

Joseph and Esther

Lesson 12 (Esther)

Esther 7-8

Haman's Downfall (Esther 7)

Haman's wife and friends had already warned Haman that he would "**surely** (most certainly) **fall** before" Mordecai the Jew (Esther 6:13). Before they could finish talking with Haman, he was rushed off to Esther's second banquet (Esther 6:14-7:1).

Esther's first banquet was held on the previous day. Between these two banquets some very important events took place. Can you remember some of them (Esther 5:9-6:13)?

Once again the king asked Esther to make known her request (Esther 7:2) even as he had done previously (Esther 5:6). This time the queen was not quiet, but she bravely spoke on behalf of herself and on behalf of the Jews (Esther 7:3-4). This took great courage because in so speaking she was revealing ethnic origin (her background), that she was a Jew. Also she was countering the king's decree and she was opposing the king's most powerful official. Esther knew that making such a request would be a life or death matter (compare Esther 4:16). As things turned out, it was life for Esther and death for Haman!

When Haman and the king issued the decree to kill all Jews, they did not realize that the queen was herself a Jew and was among those destined for destruction. Esther used the same three words—"destroy, kill or slay, perish"—which were written in the royal decree to describe the fate of her people (compare Esther 7:4 with 3:13). If the Jews had been sold as slaves, would Esther have spoken on their behalf (Esther 7:4)? _____ Since their very lives were in danger, Esther could not remain silent.

When the king heard Esther's words, he asked who was responsible for doing such an evil thing ("Who is he?" "Where is he?"—Esther 7:5). Who did Esther name as the source and the cause for the great problem that she and her people faced (Esther 7:6)?

_____ Even though Satan tried to use Haman to accomplish his evil purposes, who or what was really to blame for Haman's great sin against God's people (see Esther 7:5 and Matthew 15:19)?

- a. His wife
- b. His friends
- c. His own heart
- d. His parents
- e. The king

When the king left the banquet room to go into the garden, how would you describe his emotional state? (See Esther 7:7 and circle the correct answer.)

- a. He was afraid.
- b. He was calm and peaceful.
- c. He was mildly upset.
- d. He was burning with wrath and anger.

How would you describe the state of Haman (7:6)? _____ (terrified!) While the king was absent from the room, Haman began to plead desperately for his life before the queen. The one who planned to destroy the Jews (including Esther) was now pleading with Esther, the Jew, to save him. The fierce persecutor of the Jews now finds himself begging for his life before a Jewish woman!

As Haman continued to beg and ask for mercy, he fell down before the queen on her (bed) couch and prostrated himself before her. Remember, not long before all people had been commanded to fall prostrate before Haman; now he must fall prostrate before a woman to beg for his life. As the king returned, he saw Haman on Esther's couch and thought that Haman was trying to attack or assault her (Esther 7:8). This made the king's rage burn even hotter, and out of his mouth came a sentence of death ("Let him be hanged!" or something similar to this). When the king's servants heard this, they covered Haman's face, which was a sign used in ancient times to show that a person had received the death sentence.

Was Haman a victim of bad luck or was God allowing him to get just what he deserved?

_____ In our

study of the life of Joseph, we learned that the sins of the wicked will often be turned upon their own heads—a boomerang effect! See Proverbs 26:27; 28:10; Psalm 7:15–16; Ecclesiastes 10:8; Obadiah 15; Joel 3:4; Galatians 6:7. Read Esther 7:9–10 and explain how Haman's life and death illustrate the boomerang effect:

Consider also Psalm 9:15–16. What net did Haman prepare (Esther 5:14)? _____ Who did he want to trap in that net (Esther 7:9)? _____ As it turned out, who was caught in Haman's net (Esther 7:10)? _____ The one who wanted to be paraded around and displayed before the city (Esther 6:7-9) was now displayed on a very tall tree for all to see (Esther 7:10)!

The Problem of the Irreversible Decree (Esther 8)

What man was given the **position** (as prime minister) and **property** of Haman (Esther 8:1–2)? _____ Haman had wanted to get his hands on the wealth of the Jews (Esther 3:9,13), but as it turns out, Haman's wealth fell into the hands of his hated enemy (Esther 8:2).

