed us in a circumstance "*for such a time as this*" (Esther 4:14).

There is no guarantee that every incident in the lives of God's people will have a tidy ending, as in the book of Esther. Evil sometimes enjoys temporary victories. The path to triumph over evil is often unclear and recognized only in hindsight. But with Christ working in us and through us, we can live with the assurance that "*all things work together for good to them that love God*" (Romans 8:28).

