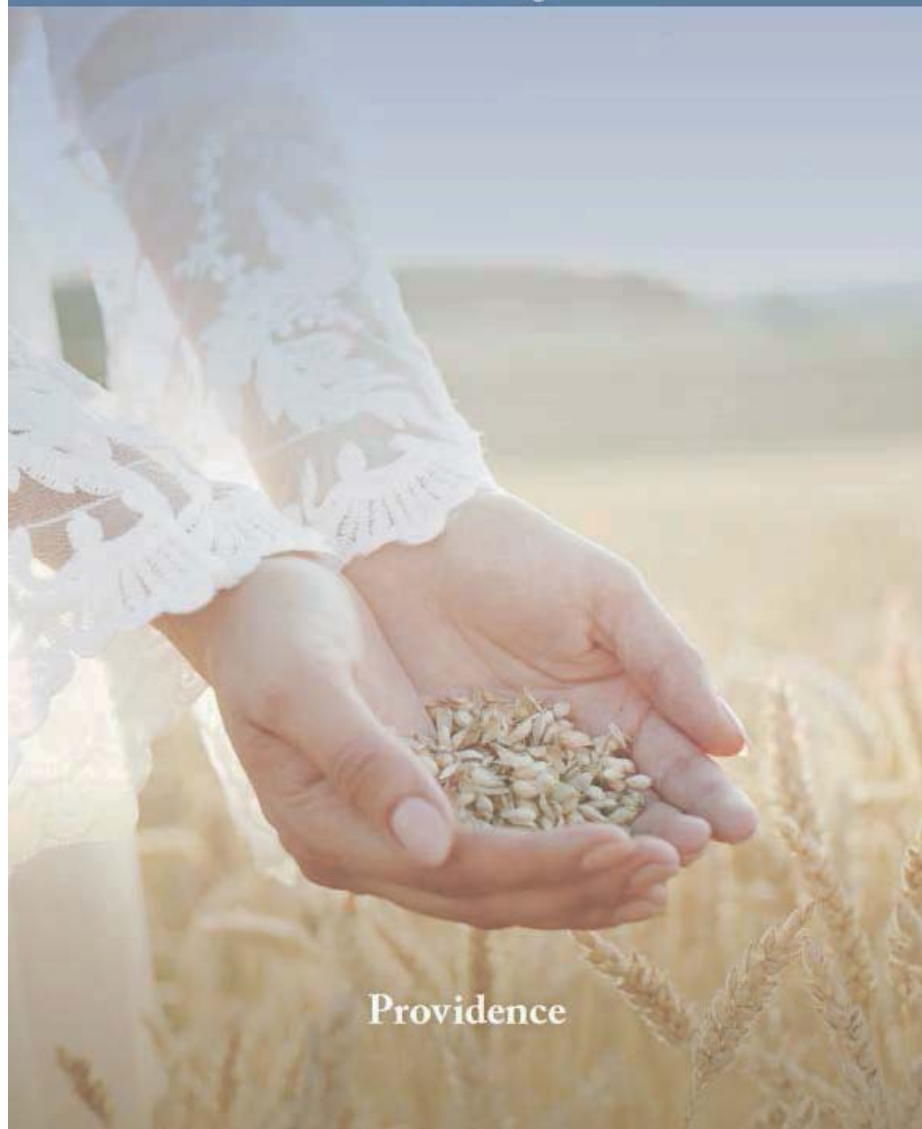


# Esther

## Explained & Applied 17

Ger de Koning



Providence



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Explained & Applied



# ESTHER

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Ger de Koning

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# Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

## Old Testament

Gen	Genesis
Exo	Exodus
Lev	Leviticus
Num	Numbers
Deu	Deuteronomy
2Ko	2 Korinthiërs
Jos	Joshua
Jdg	Judges
Rth	Ruth
1Sam	First Samuel
2Sam	Second Samuel
1Kgs	First Kings
2Kgs	Second Kings
1Chr	First Chronicles
2Chr	Second Chronicles
Ezra	Ezra
Neh	Nehemiah
Est	Esther
Job	Job
Psa	Psalms
Pro	Proverbs
Ecc	Ecclesiastes
Song	Song of Songs
Isa	Isaiah
Jer	Jeremiah
Lam	Lamentations
Eze	Ezekiel
Dan	Daniël
Hos	Hosea
Joel	Joel
Amos	Amos
Oba	Obadiah
Jona	Jonah
Mic	Micah
Nah	Nahum
Hab	Habakkuk
Zep	Zephaniah
Hag	Haggai
Zec	Zechariah
Mal	Malachi

## New Testament

Mt	Gospel of Matthew
Mk	Gospel of Mark
Lk	Gospel of Luke
Jn	Gospel of John
Acts	Acts of the Apostles
Rom	Letter to the Romans
1Cor	First Letter to the Corinthians
2Cor	Second Letter to the Corinthians
Gal	Letter to the Galatians
Eph	Letter to the Ephesians
Phil	Letter to the Philippians
Col	Letter to the Colossians
1Thes	First Letter to the Thessalonians
2Thes	Second Letter to the Thessalonians
1Tim	First Letter to Timothy
2Tim	Second Letter to Timothy
Tit	Letter to Titus
Phlm	Letter to Philemon
Heb	Letter of the Hebrews
Jam	Letter of James
1Pet	First Letter of Peter
2Pet	Second Letter of Peter
1Jn	First Letter of John
2Jn	Second Letter of John
3Jn	Third Letter of John
Jude	Letter of Jude
Rev	Revelation

## Explanation of general format

**PERSONAL PRONOUNS** are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

**BRACKETS** [ ] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

**SHARP BRACKETS** < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When **ASTERISKS** \* are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

**ALL CAPS** in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

# The book of Esther

## Introduction

The story of the book of Esther takes place during the second great world empire, that of the Medes and Persians. Under Cyrus, king of the Medes and Persians, a remnant of Israel returned to the land (Ezra 1:1-5). The events of the book of Esther can be placed between Ezra 6 and Ezra 7, i.e. between the year 483 BC – the third year of Xerxes (Est 1:3) and 473 BC – the end of the twelfth year of Xerxes (Est 3:7).

In Daniel 11 there is talk of “three more kings ... in Persia” and “a fourth” king (Dan 11:2). The fourth king is Xerxes I, which is Ahasuerus (Est 1:1). He succeeds Darius I and reigns from 485-465 BC. He is mentioned in Daniel 9 and Ezra 4 (Dan 9:1; Ezra 4:6).

The subject of this book is God’s providence, which means that we see God at work in this book, but in a hidden way. The name of the Jews is often mentioned, while God’s Name is not mentioned in this book. The latter has led critics to comment that this book does not belong in the Bible. However, anyone who reads this book with a believing heart will gradually be impressed by what this book has to say and will be strengthened in his conviction that it belongs to the inspired Word of God.

There is a reason why the Name of God does not appear in it. The book is about the fates of the people of God, here called the people of ‘the Jews’. The leading role is played by two members of it: Mordecai and Esther. There is a murderous enemy who wants to exterminate the Jews completely. When the Jews hear of this great threat, we do not read that there is even one prayer to God. Nowhere does it appear that the Jews are aware of being God’s people. There is nothing to indicate that they take into account certain laws or statutes that God has given to His people.

No, these people are separate from God, do not confess Him, do not think of Him. And because these people do not confess God, God cannot openly take sides with them. He cannot associate His Name with them. He hides Himself from His people. That is why the Name of God does not appear in it.

However, the absence of God's Name does not mean that He stops caring for His people. His Name may not appear in this book, but we do see His hand at work. Behind the events of this book, God is at work as the great Director. He controls the circumstances and also the deeds of the persons of this book, so that His intention is carried out. We will see that the outcome is fully consistent with the purpose He has set Himself. God cannot cease to be God. He is sovereign. He rules. For us it is important to remember that the throne is not on earth, but in heaven (Rev 4:3; Psa 11:4). God rules, not people on earth.

In His providence, God protects His people through Ahasuerus, for God wants His Messiah to come forth from this people. Therefore, the attack of Haman does not succeed. God saves His people from extinction, as He did in Egypt. The decisive time period of this book is eleven months. Then, humanly speaking, the history of God's people hangs by a thread.

God makes sure that the enemies of His people are ashamed (Psa 37:12-13) and that His people are preserved, even exalted. He will save His earthly people through all the genocides that have marked their history. Across all suffering, the people of God will keep their identity. God also shows here what He is doing with the world. He cannot stop being this God. God controls the fate of the world for the sake of His people.

For God's people today, the church of the living God, this book has great practical significance. This book contains an enormous consolation for all of the church who believe that God is hiding from them. Certainly, Christians do live in a known relationship to God as children to their Father. They know of a God Who loves and cares for them. But aren't there even times when they ask themselves: 'Where is God?'

We can apply this to personal life as well as to the life of a local church. Well, the people of the Jews ended up in that position through their own fault. We'll see about that. In the same way Christians can alienate themselves from God through their own failures. That does not take away the message of this book. That message is that God is fulfilling His plan in the background. This plan is to ultimately bless everyone who belongs to Him through repentance and belief in the truth. He will bless each of His chil-

dren, not because of their own merits, but because of what His Son Jesus Christ did on the cross of Calvary.

There is another aspect that makes this book so valuable. That is its prophetic meaning. God's people come in great distress, are saved from it and are exalted to great heights in Mordecai. This is how it will be in the end times. God's people will go through the great tribulation, will be saved from it by the Lord Jesus and will be made head of the nations.

This is at the same time an example of another aspect of this book. We can see pictures of spiritual realities in the various persons it contains. This is called a typological approach. In that approach we see in Mordecai a picture of the Lord Jesus, in Ahasuerus a picture of God, in Haman a picture of the devil and in Esther, originally called Hadassah (Est 2:7), a picture of the faithful remnant of Israel. We will have to be careful with this approach, but in general we will certainly recognize certain similarities in this history.

We will pay attention to all the aspects mentioned. It is clear that the message of this book is multifaceted. All in all, there are plenty of reasons to listen to it carefully with the desire to let it teach us.

In summary, this book can be viewed in four ways: historical, practical, prophetic and typological:

1. *Historical* means that we look at history as it has evolved. We then discover how God controls history behind the scenes.
2. This automatically leads to the *practical* application. Just as God governed the history of His people then, so He also controls the history of His people now and that of each of His people individually. Here are many encouraging lessons for the life of faith.
3. The *prophetic* view of this book of the Bible is also obvious. Just as God in this book of the Bible cares for His people and frees them from their enemies, so in the end time He will care for His people and free them from their enemies.
4. Although the *typological* view is not so obvious, it is present in this book of the Bible. A typological view means that we try to discover the spiritual meaning of this history, but without letting our imagination run wild. With this viewpoint we recognize, as already men-

tioned, for example in Ahasuerus a picture of God and in Mordecai a picture of the Lord Jesus.