Although Haman had died, the Jews were still doomed to destruction by an **irreversible decree** that not even the king could change (compare Esther 1:19 and 8:8). Haman was dead, but the royal decree was still living! The enemy of the Jews was dead but his "**mischief**" (his evil influence--Esther 8:3) lived on because he was the author of a decree that could not be changed!

Today we can think of men who have died and yet their "mischief" lives on. Two examples would be Charles Darwin (the father of evolution) and Karl Marx (the father of communism). Can you think of others? Though these men have died, the things they wrote have had a lasting influence.

Once again Queen Esther made a request before the king on behalf of the Jews (Esther 8:5). She asked the king to reverse the royal decree which Haman had written (Esther 8:5). Though the king could not reverse the law of the Medes and Persians (compare Esther 1:19 and Daniel 6:8,15), he did give Mordecai permission to write another

decree (a counterdecree) which would help to overcome the first decree. It was impossible to remove the first decree but it was possible to add the second.

The second decree written by Mordecai is described in Esther 8:9–14. Notice that in many ways it was similar to the first decree written by Haman (see Esther 3:12-15). The second decree gave the Jews royal permission to assemble together and defend themselves against their enemies on that coming day of destruction. This counterdecree went forth two months and ten days after the first decree was issued, and more than eight months before the previously determined day of destruction (compare Esther 8:9 with Esther 3:7,13).

Because of this second decree, there was rejoicing and gladness throughout the kingdom (Esther 8:15-17). The gloom and darkness which had hung over the Jews had suddenly changed to gladness and light (Esther 8:16). The Jewish people had begun to experience one of the greatest deliverances of God since the Exodus (when God brought His people out of Egypt), and the heathen people in the kingdom were deeply impressed by this remarkable change of events. What happened to many of the people (Esther 8:17)?

An Important Lesson For Us

The King of the universe, the living God, has issued an irreversible decree. This decree is found in the following verses:

"The LORD...will not at all acquit the _____" (Nahum 1:3).

This means the LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished. He must punish the guilty ones!

"The LORD [will]...by no means clear the _____" (Numbers 14:18).

This means the LORD will punish those who are guilty. He cannot let the guilty ones go away unpunished.

"I will not _____ the _____" (Exodus 23:7).

This means the wicked person must be punished for his sins.

Consider also Deuteronomy 25:1, Proverbs 17:15 and Proverbs 24:24.

These verses reveal that God hates for an innocent person to be punished and He hates for a guilty person to be left unpunished.

The first decree says that the guilty must be punished and the punishment is D_____ (Romans 1:32; 6:23). How many of us are guilty before God (Romans 3:10,19,23)? _____ Thus according to the first decree, all men are guilty and must be punished by death (compare Esther 3:13). This is God's law!

Can this decree be changed or reversed? Can God the King change His mind and say, "Please disregard what I have written in My Word. I have now decided to allow guilty people to go unpunished. I will overlook their sins and forget about their wicked deeds"? Can God reverse what He has said (Numbers 23:19-20)? _____

Is there any hope for mankind? Are we all doomed to destruction? Is there any possible way that God can justify the ungodly and not punish them for their sins (compare Romans 3:26; 4:5)?

God the King cannot change the first decree, but He can send forth a second decree. The second decree says this:

God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, will go to the cross and He will be punished as a Substitute for the guilty ones (1 Peter 3:18; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Those who believe on Him will be completely justified (Romans 3:26; 4:5).

Instead of the punishment falling upon me, the guilty one, it fell upon Christ, my Substitute! He paid the death penalty in full. He died that I might live! The first decree says: **The guilty ones must die!** The second decree says: **The believing ones may live!**

The good news of the second decree should bring great joy to the heart of every believer (Psalm 51:12; compare Esther 8:15-17)! The wonderful message of the second decree should be published far and wide (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19; compare Esther 8:9,13-14)! As a result, many others can become believers (compare Esther 8:17).

Are you thankful for God's second decree?

Are you rejoicing in your so-great salvation?

Are you helping to spread this good news to others?

Are you praying that others might receive this Saviour and Substitute, and experience the joy which you have?



Haman's Downfall

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