Another peculiarity of this book is that it is named after a woman, just like the book of Ruth. We also see that these two women marry a man who does not belong to their own people. Esther connects with a pagan who remains an idolater. This is due to the fact that she does not reveal her true identity until she is forced to do so. That is why God also remains hidden. He does not make His relationship to the people known until the people are forced to do so (cf. Deu 32:20).

The books of Ruth and of Song of Songs as well as the book of Esther place a woman in the center. Esther, like the women in the other two books, is a picture of the faithful remnant going through deep trials. In all three books there is also an image of the Lord Jesus: in Ruth it's Boaz, in Song of Songs it's Solomon and in Esther it's Mordecai.

The book can be divided into two parts:

1. the first part describes the threat to the Jews (Esther 1-4);
2. the second part describes the triumph of the Jews (Esther 5-10).

In the first part everything is written down that is necessary to come to the deliverance in the second part. In distress God lays down the seed of salvation. During the distress God already makes preparations for the deliverance. God is never embarrassed, because He determines the outcome long before it is seen by man.

# Esther 1

## Introduction

Verses 1-8 are the introduction to the book. Historically and practically, these verses show the world in its generosity and attractiveness, causing God's people to forget their true King. With all that glory, their land of Israel falls into oblivion. So, it can also happen to us as Christians.

In prophetic and typological respect, we see in Ahasuerus a picture of God as the sovereign Ruler Who rules the whole world. As Ruler over the world, God still blesses all people with earthly blessings, without forcing them to make use of them (Acts 14:16-17).

It is about the essential question of authority. Authority comes from God. He grants authority to man in various fields. Subjugation to it means the acknowledgment of God's authority. Behind the authority of the ruler of a country, the head of state, the husband, father, mother, employer, teacher at school is the authority of God, for He has established these authority relationships.

The rest of Esther 1 is dedicated to the actions of Ahasuerus with Vashti. From a historical and practical point of view we see that God uses the king's counselors to erect a dam against evil through legislation, so that evil is curbed. This is what the government serves for today (Rom 13:1-5).

Prophetically and typologically, the casting out of Vashti represents the setting aside by God of Israel as His wife. Israel has failed to bear the testimony of Who God is, just as Vashti refuses to show her beauty which she has thanks to her connection with Ahasuerus. For the same reason, Christianity will be cast out just as any Christian who lives in contradiction to His confession. The deposing of Vashti paves the way for the introduction of Esther. It is a picture of the faithful remnant of Israel with which God resumes the history of His people in the future.

## **Verses 1-4 | A Banquet for Princes and Attendants**

*1 Now it took place in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces, 2 in those days as King Ahasuerus sat*

*on his royal throne which [was] at the citadel in Susa, 3 in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his princes and attendants, the army [officers] of Persia and Media, the nobles and the princes of his provinces being in his presence. 4 And he displayed the riches of his royal glory and the splendor of his great majesty for many days, 180 days.*

The history of this book takes place “in the days of Ahasuerus” (verse 1), the king of the world empire of “Persia and Media” (verse 3). Ahasuerus rules “over 127 provinces”. One of them is the land of Israel. Israel is under foreign rule. We can see that in the dating. We read in verse 3 about “the third year of his reign” – that is the year 483 BC. This means that God no longer dates history to the kings of Judah and Israel, but to the kings of the nations.

After reference to Ahasuerus in verse 1 in connection with the extent of the area over which he reigns, reference is made to him in verse 2 in connection with his position. Here he is emphatically called “King Ahasuerus” and it is emphasized that he sits on “his royal throne”. He is the ruler and commander of an immense empire.

This throne, which in reality is the throne of God, is here “at the citadel in Susa” and not in Jerusalem. This situation is not the way God wants it to be. God originally established His throne in Jerusalem. He is their King, whereby He has had His kingship over His people exercised by people He has appointed for that purpose. We see that in David and the kings that came forth from his lineage. But this kingship, entrusted to men, has failed.

After much patience, God had to take away the kingship of His people and put it into the hands of the nations. The first king to whom God gives this authority is Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. Since he, too, is unfaithful to his mandate, his power is taken away from him. God has used the people of the Medes and Persians for this.

The first king of the Medes and Persians, Cyrus, authorizes all the Jews throughout his kingdom to return to Jerusalem to rebuild God’s house, the temple (Ezra 1:1-2). Unfortunately, only a handful of Jews took advantage of this opportunity. Many remained where they ended up after their deportation. In the course of time they have built up their existence in the foreign land and have come to feel at home there. They have begun to miss



their homeland less and less and the longing for it has eventually disappeared. This situation applies to the Jews living in Susa.

We also come across the citadel of Susa in Daniel 8. Daniel is there when he gets a vision (Dan 8:2). In this vision he is shown the judgment of the Medo-Persian world empire. He gets this vision when the empire is far from that size. God shows him the downfall of that empire, in the very citadel of Susa, the residence of the kings of Persia. Daniel is shown the rise of the empire and also how it is judged.

This is how God shows us what happens to a world that impresses us so much. The world passes by and its lusts (1Jn 2:17a). The Jews in Susa don't think about that and many Christians don't think about that either. The splendor of Susa and the brilliance of the world is in stark contrast to the ruins of Jerusalem. But we allow ourselves to be deceived when we hang on to the world with our hearts.

Ahasuerus is in his third year of government (verse 3) when history begins here. As said, the era is according to the reign of pagan princes and not to that of the kings of Israel and Judah (Est 2:16; 3:7). Jerusalem is no longer central, but a pagan kingdom. The history of salvation has changed. Jerusalem is supposed to be the head, but has become unfaithful and set aside and has become the tail instead (Deu 28:44b). The time of Israel being the center of God's actions is over. "The times of the Gentiles " (Lk 21:24b) began when God in Nebuchadnezzar made the nations the head and gave them power of government (Dan 2:38).

In the third year of his reign, Ahasuerus gives "a banquet for all his princes and attendants", which are the leaders of his armies and of his provinces. They are with him for 180 days (verse 4). During those days he shows them "the riches of his royal glory and the splendor of his great majesty". The occasion of this feast was to get his staff on his hand to carry out his plan to start a war against Greece.

We read the following about that intention in the book of Daniel: "Behold, three more kings are going to arise in Persia. Then a fourth will gain far more riches than all [of them]; as soon as he becomes strong through his riches, he will arouse the whole [empire] against the realm of Greece"

(Dan 11:2). This is explained in more detail here in the first chapter of the book of Esther.

The third year of his reign is the year in which the unsuccessful campaign against Greece is decreed. In order to win them over to his battle plans, Ahasuerus invites all the leaders of the 127 provinces to visit him and demonstrates his extraordinary richness and splendor. That is why the feast lasts so long: six months. We don't read anything about the battle here. God is concerned about His people in the midst of the nations and how they are doing.

### **Verses 5-8 | A Banquet for the People**

*5 When these days were completed, the king gave a banquet lasting seven days for all the people who were present at the citadel in Susa, from the greatest to the least, in the court of the garden of the king's palace. 6 [There were hangings of] fine white and violet linen held by cords of fine purple linen on silver rings and marble columns, [and] couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and precious stones. 7 Drinks were served in golden vessels of various kinds, and the royal wine was plentiful according to the king's bounty. 8 The drinking was [done] according to the law, there was no compulsion, for so the king had given orders to each official of his household that he should do according to the desires of each person.*

When the feast for the commanders of his army and the rulers of his provinces is over, the king arranges a new banquet (verse 5). This time the guests are "all the people who were present at the citadel in Susa, from the greatest to the least". The feast lasts seven days and is held "in the court of the garden of the king's palace". It is believed that Ahasuerus gives this feast to all the people of Susa as an expression of his joy over the permission to go to war.

The feast is decorated with the most precious rugs and fabrics "linen held by cords of fine purple linen on silver rings and marble columns" (verse 6). Furthermore, there are "couches" which reminds one of coming to rest in the presence of the great ruler. The floor on which the resting beds stand consists of the most precious stones. It indicates that the rest enjoyed is attractive and steady or stable.

There is also plentiful “royal wine according to the king’s bounty”. The fact that it is “royal wine” perhaps means, apart from the fact that the king gives it, that it is wine that the king himself drinks and that he now also gives his subjects to drink. That it is wine “according to the king’s bounty” indicates the rich supply of wine. There need be no fear of lack.

The wine to be drunk is given “in golden vessels” which are all different from each other (verse 7). This is reminiscent of another aspect of a feast organized by the king. Wine is a picture of joy (Psa 104:15; Jdg 9:13) that is experienced by each person in a different, unique way, which is represented by ‘vessels of various kinds’.

We can see Ahasuerus in this scene as a picture of God on His throne, surrounded by all the glory of the first creation. He gives His blessings generously to all, such as sun and rain and fruitful times, food and joy (Mt 5:45b; Acts 14:17). Whoever acknowledges Him as the source of that blessing will find complete rest and true joy.

Nor has God ever forced people to make use of these blessings, for it is all according to the law “no compulsion” (verse 8). However, God, Who can be known from creation, is not honored as God or given thanks by man (Rom 1:20-21). All the goodness that God grants man puts man to the test. Then it turns out that man abuses everything God has given.

### Verses 9-12 | Queen Vashti

*9 Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the palace which belonged to King Ahasuerus. 10 On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar and Carkas, the seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus, 11 to bring Queen Vashti before the king with [her] royal crown in order to display her beauty to the people and the princes, for she was beautiful. 12 But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king’s command delivered by the eunuchs. Then the king became very angry and his wrath burned within him.*

While Ahasuerus is keeping his meal, Queen Vashti is also addressing a meal (verse 9). She addresses it “to the women in the royal house that belonged to King Ahasuerus”. It is a meal of her own and in the area that

belongs to the king. Here we see an example that man uses for himself what has been made available to him by God.

Vashti gives a banquet without the king. It is reminiscent of the eldest son in the parable of the prodigal son. That son also wants to enjoy a meal, but only with his friends, without his father (Lk 15:29). This is how sin came into the world, because Eve wanted to enjoy something without God. Later we see that Esther does make a banquet for the king (Est 5:4).

That Queen Vashti does not take her husband King Ahasuerus into account is shown by what follows. "On the seventh day" (verse 10), the last day of the banquet, when the heart of Ahasuerus is happy because of the wine, he orders seven eunuchs to bring his wife to the banquet. These eunuchs "served in the presence of king Ahasuerus". They are in his immediate vicinity to obey his command immediately. The fact that there are seven of them indicates their full ability to carry out the mission.

Their mission is to bring Queen Vashti to the king and to do so in a manner befitting the dignity of the king. Therefore, Vashti must come "with [her] royal crown" on her head. The crown will give her outer beauty even more shine. Ahasuerus sends this completely – seven servants – competent company with this command to Vashti because he wants to "in order to display her beauty to the people and the princes".

Queen Vashti, however, refuses to come. She resists "the king's command delivered by the eunuchs". This refusal is, in the first place, disobedience to the king's command. The command of the king means his authority. As the king's consort, her refusal is also an outright insult to him. He justifiably becomes "very angry" and about this "his wrath burned within him". What should have been a climax becomes an anticlimax.

In several commentaries the refusal of Vashti to comply with the king's request is discussed in an understanding manner. Vashti would be the victim of a capricious, drunken king who would expose her to the abuse of a drunken company. Such a thought would then be sufficiently grounded by what one knows of the relationships and practices at that time. Sometimes background information is useful, but it is doubtful whether this kind of information helps to understand what is happening in this case.

In any case, it does not say that Ahasuerus is drunk and surrounded by drunken people and in that state gives an excessive command.

In the prophetic and practical application, we can draw a parallel between Vashti on the one hand and Israel and Christianity on the other hand. Both Israel and Christianity have failed in their duty to reveal God's glory. Israel has refused to acknowledge God's authority and has not made His Name great with respect to the nations. That is why God finally had to reject His people.

The same, and perhaps even more so, applies to Christianity. The church has failed to show her glory, which is that of God, in the world. It has not stuck to the "simplicity ... to Christ" (2Cor 11:3), but has committed herself to the world. The church, or Christianity, has moderately glorified herself. We see this fully expressed in Babylon, in which we recognize the roman-catholic church. Babylon imagines that she "sits as a queen" (Rev 18:7), by which she boasts of her own authority, without the recognition of God's authority over her. She has enriched and praised herself and will be judged by God.

God knows how to use these events for His purpose:

1. By judging apostate Israel, He is paving the way for the true Israel, of whom Esther is a picture.
2. By judging the false bride, the apostate church, He opens the way for the true bride of the Lamb, that is the church.

### Verses 13-22 | The Council of Memucan

*13 Then the king said to the wise men who understood the times—for it was the custom of the king so [to speak] before all who knew law and justice 14 and were close to him: Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media who had access to the king's presence and sat in the first place in the kingdom— 15 "According to law, what is to be done with Queen Vashti, because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus [delivered] by the eunuchs?" 16 In the presence of the king and the princes, Memucan said, "Queen Vashti has wronged not only the king but [also] all the princes and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. 17 For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women*

*causing them to look with contempt on their husbands by saying, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in to his presence, but she did not come.' 18 This day the ladies of Persia and Media who have heard of the queen's conduct will speak in [the same way] to all the king's princes, and there will be plenty of contempt and anger. 19 If it pleases the king, let a royal edict be issued by him and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media so that it cannot be repealed, that Vashti may no longer come into the presence of King Ahasuerus, and let the king give her royal position to another who is more worthy than she. 20 When the king's edict which he will make is heard throughout all his kingdom, great as it is, then all women will give honor to their husbands, great and small." 21 [This] word pleased the king and the princes, and the king did as Memucan proposed. 22 So he sent letters to all the king's provinces, to each province according to its script and to every people according to their language, that every man should be the master in his own house and the one who speaks in the language of his own people.*

That the king is not a plaything of his emotions, but knows what he is doing, is also shown by his reaction to the refusal of Vashti. In any case, he is not the capricious ruler here, who, also mired in drink, without any consultation, immediately passes judgment on Vashti. When later Haman is unmasked, we see that he, rightly so, immediately passes judgment (Est 7:9-10).

The king presents the case to "the wise men" (verse 13). They know "the times" and "the law and justice". Asking for counsel has also been explained as an indication that Ahasuerus would have been a weak and manipulatable king. It may be so historically, but again this is not apparent from the biblical text here.

Knowing "the times" means having insight into the spirit of the times, the spiritual climate of the time in which the events take place. "The law" refers to the rules that apply to life in the kingdom. "Justice" means that they also have wisdom to apply the law correctly. They see to it that the right takes its course.

If we can still see Ahasuerus as a picture of God in these events, we see a divine attribute in his deliberations. God also deliberates (Gen 18:20-21; 1Kgs 22:19-22).

Of the seven wise men it is said that they “who had access to the king’s presence and sat in the first place in the kingdom” (verse 14). They have the position of confidants of the king. In this context we can see them as a picture of “the seven Spirits of God” (Rev 4:5), which indicates the fullness of the Holy Spirit. God deliberates, as it were, with the seven Spirits before His throne in order to set aside the failing church. This Spirit is manifested in perfection in the Lord Jesus, God’s King (Isa 11:2-3).

The king’s question is what should happen to queen Vashti according to the law (verse 15). He mentions what he accuses her of: “because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus [delivered] by the eunuchs”.

Both in verse 12 and here in verse 15 it is mentioned that “the eunuchs” convey this command. This is how God works now. He lets His Word be brought to people by His servants. The fact that He uses men does not change the authority of His Word. Everyone to whom His Word comes must obey (Acts 17:30-31). He who does not, will be judged.

When the king has asked his question, Memucan takes the word (verse 16) and paints the state of affairs. Vashti has not only misbehaved against the king, but also against all the princes and all the peoples who are in all the provinces. The motivation is that all women will hear of the queen’s case, encouraging them to despise their own husbands (verse 17). They will justify their contempt by referring to the disobedience of queen Vashti to King Ahasuerus.

What Vashti has done is “like letting out water” (Pro 17:14). The fence is off the dam if no action is taken against it. If no clear position is taken, a revolution will be unleashed in all houses. The king’s answer must put an end to the contempt and annoyance that already exist. These have been enough (verse 18).

After Memucan has made it clear what the situation is like, he comes up with two proposals (verse 19). The first proposal is that the king makes it clear to everyone that his relationship with Vashti is definitely broken. Vashti has misbehaved in such a way that there can be no question of recovery in her high position. This decision must be recorded in writing and as a law of Medes and Persians so that the decision cannot be repealed.

The second proposal is to provide for the vacant place of Queen. The “royal disposition” that Vashti has possessed but lost because of her willfulness must be given “to another” who is described by Memucan as someone “who is more worthy than she”.

In the final setting aside of Vashti we see the final setting aside of the unbelieving Israel as the wife of God. What happens to Vashti is similar to the curse the Lord Jesus pronounces on the barren fig tree which is a picture of the unbelieving Israel: “No longer shall there ever be [any] fruit from you” (Mt 21:19). God has given this apostate woman a letter of divorce, through which she can no longer return to Him (Deu 24:1-4; Jer 3:8).

The vacant place gives God the opportunity to establish a new relationship. This is provided by someone whose name is not yet mentioned, but whose quality is described as “more worthy than she”. It is noteworthy and beautiful that a similar expression occurs again, in connection with David for whom Saul, the king after the flesh, must clear the field.

Saul is disobedient – just like Vashti. He disobeys God’s command to exterminate the Amalekites. Samuel tells Saul that the kingship of Israel will be torn from him – similar to Vashti. Then he says it will be given to someone “who is better than you” (1Sam 15:28) – again just like with Vashti. No name is mentioned to Saul as to who it is. In both cases it is a position that makes someone unworthy and for which God has chosen someone, someone after His heart, to take that position.

We can therefore see this history from the providence of God. God’s purpose is the exaltation of Mordecai to bless His people through him. In this Mordecai is a picture of the Lord Jesus. God begins to prepare for this already in this first chapter. The deposition of Vashti also takes place with this in mind. God acts for a purpose that we know from Scripture. The way in which He acts is not always known to us. We only know it when He has reached that goal and we look back on the way He has gone.

Memucan concludes his plea by suggesting the blessed consequences if the king will issue this command. It is an order that he must issue for his entire kingdom, which is great. If all women in all ranks and positions have respect for their husbands (cf. Eph 5:33), it will promote peace in



families. And if there is peace in families, there is also peace in the whole kingdom.

The king and the princes approve of Memucan's proposal, and Ahasuerus acts accordingly. He sends letters to all the provinces of his kingdom. In doing so, he ensures that each province receives the letter according to its script and to every people according to their language. Everyone must be informed of the decision. In the letter "every man" is addressed as the responsible head of the family. His responsibility has two aspects. He must "be master in his own house". This is reflected in his position of authority. He must also speak "in the language of his own people". That concerns his behavior, his example.

The call to actually exercise the authority given by God is desperately needed today. The man is the head of the woman (1Cor 11:3). This means that, following Christ's example of caring for His church, he gives her everything she needs as head (Eph 5:29). He will also address the members of his family in the language of God's people, which is the language of God's Word (cf. Neh 13:23). This 'language' is to be spoken throughout the kingdom of God, that is, in families, in society and in the church.

If the authority of God's Word is acknowledged in families, this will also happen in society and in the church. In families this will be shown by the submissive attitude of the wife towards her husband and by the submissive attitude of the children towards their parents. The men have the main responsibility to take care of the right relationships in their families. The same applies to the relationships and behavior in the church.

## Esther 2

### Verses 1-4 | Proposal for a New Queen

*1 After these things when the anger of King Ahasuerus had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her. 2 Then the king's attendants, who served him, said, "Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king. 3 Let the king appoint overseers in all the provinces of his kingdom that they may gather every beautiful young virgin to the citadel of Susa, to the harem, into the custody of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women; and let their cosmetics be given [them]. 4 Then let the young lady who pleases the king be queen in place of Vashti." And the matter pleased the king, and he did accordingly.*

Verse 1 connects to the previous section, without taking into account the time elapsed. Reference is made back to the anger of King Ahasuerus (Est 1:12) which is now said to have subsided. Then we are told what is going on in his mind. In his mind there are three things that, like his anger, took place in the previous chapter and have been described there. He thinks

1. of Vashti,
2. of what she has done, and
3. of what's been decided about her.

This again determines that a vacuum, a vacancy for a queen, has arisen. The story that follows is connected to that. Without any question from the king, the attendants come with an advice (verses 2-4). That advice consists of three parts:

1. Let girls be searched for who are virgins and beautiful to behold.
2. Gather those girls and give them a beauty treatment.
3. The one girl out of all those girls that is pleasing in his eyes should become queen instead of Vashti.

In this advice we see an ascent. First a selection is made out of all the girls in his kingdom and from that selection comes the one girl who is chosen by Ahasuerus as queen.

The word for “attendants” literally means “youngsters”. That word highlights that there is a new generation, the beginning of a new situation, and a new queen. The attendants advise the king to take something new and more beautiful instead of what he has lost, in order to forget the past.

From a prophetic and typological point of view, we see in the king’s longing the longing of God for a people on earth that belongs to Him and that is entirely devoted to Him. When the church is taken away, He will find a new people after His heart on earth, born of Him. He will find these people in the future remnant of Israel. Esther is a type or example of this.

In the proposal to find a new queen some recommendations are made. For example, Ahasuerus is recommended by the attendants

1. to appoint overseers to gather the girls,
2. that those girls are entrusted to a caretaker and custodian, and
3. that the gathered girls receive a beauty treatment (verse 3).

Girls are selected with care from everywhere. The girls who possibly qualify to become queen, are chosen and treated with care.

In this we see God’s care in proclaiming the gospel to draw people from the world to Himself. People who have accepted the gospel are further cared for by gifts that the Lord Jesus has given, so that they will fulfill the purpose that He has with them: to please Him. We see this in the service of Paul and his fellow ministers: “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me” (Col 1:28-29).

The efforts to please this king are an example to us. We are also prepared and used to please our Lord. Are we therefore as diligent as we have been in this history and as Paul? Do we bring the gospel and do we care for those who have accepted it?

### Verses 5-7 | Mordecai and Esther

5 [Now] there was at the citadel in Susa a Jew whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite, 6 who had been taken into exile from Jerusalem with the captives who had been exiled with Jeco-

*niah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had exiled. 7 He was bringing up Hadassah, that is Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had no father or mother. Now the young lady was beautiful of form and face, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.*

At this point in the story two new persons are portrayed in an intermediate part (verses 5-7). This insertion shows us who God is about to put forward for the fulfilment of the advice of the attendants in the previous verses. They are Mordecai and Esther. Together with Ahasuerus they will play a leading role in the history of God's people.

In verse 5 Mordecai is first introduced to us. However, before his name is mentioned, it is first said that he is "a Jew". This emphasizes him being a Jew. That Mordecai is a Jew is further shown by his genealogy. He is a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin who was brought by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon with the exiles from Jerusalem with Jeconiah, the king of Judah (verse 6).

The fact that he was taken away with Jeconiah makes it easy to say that he could not have been taken away personally from Jerusalem with the exiles. In that case he would have been about one hundred and twenty years old in the seventh year of Ahasuerus. This is very unlikely, also in view of the age of his young and attractive cousin Esther. However, he is so attached to his ancestors as a Jew that what happened to them is stated here as it happened to himself. Their history is his history, their pain of being taken away is his pain.

In verse 7 the other new person, Esther, appears who will also play a leading role in this book, in close relationship with the just presented protagonist Mordecai. That close relationship is shown in the beginning of verse 7, where we read: "It was he who raised Hadassah, that is Esther, the daughter of his uncle". She also emphasizes her Jewishness by first mentioning her Jewish name, Hadassah, and only then her Persian name, Esther. Her Jewish identity is also apparent from the mention of her family relationship with Mordecai. She is his cousin.

Halfway through verse 7 the gaze is completely focused on Esther, on her beautiful stature and her handsome appearance. However, immediately after this, her close relationship with Mordecai is pointed out again, who

“took her as his own daughter”, because “her father and her mother died”. Her past is dead, cut off. In this situation she is completely dependent on Mordecai’s mercy and care. In this way she has been accepted, albeit in secret, by the LORD (cf. Psa 27:10).

God shows Himself in this care through Mordecai, behind the scenes, “a father of the fatherless” (Psa 68:5). In Mordecai’s care for the education of Esther we see the care of the Lord Jesus, of whom Mordecai is a picture, for the faithful remnant, of whom Esther is a picture. Esther owes her life to him and therefore also her exaltation to queen.

Things that we say happen to us as misfortune are things that God controls and uses for our benefit. Circumstances related to our birth are not determined or chosen by us. We cannot choose our parents or the country or the date of our birth. Nor can we bring about our birth ourselves. What we can say is that God had our salvation in mind with the circumstances of our birth. For that we must thank Him.

Esther’s original name is Hadassah, which means ‘myrtle’. The myrtle tree occurs in connection with the Feast of Booths (Neh 8:15-16), a feast that refers to the realm of peace under the rule of the Messiah (Isa 41:19; 55:12-13). The fact that her parents gave her that name says something of their faith in the restoration of God’s people.

### Verses 8-9 | Esther Under the Custody of Hegai

*8 So it came about when the command and decree of the king were heard and many young ladies were gathered to the citadel of Susa into the custody of Hegai, that Esther was taken to the king’s palace into the custody of Hegai, who was in charge of the women. 9 Now the young lady pleased him and found favor with him. So he quickly provided her with her cosmetics and food, gave her seven choice maids from the king’s palace and transferred her and her maids to the best place in the harem.*

After the introduction of Mordecai and Esther, history continues with the execution of “the command and decree of the king” (verse 8). Many girls are gathered to the citadel of Susa. They all come into the custody of Hegai. Among those girls is also Esther. Our attention will be focused on her in

this section. She is, like all the other girls, in the citadel of Susa, but it is said of her that she is taken “to the king’s palace”.

Esther attracts the special attention of Hegai (verse 9). She “pleased him and found favor with him”. Where that comes from is not told. He makes an effort, and does so in haste, to give her everything that can make her the king’s ‘favorite’. He gives her cosmetics for her external care and food for her internal care.

He also gives her “seven choice maids from the king’s palace” to get her used to the atmosphere of the king’s house, as it were. Together with her girls he transfers “her and her maids to the best place in the harem”, perhaps a kind of porch of the royal palace, with a view of the palace. Everything serves to bring her into the atmosphere of the palace and to prepare her for a stay in the palace with the king.

We can see Hegai as a picture of the Holy Spirit, Who continues to prepare the remnant, of which Esther is a picture, so that it can respond to the wishes of the heart of God. The Holy Spirit also does everything He can to bring us, who belong to the Lord Jesus and live in a world hostile to God, into harmony with Him Whose interest is constantly focused on us.

The acquisition of favor or grace in the eyes of hostile rulers standing above them is seen in Joseph (Gen 39:2,21) and Daniel (Dan 1:9). With Joseph and Daniel and his friends it is said that it is God Who grants the favor. This is not the case with Esther for the known reason – the absence of the Name of God in this book. However, it is clear that God works this in her case. Another similarity between Esther and Joseph and Daniel (and his friends) is that they are all said to be handsome (Est 2:7; Gen 39:6; Dan 1:4,15).

If we are faithful in the circumstances in which we find ourselves, it will be visible in us. Faithful people show something of Christ, which gets the respect of the people around them. Faithful people are ‘handsome in stature’. Their way of life shows characteristics that arouse admiration, even among those who are hostile to them. Our surroundings can try anything to silence us, but they cannot ignore our way of life. It is the intention of the Spirit that “Christ is formed” (Gal 4:19) in us. When that happens, real beauty will be seen in our lives and everyone will notice it.

### Verses 10-11 | Esther and Mordecai

*10 Esther did not make known her people or her kindred, for Mordecai had instructed her that she should not make [them] known. 11 Every day Mordecai walked back and forth in front of the court of the harem to learn how Esther was and how she fared.*

These verses say a little more about the relationship between Esther and Mordecai. Esther hid her people and her lineage because Mordecai commanded her to do so (verse 10). The emphasis is on Esther's obedience to Mordecai. Here we see her mind toward Mordecai. Then in verse 11 we see the opposite, the mind of Mordecai toward Esther. His concern is for her. His thoughts are with her. He wants to know how she is doing. He also wants to know what will happen to her. That he is a Jew is known (Est 3:4); that she is a Jewess is not known.

Her ancestry must remain hidden. This secret fits completely in the history of this book. It should not be known that the woman who is nominated to become the new queen is a Jewess. Only when history reaches its climax, may and must this secret also be revealed. It is like the announcement of Joseph to his brothers that also only happens when the climax of the brothers' exercises of faith is reached (Gen 45:1-4).

The care in the background of Mordecai for Esther is a beautiful picture of what Christ does for His own who are brought up in the school of the Holy Spirit. Christ constantly thinks of His own and continually commits Himself to them, without acting openly on their behalf (Heb 7:25b). He wants us to grow and show spiritual beauty, that is, to show His features.

This is how it will be with the remnant in the last days. Although He still hides Himself, He does not abandon them, but is committed to them while they are in need. We see this beautifully illustrated in the storm on the lake: while the disciples are in need, He went up the mountain to pray (Mt 14:23-24).

### Verses 12-14 | Preparations to Come to the King

*12 Now when the turn of each young lady came to go in to King Ahasuerus, after the end of her twelve months under the regulations for the women—for the days of their beautification were completed as follows: six months with*

*oil of myrrh and six months with spices and the cosmetics for women — 13 the young lady would go in to the king in this way: anything that she desired was given her to take with her from the harem to the king's palace. 14 In the evening she would go in and in the morning she would return to the second harem, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the concubines. She would not again go in to the king unless the king delighted in her and she was summoned by name.*

Verses 12-13 inform us about the general preparations of a girl before she, when it is her turn, can come to the king. The duration of the beauty treatment is “twelve months”, divided into two periods of “six months” (verse 12). The first six months the girl is treated, rubbed in, with oil of myrrh. The second six months she is treated with numerous unspecified spices and cosmetics.

For the first six months, the candidate queen is only treated with myrrh oil. Myrrh is a pleasantly scented resin and can have a bitter, but also a sweet taste. Myrrh is extracted from various types of trees and obtained by incising them. So the tree is injured. At very high desert temperatures, the softened resin seeps out by itself. In biblical times myrrh is a symbol of suffering and death [Source: <http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mirre>].

With this in mind the following can be said regarding the spiritual meaning of oil of myrrh. The word ‘myrrh’ comes from a word that means ‘bitter’. In Scripture myrrh always speaks of the suffering of Christ and the pleasant fragrance that has risen from His suffering to God (cf. Eph 5:2). In the treatment with oil of myrrh in preparation for the meeting with the king there is an important spiritual application. It speaks of the fact that nothing is so important for our spiritual growth as to occupy ourselves with the suffering of Christ under the guidance of God’s Spirit, of Whom the oil speaks.

The number six of the “six months” in which the oil of myrrh is applied is the number of man created on the sixth day (Gen 1:26-31; cf. Rev 13:18). Because we are human beings, we need the Holy Spirit, of Whom the oil speaks, to be able to occupy ourselves with the sufferings of Christ.

This will awaken the desire to suffer with Him and for Him, and thus to become like Him, even to be identified with Him in His suffering (cf. Phil



3:10-11). This, of course, does not apply to His suffering with respect to the atonement of our sins. That suffering is unique and we cannot share in it. However, there is another form of suffering and that is suffering because of faithfulness to Him and His Word (1Pet 4:13-14). In the picture Esther is made familiar with this suffering.

Then there is that second period of six months. It is necessary to try out all kinds of spices and cosmetics in order to discover which ones suit her best and accentuate her beauty the most. She can then make a conscious choice to take the right means from the harem to the king's palace (verse 13). This is where her responsibility lies. She decides what she will take with her to impress the king, so that his choice will fall on her to take her as queen.

The following can be said about the spiritual meaning of this second period as a sequel to the first period. In the first period the foundation has been laid. That period is – spiritually applied – entirely dedicated to being engaged in the suffering of Christ that can only be presented to us through the Holy Spirit. Then follows a second period. That period serves to make the right choices that accentuate the beauty of the believer he has thanks to and in Christ.

Each believer has particular characteristics, shows a different glory of Christ, has his own gift in which Christ becomes visible. In order to find out what those characteristics are, the believer must engage in the various glories of Christ. If he studies the Scriptures for the purpose of getting to know Christ better, the result will become visible in his life.

Everything happens in view of our meeting with the Lord Jesus. If we think that we will see Him (1Jn 3:2b-3), it will determine our lives in the choices we make. The wrong things, things that prevent us from showing His features in us, will disappear. For example, we are decorating ourselves with the “clothes of righteousness”. We prepare those clothes on earth, but it will appear in heaven that He has given it to us (Rev 19:7-8).

Verse 14 gives us a further look at the rules for the royal women. A girl called by the king is with him during the night. She goes to the king in the evening and returns in the morning. Then she goes to “the second harem” and comes “to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the concubines”. This means that she is degraded to the rank

of concubine and will never go back to the king unless he calls her by her name.

### **Verses 15-18 | Esther Becomes Queen**

*15 Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai who had taken her as his daughter, came to go in to the king, she did not request anything except what Hegai, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the women, advised. And Esther found favor in the eyes of all who saw her. 16 So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus to his royal palace in the tenth month which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. 17 The king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found favor and kindness with him more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. 18 Then the king gave a great banquet, Esther's banquet, for all his princes and his servants; he also made a holiday for the provinces and gave gifts according to the king's bounty.*

When it is Esther's turn to come to the king, she does not take advantage of her freedom to take anything she wishes (verse 13). She will have been filled with only one thought: "How do I make the best impression on the king?" This makes us think about whether we are dealing with just one question: "How am I and do I live most to the glory of my Lord and Savior?"

Although Esther is completely free in the choice of her clothes and decorations, she decides to take only what Hegai says to her (verse 15). Here we see again, as before with respect to Mordecai (verse 10), her surrender to someone on whom she depends. It is a voluntary surrender.

We surrender ourselves completely to what the Holy Spirit makes clear to us from God's Word how we can please God. Esther entrusts herself to someone she knows to have the best for her and knows better than she what is good for her stay with the king. That attitude of modesty and submission is an ornament (cf. 1Pet 3:3-5), through which she "found favor in the eyes of all who saw her".

The fact that she does not want to take anything but what Hegai says to her is her own choice. Until now others have decided about her. There is a power that directs the event, but there is also an action of her own. In verse

16 again she is dealt with. She is taken to the king. That's not a choice, that happens to her.

The difference with the other girls is also shown by the fact that only her meeting with the king is dated. This also shows her special exaltation above the masses. The meeting with the king takes place in the "seventh year of reign" of king Ahasuerus, i.e. four years after the deposition of Vashti.

That she trusts Hegai completely, has as a result that the king prefers her over all other girls (verse 17). God has made Esther beautiful, her beauty comes from Him and He directs the king to choose her. Without any desire on the part of Esther, she becomes the king's favorite wife. We see here that God's election is separate from any question on the part of man.

The king's choice is explained in many different ways:

1. his love for her is greater than for any other woman,
2. she obtains from him more favor and kindness than all the other girls,
3. he sets the royal crown on her head and
4. finally makes her queen instead of Vashti.

This is where Vashti is mentioned for the last time. She disappears from history. Her place is taken by Esther.

The king organizes another great banquet for all his princes and his servants. This time it is not about showing his glory (Est 1:3), but showing the new queen. This banquet is even literally called "Esther's banquet".

### Verses 19-20 | Again Mordecai and Esther

*19 When the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate. 20 Esther had not yet made known her kindred or her people, even as Mordecai had commanded her; for Esther did what Mordecai told her as she had done when under his care.*

The translation of verse 19 may also read: "In connection with the bringing of the girls, in the second place, Mordecai was at the gate". The "second" has to do with verses 10-11. There the first information about the relationship between Mordecai and Esther is given, after in the previous verses 8-9 there is also talk about the gathering of girls. Now, after a second part

about girls (verses 12-18), for the second time an announcement is given about the relationship between Mordecai and Esther.

The first announcement shows a restless Mordecai who wants to know what happens to Esther (verse 11). Now that Mordecai knows what happens to Esther, he can quietly sit down in the gate again. The new message about Esther connects to this (verse 20). In the first message it says that Esther does not reveal her people and her ancestry, because Mordecai commanded her to do so (verse 10). In this second message it says the same thing, but the other way around, that she did not tell her ancestry and her people, also with the message that Mordecai commanded her.

The message about Esther concludes by saying that she continues to obey Mordecai when she is queen, just as she obeyed him when he raised her. Her position has changed, her mind not. How important this is, we will see in the continuation of history.

In practical terms, however, there is a lesson to be learned for all those who have grown up in simple circumstances and have risen to high social positions. Let them never renounce their origins and continue to honor their parents!

### **Verses 21-23 | Mordecai Discovers a Conspiracy**

*21 In those days, while Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's officials from those who guarded the door, became angry and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. 22 But the plot became known to Mordecai and he told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name. 23 Now when the plot was investigated and found [to be so], they were both hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the Book of the Chronicles in the king's presence.*

Mordecai has regained his usual place, "at the king's gate" (verse 21). This enables him to discover the conspiracy of the king's officials. The officials are mentioned by name and their function is also communicated. It seems that they are a kind of bodyguard of the king who have easy access to him.

Why they become "angry" with the king, so angry that they want to kill him, is not told. Also, the way in which Mordecai finds out about their plans is not mentioned. This is not important for the course of history.

What matters is that Mordecai becomes aware of their plan, what he does with it and what the king does when he hears about it through Esther.

As a loyal subject, Mordecai reports the conspiracy to the king through Esther. Esther talks to the king about Mordecai, whose name is written down in a book. We may speak to God about the Lord Jesus, about what He has done. This is recorded and remains forever before God's face.

By reporting the discovered conspiracy, Mordecai shows that he is seeking the peace of the city to which he has been banished (Jer 29:7) and that he remains faithful to the established authority. He guards for the honor and welfare of the king. This is how the Lord Jesus acted on earth for the honor of His Father. In His life He has always maintained the rights of God. He has stood up for this and has not allowed Himself to be deprived of them.

It is no opportunity for Mordecai to get rid of an oppressor. Here again we see a similarity with the histories of Joseph and Daniel. Mordecai shows the same attitude of helpfulness as we see with Joseph towards Pharaoh and with Daniel towards Nebuchadnezzar. The case is investigated and turns out to be correct. The two conspirators are hanged.

Then the case is written down, without any further word being heard by Mordecai. His deed is not (yet) rewarded. In the same way, Joseph is forgotten by the cupbearer, as is the wise man who delivered a city through his wisdom (Gen 40:23; Ecc 9:14-15).

The writing down of deeds in a book we have learned from God. He records everything and will judge everything in His time according to what is written in the books. God forgets nothing, He has a divine archive. The Lord Jesus comes and has His reward with Him to reward all that has been done for Him, for He forgets nothing (Mal 3:16; Mt 10:42; Rev 22:12; Heb 11:26). God's time comes to reward Mordecai. God's time will also come to make the Lord Jesus appear in public glory, so that He will be openly honored.

## Esther 3

### Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to Haman. Haman gets his high position from Ahasuerus. We see in this the picture that every power a person has ultimately comes from God. Something else is, how someone uses that power. Haman uses it for his own honor and to kill God's people, because they do not bow down before him.

### **Verses 1 | Haman, the Agagite**

*1 After these events King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and established his authority over all the princes who [were] with him.*

From the expression "after these events" (verse 1) we see that a new part begins, in which new events will take place. We are here at the beginning of the twelfth year of the reign of Ahasuerus (verse 7), while the events of the previous chapter take place around the seventh year of his reign (Est 2:16).

As an introduction to the new events, our attention is focused on what Ahasuerus is doing to Haman, the fourth protagonist of this book. In a threefold mention we are told remarkably emphatically that Ahasuerus exalts Haman to great heights. Ahasuerus

1. "promoted Haman",
2. he "advanced him", and
3. "established his authority over all the princes who [were] with him".

As with two other protagonists, Mordecai and Esther, Haman's ancestry is also mentioned (Est 2:5,15).

Haman is the great opponent of Mordecai and the people of Mordecai. Here Haman is made great by Ahasuerus as a prelude to the extermination of God's people. So how is it possible that the king is a picture of God? We only understand that when we see that God is sovereign and gives power to whom He wills. He controls everything.

God created the angel who would become satan (Eze 28:14-19). He has allowed satan to have dominion over creation because he succeeds in deceiving man. Since then, satan has been the “god of this world [lit. age]” (2Cor 4:4) and “the ruler of this world” (Jn 16:11) who reigns the world. At the same time, God never relinquishes control. For example, He Himself will conceive the Antichrist (Zec 11:16), while in the following verse He also pronounces the ‘woe’ over him (Zec 11:17). Thus, the Lord Jesus says to Pilate when He stands before him as a Prisoner: “You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above” (Jn 19:11).

It is significant that Haman is an Agagite. Agag is the title of the Amalekite kings (Num 24:7; 1Sam 15:20,32). Saul, who like Mordecai is a Benjaminite, must kill Agag. Saul, however, spares his life. What Saul out of disobedience leaves out, Samuel then does (1Sam 15:9,33). In the book of Esther we see in Mordecai another Benjaminite (Est 2:5) as opposed to another Agagite. Will Mordecai do better than Saul?

In Haman and Mordecai, two nations face each other. One is the people of Mordecai, that is the people of the Jews, God’s people; the other is a people that hates God’s people with great hatred, that is the people of the Amalekites. This hatred has been shown in history. Amalek is the first enemy to attack Israel, while the people have only just been delivered out of Egypt (Exo 17:8,16). In view of this, God commands His people to exterminate Amalek (Deu 25:17-19).

Amalek, however, has not yet been exterminated. Balaam speaks of the exaltation of Amalek (Num 24:20), although the Messiah will eventually be higher (Num 24:7). Here we see the exaltation of Amalek. Instead of an exaltation of Mordecai as a reward for saving the life of the king, a great enemy of God’s people is exalted. But what at first glance seems to go against God’s promises is helping to fulfill His plans.

We see this, for example, in Paul’s life. When he is on his way as the Lord’s messenger, he is captured. Now he can no longer fulfil his commission and go around preaching, because he is bound. God, however, has a purpose with it. Paul is aware of this and therefore he can say that his captivity has “turned out for the greater progress of the gospel” (Phil 1:12).

We also see this with Israel. God has promised to make the people numerous (Gen 15:5), but it seems as if the enemy has a chance to exterminate them (Exo 1:7,8,22). The people are in great distress and cry out to God. This is the reason for God to fulfil His promises (Exo 2:23-25).

### Verses 2-7 | Haman and Mordecai

*2 All the king's servants who were at the king's gate bowed down and paid homage to Haman; for so the king had commanded concerning him. But Mordecai neither bowed down nor paid homage. 3 Then the king's servants who were at the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why are you transgressing the king's command?" 4 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. 5 When Haman saw that Mordecai neither bowed down nor paid homage to him, Haman was filled with rage. 6 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. 7 In the first month, which is the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, Pur, that is the lot, was cast before Haman from day to day and from month [to month], until the twelfth month, that is the month Adar.*

At the command of the king all the servants bow down before Haman (verse 2). Haman has been given a position to be acknowledged by all. Only those who belong to God's people do not and are not allowed to do so. For them this command of the king is a test. So it is also with the power that satan has received from God. All who are in the power of satan bow before him. For the children of God it is a test. To whom do they bow?

The power of Haman puts the people of God to the test. Thus, God uses satan, of whom Haman is a picture, to test His people. The Lord Jesus has also had to deal with satan who comes to him with his temptations. In this way God's children have to deal with an enemy who wants to cause them to abandon confidence in God with all the means at his disposal.

The hatred of the world is a part of everyone who clearly takes his place as a Christian. Such a Christian spreads light and hates the world that is



in darkness. If we do not experience this so strongly, it may be because we have already adapted to a certain extent to the world.

Mordecai is someone who does not go with the masses. He does not bow down before this ruler (verse 3). Nor has the Lord Jesus, of whom Mordecai is a picture, ever done so (Mt 4:8-10). Mordecai resembles the friends of Daniel, who also violate the king's commandment and refuse to kneel before the image he has made (Dan 3:18).

If there is a sudden situation where we have to confess our faith, we will experience God's power. Daniel's three friends are not unprepared to confront Nebuchadnezzar because of the image he has made. They have learned to pray and in practice to keep themselves clean from the impurity of the world. That is why there is inner strength to remain standing under the pressure of Nebuchadnezzar. The time of need reveals whether there is anything of God present in it.

Those who do not bow down will be held accountable by those who do. This happens in order to exert pressure to also bow down before the great ruler. The faithful Christian will use this opportunity to give an account for the hope that is in him (1Pet 3:15-16).

That pressure is being exerted on Mordecai is shown in verse 4. For they speak to him "daily" about his 'inflexibility'. But he does not listen. He keeps himself deaf. In this he resembles the true servant of the LORD, the Lord Jesus, Who also kept himself deaf to everything that was said to Him that would make Him unfaithful to His God (Isa 42:19).

Again we see a clear parallel with Joseph. Joseph is also addressed "day after day" by Potiphar's wife, whereby her intention was to seduce him to have sexual intercourse with her. And there too we read that he "did not listen to her to lie beside her [or] be with her" (Gen 39:10). It is important not to listen to wrong advice or encouragements to sin.

When Mordecai stands firm in his refusal to bow to Haman, the servants tell Haman. It seems to have escaped Haman that Mordecai does not bow down to him. The reason they tell Haman is that Mordecai is a Jew. Mordecai does not bow down because he is a Jew. It is also important for us to say that we are not participating in certain things because we belong to the Lord Jesus.

Mordecai did not conceal his origins, but confessed it. That is precisely why they want to see if his words will hold up. In this way our confession will also be tested. We can count on being the special target of satan's attacks if we confess our faith in the Lord Jesus and belong to the church of the living God.

We will see that in the rest of this history. Drawn attention by the servants to the inflexibility of Mordecai towards him, Haman now pays special attention to Mordecai. If he sees that he indeed does not bow down before him, he is "filled with rage" (verse 5). From this moment on there is nothing more for him than anger toward Mordecai, an anger that seeks a way out.

The only thing that can calm his anger is Mordecai's death. And not only that. Also the whole people of Mordecai must be exterminated (verse 6). Inspired by this thought, Haman searches for a way to "to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai". And not locally, only in the citadel of Susa, but "throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus".

Here we clearly see that Haman is a picture of satan. If the people were killed, the Messiah could not be born. We also see this with Herod, who is a willing instrument in the hand of satan when he wants to kill the Lord Jesus when He is just born (Mt 2:16).

Haman wants to kill the whole people of the Jews (Psa 83:4-5). The people are associated with Mordecai and share Haman's hatred of Mordecai. Here we see the connection between the Lord Jesus and His people. Christ and His own are one. Thus, Saul is told by the glorified Lord: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? (Acts 9:4) while he was persecuting the church. That the devil's wrath concerns both the Lord Jesus and His people, we see also in the end time, when the dragon, that is the devil, wants to devour not only the Child, that is Christ, but also all who belong to Him, that is the believing remnant of Israel (Rev 12:4b,17).

How did Haman come to this attitude? He has seen that there is one person who dares to defy him. However, in his pride and wrath it is too little for him that only one person pays. His injured pride calls for revenge. He is not satisfied with just one person. He wants to be like God, like satan once did, and submit everything to himself. Whoever dares to resist him

must be killed. Satan never offers an alternative, nor can he. He has a depraved nature and destroys whoever is in his power (cf. Jn 10:10a). Whoever does not bow down, he seeks to perish. Whoever bows down before him, whoever he holds in his grasp, that person is dragged into ruin.

In order to come to the execution of his gruesome murder plan, Haman lets the lot cast in his presence (verse 7). He lets this be done, guided by his superstitious, pagan, dark thinking, to determine the most suitable day for the realization of his plan of extermination. This occult course of events proves once more that Haman is a servant of satan. However, God is above him and satan.

Surely it is remarkable that fate finally falls on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month. The casting of the lot begins in the first month, the month of Nisan, that is the month of Passover, which is reminiscent of the redemption of God's people from Egypt. For each day of that month the lot is cast, but no day turns out to be suitable. So it is with every day of the second month and every day of the following months. Until finally the lot designates the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, as the favorable day.

The time in which the lot is cast is "the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus", a dating that indicates that the authority is in the hands of the nations and not in those of God's people. However, the months are mentioned with the Hebrew name, a dating that applies to God's people. Here we see that behind this demonic act God controls everything. Haman will have seen the outcome as a favorable omen, because it gives him time to carry out his depraved intention. However, he has no awareness that this delay will be both his downfall and the deliverance of the Jews. He does cast the lot, but the LORD decides (Pro 16:33).

In Israel the lot makes the will of God known to the people. We see this for example in the history of Achan (Jos 7:16-18) and in the division of the land (Joshua 15-19). In the Bible the lot is cast out for the last time when a successor is to be chosen for Judas, the traitor of the Lord Jesus (Acts 1:26). We do not need the lot, because we have the complete Word of God. Now God's will is given to us in His Word, which is made clear to us by the Holy Spirit.

### Verses 8-9 | Haman's Plan

*8 Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "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. 9 If it is pleasing to the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who carry on the [king's] business, to put into the king's treasuries."*

After Haman has cast the lot and determined the day of the extermination of the Jews, he goes to King Ahasuerus (verse 8). His intention is to get permission for his plan. Cunning as he is, Haman does not mention the name of the people. He wants to portray the people as a nation that is dangerous to the state. It is an anonymous people that has spread its cancer cells like a cancerous tumor throughout the entire kingdom of the king.

He first points out that there is a people that lives "scattered and dispersed" among all other peoples. They are everywhere. Also because of their laws they are different from other nations (cf. Deu 4:8; Psa 147:19-20). Finally, the situation with these people is so bad that none of them "observe the king's laws". His conclusion is that it does not suit the king to leave them alone. If the king does leave them alone, this people will cause great difficulties in his kingdom and it will be over with the peace in his kingdom.

He has a good solution and that is to kill the people (verse 9). If the king gives a written order for this now, it will be all right. The king doesn't have to worry about the costs either. Haman declares himself willing to make a substantial deposit in the king's treasury. With that money the hands of those who have to do the dirty work can be filled. In any case, it does not have to be at the king's expense.

What Haman says to Ahasuerus in verse 8, he means to discredit the people, but in fact it is a great compliment. It is a people of whom God has said that they dwell apart (Num 23:9b). The world should be able to say the same of Christians today. Through salvation, God has separated His people, the church, from all other nations. To salvation belongs separation or sanctification. Separation is the result of salvation (1Cor 6:11). He who is saved is sanctified. This means that he belongs to God and no longer to

the world. God led Abraham out of Ur and His people out of Egypt and us out of the world (cf. Gal 1:4).

Haman's plan shows us the deeply depraved thoughts of satan. The people of God are not charged with any crime, something that makes them punishable. There is also no condition that they must meet in order to save their lives. No, they must die, die without mercy, just because they are Jews. Thus, the enemies of the church have always called for "the blood of the witnesses of Jesus" (Rev 17:6). Those enemies are like the leech that cries: "Give, give" (Pro 30:15).

### Verses 10-15 | Command to Annihilate All the Jews

*10 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. 11 The king said to Haman, "The silver is yours, and the people [also], to do with them as you please." 12 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. 13 Letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces 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, and to seize their possessions as plunder. 14 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. 15 The couriers went out impelled by the king's command while the decree was issued at the citadel in Susa; and while the king and Haman sat down to drink, the city of Susa was in confusion.*

The king gives Haman the free hand to carry out his plan, and gives him his signet ring as proof of the power of attorney to do it (verse 10). Of Haman is said again from whom he descends and what he is. He is in his nature "the Agagite", the eternal enemy, and in his work "the enemy of the Jews".

What Ahasuerus does is also what God does in the history of Job. He gives satan the free hand to strike Job in all things in which He allows satan to

do (Job 1:12; 2:6). God also does this here with His people. In the surrender of the people of the Jews into the hand of Haman, we see a picture of God surrendering His people to their enemies (Psa 44:12-13).

Ahasuerus does not allow himself to be bribed by Haman (verse 11). Likewise, the stake of God's people is not a matter of agreement between God and satan. What He will bring upon His people *has to be* brought upon them, for He cannot bring His people into proper relationship with Himself in any other way. For this He uses satan. We should also remember that the order is issued because of Mordecai. That shows us that the remnant will suffer because of their connection with the Lord Jesus.

We know from the course of history the final decision of Ahasuerus about both the destiny of God's people and the destiny of Haman. What we have seen so far is the preparation for what Ahasuerus will eventually do. This shows us that Ahasuerus is after all a picture of God, Who is the Highest above all other high placed people.

We see that aptly at the death of the Lord Jesus. Peter says of this that He was "nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put ... to death" (Acts 2:23b). He says, however, and even precedes it, that the Lord Jesus was "delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23a). Here we see, on the one hand, the counsel of God and, on the other hand, the responsibility of man. Only God can combine these two sides in a way that completely does justice to both.

The scribes of the king are called (verse 12). This happens on the thirteenth day of the first month, the day of the preparation of the Passover which is held the next day (Lev 23:5). On the day when God's people are to prepare to celebrate the deliverance, preparations are made here for the extermination of God's people. We also see this in the deliberations to kill the Lord Jesus (Lk 22:1-2a).

Everything that Haman commands is written down. The writing is addressed to all dignitaries throughout the kingdom of Ahasuerus. The commandment is published in each language separately. Everyone receives 'the honor' to cooperate in the execution of the order, not to hurt anyone and thus to antagonize themselves. The name of Ahasuerus is mentioned under each individual letter.

Then the letters are sent to the one hundred and twenty-seven regions by couriers (verse 13). Once again the emphasis is placed on the content of the letter. It is about nothing less than “to destroy, to kill and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, women and children, in one day”. An additional exhortation to implement the law concerning the Jews is the permission to “to seize their possessions as plunder”. These couriers have a dark and therefore completely different message than the Lord Jesus, who through His ‘couriers’ preaches the gospel to invite people to the King’s wedding.

How hopeless the situation is for the Jews is made clear by verse 14. The whole world is ordered by law to turn against them. Anyone can make preparations to be ready to strike on the day determined by Haman. However, God is not out of control of these events. We see the counterpart when it is said later in the same words that a letter is enacted as law, stating that the Jews “would be ready for this day to avenge themselves on their enemies” (Est 8:13).

God is in control. He raises up someone like Haman and makes him great to bring all the distress upon the Jews, with the ultimate goal of giving them the blessing He has promised them. That blessing is connected with the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, Who will be born of this people. He is the source of all blessing.

The couriers go on their way, with extra urgency to hurry, by the king’s command (verse 15). While the king and Haman are drinking, the city of Susa becomes confused. Not only the Jews are in turmoil, but the entire city of Susa. This is circumstantial evidence of the good testimony the Jews have there.

In this verse we see a contradiction between the peace at the place where the decisions come from (the palace) and the confusion at the place where the decision applies (the city). God is not confused about what He has planned for Himself, even if satan plays a certain role in it, and even thinks that he has done well with his plan to annihilate God’s people.

The Hebrew word for “confusion”, except in Joel 1 (Joel 1:18), remarkably only occurs in the history of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt. God puts this word in the mouth of Pharaoh. Pharaoh uses this word to

describe the situation of God's redeemed people when they are in the wilderness on their way to the Red Sea: "For Pharaoh will say of the sons of Israel, 'They are wandering aimlessly [lit: confused] in the land; the wilderness has shut them in'" (Exo 14:3). Here, too, we see how God looks at the matter and how it is experienced by people. God is never embarrassed about situations of which we are confused or panic about.



## Esther 4

### Introduction

The chapter begins and ends with a performance by Mordecai. In between there is contact between Mordecai and Esther through intermediaries. The content of the contact is consultation in order to come to an aversion to the announced annihilation of the Jews.

### **Verses 1-4 | Mordecai and the Jews in Mourning**

*1 When Mordecai learned all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city and wailed loudly and bitterly. 2 He went as far as the king's gate, for no one was to enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth. 3 In each and every province where the command and decree of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing; and many lay on sackcloth and ashes. 4 Then Esther's maidens and her eunuchs came and told her, and the queen writhed in great anguish. And she sent garments to clothe Mordecai that he might remove his sackcloth from him, but he did not accept [them].*

Mordecai was deeply affected when he “learned all that had been done” (verse 1). What he knows concerns not only the contents of the letter sent around, but also the events that gave rise to it and what followed on from it. How he found out everything is not mentioned. That is also not necessary for the story. That he knows everything is necessary in order to fully inform Esther (verse 7).

He expresses his deep suffering by tearing his clothes and enveloping himself in sackcloth and ashes. He does not mourn in secret, but loudly and bitterly wails “into the midst of the city”. He openly expresses his grief, possibly partly through the realization that he is the cause of this terrible intention.

In the expression of his sorrow he goes as far as possible in the direction of the king (verse 2). He approaches the gate. He is not allowed to go any further because he is dressed in a robe of mourning. Mordecai is not alone in the expressions of mourning. There is great mourning among the Jews

everywhere in the whole realm where the king's command and his law have arrived (verse 3). Here we see the close connection between all the Jews throughout the empire and Mordecai in Susa. The mourning is described in many different ways in order to convey its extent and depth to the reader as poignantly as possible. There are five elements: great mourning, fasting, weeping, wailing and sackcloth and ashes.

Mordecai's mourning at the gate is necessary to draw the attention of Esther's maidens to himself (verse 4). Mordecai achieves his goal. Esther's maidens and her eunuchs tell her. When Esther hears what is going on, she is tremendously frightened, she "writhed in great anguish". Then she wants to take away Mordecai's mourning clothes and let him put on ordinary clothes. She wants to heal, so to speak, "the brokenness ... superficially" (Jer 8:11). She does not want to face the cause of the grief, but to cover it with a beautiful appearance. Mordecai, however, does not want that. The anguish of imminent annihilation is undiminished and cannot be camouflaged by the appearance of beautiful clothes.

Mordecai does not want to give up the connection with his grieving people. There is an enormous threat hanging over their heads. Changing their clothes does not take away the threat. Mordecai doesn't like the ostrich attitude, with its head in the sand. He's facing the real problem.

Prophetically, Mordecai's complaint is that of the Lord Jesus, Who "in the days of His flesh, ... offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death" (Heb 5:7). The Lord Jesus does not complain because of the enemy, but because of what God is going to do to Him when He will be made sin. The command of 'the king' is against Him. No one grieves with Him. When, in view of that suffering, He prays in Gethsemane to beg His Father there, He asks His disciples to keep watch with Him. However, they are unable to do so and fall asleep. They do not understand what awaits Him (Mk 14:32-42).

### **Verses 5-14 | Mordecai Tells Esther What to Do**

*5 Then Esther summoned Hathach from the king's eunuchs, whom the king had appointed to attend her, and ordered him [to go] to Mordecai to learn what this [was] and why it [was]. 6 So Hathach went out to Mordecai to the city square in front of the king's gate. 7 Mordecai told him all that had happened to*

him, and the exact amount of money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews. 8 He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict which had been issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show Esther and inform her, and to order her to go in to the king to implore his favor and to plead with him for her people. 9 Hathach came back and related Mordecai's words to Esther. 10 Then Esther spoke to Hathach and ordered him [to reply] to Mordecai: 11 "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that for any man or woman who comes to the king to the inner court who is not summoned, he has but one law, that he be put to death, unless the king holds out to him the golden scepter so that he may live. And I have not been summoned to come to the king for these thirty days." 12 They related Esther's words to Mordecai. 13 Then Mordecai told [them] to reply to Esther, "Do not imagine that you in the king's palace can escape any more than all the Jews. 14 For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?"

Esther wants to know what is going on and why Mordecai is doing this (verse 5). That's why she sends Hathach to ask him. Hathach goes openly to Mordecai. Mordecai tells Hathach in detail everything that has happened (verses 6-7). He gives Hathach a copy of the written law and in this way he informs Esther of what is about to happen (verse 8). Nothing impresses as much as the text itself. She doesn't have to make any illusions anymore. The decision is made.

Mordecai concludes his communication by giving an order – it is not just a request – for Esther to Hathach. Esther is familiar with the fact that he gives her orders and also to listen to them (Est 2:10,20). This time she must

1. go in to the king
2. implore his favor and
3. plead with him for her people.

We're seeing an ascent in the orders here:

1. The first is general, addressed to the person of the king;
2. the second is meant for the heart of the king;
3. the third is the concrete question for her people.

With this, Mordecai revokes his earlier instruction to Esther to keep silent about her ancestry. Now she must speak; she must make it clear which people she belongs to. This is the wisdom that knows when to keep silent and when to speak (Ecc 3:1,7b).

Hathach is a faithful eunuch and relates to Esther “Mordecai’s words” (verse 9). He passes on verbatim what Mordecai said, without adding or subtracting anything from it. Such a servant is valuable. They are not just words spoken by some stranger. They are the words of Mordecai. That is what makes the words so meaningful.

Esther understands the weight of the words Mordecai has given her. She understands what he expects of her. To this end, she sends Hathach back to Mordecai with a message (verse 10). In her message she tells Mordecai what his question means to her (verse 11). It means that she can be killed if she goes to the king while he has not summoned her. This is a contrast with Vashti who was summoned by the king but refused to come (Est 1:12).

Esther seems to blame Mordecai slightly for asking for something that puts her life in great danger. Everyone knows that there is a law that states that no one may go to the king uninvited. If everyone knows that, then Mordecai must know that for sure. Then he also knows that whoever does so will pass his own sentence and be killed. The only way to escape this verdict is if the king holds out the golden scepter to such a person.

There doesn’t seem to be much hope that she will be handed the golden scepter, because she hasn’t been called to the king in thirty days. To go to him uninvited, becomes a very precarious undertaking. It looks bad. On top of that she has to confess her origins. What Esther has to learn is that escaping can only be done by dying, that the way to life is through death.

Esther must learn to ask for mercy, because according to the law there is no salvation possible, but only death can be expected. In order to get this far, a soul goes through deep exercises. The law keeps someone out of the presence of God (Gal 3:11-12). Only when grace is counted upon can one come into the presence of God (Rom 5:1-2a; Eph 2:18; Heb 10:19-22).

We see the same thing in the end times, when the faithful remnant of Israel is brought to appeal to grace by the Spirit of Christ. Silence does not bring salvation, an open appeal to grace does. If Esther goes to Ahasuerus

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contrary to the commandment, it is not moderation, but the true workings of grace.

It is the true workings of grace that the faithful remnant will experience in the end time when the anguish will drive them out to God. The law is not the solution to their need. They will have to learn to call to God for grace. To this end they are brought by Christ through the action of His Spirit, for He will pour out on them “the Spirit of grace and of supplication” (Zec 12:10). The Spirit of Christ will instruct them and teach them that they can only live by grace. We see this here in the picture that Mordecai, through Hathach, urges Esther to beg for the king’s grace (verse 8).

“Esther’s words” are related to Mordecai (verse 12). Again, we see the weight the author attaches to conveying exactly what Esther said. Mordecai’s answer contains an admonition (verses 13-14). By the way, in this answer we hear Mordecai speak directly the only time in this book. He tells her not to imagine that she will be the only one of all the Jews to escape because she thinks that her stay in the king’s house will save her from a sure death (verse 13). Mordecai presents the case to her as it is.

So far, her safety has been in keeping her ancestry secret. Continued silence, however, will lead to the disclosure of her identity and to the loss of her life (verse 14). Now is the time to speak up and make her ancestry known, for therein lies the only chance of salvation for her and her people. How this announcement is to be made is not yet mentioned. Mordecai only points out the consequences for Esther if she remains silent.

For Mordecai himself, not everything depends on Esther’s silence or speech. He is convinced that it does not depend on her, but on a higher power. Here we see in veiled terms the faith of Mordecai, a faith that overcomes the world (1Jn 5:4b). He is certain of the salvation of himself and his people.

He reminds Esther of the responsibility she has in her position to plead for her people. She has not been given that position for nothing. He even assumes that in view of the situation that has now arisen, she has been given this high place. Esther is reminded of her responsibility, but also of the fact that God is not dependent on her.

Each of us must consider and examine the purpose for which God has placed us in the place we occupy. We must then devote ourselves to meeting that goal. If a special opportunity presents itself to us to serve God and our generation, we must take care not to let it pass by. Indeed, we are given this opportunity to use it as a blessing for God's people and for the glory of the Lord.

### Verses 15-17 | Esther's Answer

*15 Then Esther told [them] to reply to Mordecai, 16 "Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens also will fast in the same way. And thus I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish." 17 So Mordecai went away and did just as Esther had commanded him.*

Esther is convinced of the importance of Mordecai's command. She recognizes its necessity and answers Mordecai (verse 15). Now she takes the initiative and instructs Mordecai to do something (verse 16). He has to gather all the Jews in Susa and call for a fast for her. She does not call for games and entertainment to be organized to forget the danger. That is what the people of the world do.

They have to fast for three days, night or day. This means that they fast during the time of the Passover, for it is the thirteenth day of the first month (Est 3:12). The Passover is eaten at night (Exo 12:8-10), which may explain why Esther speaks of fasting night or day. The feast of the exodus is therefore celebrated in this twelfth year of Ahasuerus in a way that is contrary to the way it is prescribed. Instead of eating and drinking, there is no eating and no drinking.

She will also fast herself, with her maidens, to prepare for the crucial meeting with the king. Once again she says that her passage to the king is "not according to the law". Vashti has been disobedient by not coming; Esther is disobedient by coming uninvited. However, Esther's disobedience is related to the appeal to grace. Grace is always above the law.

There has been talk of fasting before in this chapter (verse 3). There it is a spontaneous fast as a direct reaction to the announcement of the annihilation of all Jews. The fasting that Esther proclaims here is a command. What

we miss is the mentioning of the prayer. In several Scriptures where fasting is spoken of, we see that fasting goes hand in hand with prayer (1Sam 7:6; Jer 14:12; Joel 1:14; Ezra 8:21,23). Fasting is not an end in itself, but is meant to be completely dedicated to a particular cause in prayer, without thinking of bodily needs. The lack of mention of prayer is consistent with God's hidden place in this book.

Mordecai told her that she would die if she remained in deep silence. This leads her to consider that she may stay alive and then save the lives of her people if she goes into the presence of the king. She takes the risk of a sure death and speaks the proverbial words: "If I perish, I perish." She says this not in despair or passion, but in a holy, firm intention to do her duty.

The consideration is that doing nothing will certainly bring death. Then it is better to risk it, for there is nothing to lose. This means that she delivers herself to mercy. Death she deserves, grace she can receive. She dares to go, not on the basis of the law, but on the basis of grace alone.

This is also the reasoning of the four lepers when the city of Samaria is besieged and starving. Those four men, because of their leprosy, have death in their bodies and because of the encirclement by the enemy also starvation in mind. The only possibility they see for survival is to go to the enemy. If he kills them, their lives are finished, but if he is merciful, they can continue to live (cf. 2Kgs 7:3-4).

In the same way, we have nothing to lose. If we want to keep our life, we will lose it. But if we lose our life for the sake of the Lord Jesus, that is, if we deliver ourselves to Him and give up every right to it, we will keep it (Lk 9:24). We will lose our lives anyway. Then it is better to voluntarily lose it now, so that we can stay alive.

Just as Esther obeyed Mordecai (Est 2:10,20), so Mordecai obeys Esther and does what she commanded him to do (verse 17). Mordecai does what Esther says, because Esther does what he has said. The Lord Jesus will also do what we ask if we do what He asks of us.

## Esther 5

### Verses 1-2 | The Golden Scepter

*1 Now it came about on the third day that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace in front of the king's rooms, and the king was sitting on his royal throne in the throne room, opposite the entrance to the palace. 2 When the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, she obtained favor in his sight; and the king extended to Esther the golden scepter which [was] in his hand. So Esther came near and touched the top of the scepter.*

On the third day, after three days of fasting, Esther goes to the king. How will she be received by him? “As the heavens for height and the earth for depth,

So the heart of kings is unsearchable” (Pro 25:3). But God turns the heart of a king “wherever He wishes” (Pro 21:1). Life is not fatalism. God wants His own to cooperate in the execution of His purpose. They can do so by giving their lives in His hand, so that He can control it.

“The third day” in Scripture refers to the day of Christ’s resurrection (Mt 16:21; Lk 24:46; 1Cor 15:3-4; 1Pet 1:21). Christ was resurrected on the third day and we can approach God only on the basis of His resurrection (Rom 4:24-25; 5:1-2). We see this in picture with Esther. She does not go in her own clothing, but in “a royal robe”, that is, a robe that the king has given her. She goes, in picture, not in her own merit, but in the merit of God’s work in Christ.

The place where she is going to stand is described in detail. The whole description is impressive. It draws an atmosphere of royal dignity and government, in which someone can only enter in a way that is appropriate for that purpose. Esther has the appropriate clothing. She is, in picture, “clothed ... with garments of salvation”, “wrapped ... with a robe of righteousness” (Isa 61:10). She is wearing “the best robe” (Lk 15:22), making her fit to appear in the presence of the king. The question now is how the king will react. This hardly seems to be a question anymore, because everything, including Esther, answers to his majesty.



The king sees Esther standing in the court (verse 2). Remarkable is that we read that he sees “Esther the queen” standing there. This makes it clear once again that she not only has the appropriate clothing, but also the appropriate position. For the king, and for us, it is therefore no longer a question whether he will accept Esther. For Esther, that question is still there at that moment. The tension is already broken for us when we read that “she obtained favor in his sight”. That shows the king’s disposition. From that disposition the king then extends the golden scepter to Esther, breaking the tension for Esther as well.

What now remains to be done is for Esther to accept the grace offered to her. She does this by coming forward and touching the top of the scepter. We see here in picture that someone who comes to God, not on the basis of the law, but on the basis of the finished work of Christ, can only be accepted by God in grace. Esther knows that she is dependent on grace, but now she is experiencing that grace because she actually went to the king and touched the scepter.

### Verses 3-4 | Esther’s First Request

*3 Then the king said to her, “What is [troubling] you, Queen Esther? And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be given to you.” 4 Esther said, “If it pleases the king, may the king and Haman come this day to the banquet that I have prepared for him.”*

Now a series of dialogues are beginning between Esther and the king, with the tension rising to the top. Esther’s handling of this tension is a testimony of great wisdom. She knows how to appreciate and use grace properly. From the moment she is accepted by the king in grace, she knows how to behave.

The king’s first words to her are encouraging. The king speaks to her by title and name. The king has accepted Esther in grace. He makes her feel even more at ease by asking her two questions related to her desires (verse 3). He realizes that she wants to ask something. In the same way, God invites His children to come to Him with their questions and desires with boldness. God is the giving God Who loves to give an answer to our prayers. He will even give us all things with Christ (Rom 8:32).

This is the opportunity for Esther to make her request in favor of the Jews. She does not. She still keeps that request to herself. In her answer, after the grace shown and accepted, she points tactfully first to the king's discretion (verse 4). In doing so, she appeals to his kindness towards her. She wants to further stimulate this mind in the king through the meal she has prepared for him. She also wants Haman to be there, because it is about unmasking him.

We see that she did not sit still during the fast, but was busy with this meeting and prepared for it. She is acting according to a plan she came up with during fast time. It also reveals that she has taken into account a benevolent reception by the king and a favorable response to her request to come to the meal she prepared.

### Verses 5-8 | Esther's Second Request

*5 Then the king said, "Bring Haman quickly that we may do as Esther desires." So the king and Haman came to the banquet which Esther had prepared. 6 As they drank their wine at the banquet, the king said to Esther, "What is your petition, for it shall be granted to you. And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be done." 7 So Esther replied, "My petition and my request is: 8 if I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and do what I request, may the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king says."*

The king agrees to Esther's request and even makes the matter urgent (verse 5). He wants Haman to come as soon as possible. Without any further announcements about messengers who are going to fetch Haman or where the meal will take place, we are taken directly to the meal that Esther has prepared. What the meal consists of is of no importance. What is important is what concerns the king about Esther and what concerns Esther about her people.

The king comes, with Haman, to the meal. When drinking the wine, the king asks again what Esther wishes (verse 6; verse 3). He even asks his question twice, using the word "petition" first and the word "request" the second time. He commits himself irrevocably to give her what she asks or

to grant her request. The expression “even to half of the kingdom” indicates his unlimited generosity.

Here again, Ahasuerus is a picture of God. God urges us to ask of Him by telling us that we may ask Him for anything. We may do so in the confidence that He can do it. He has the ends of the earth in His possession and at His disposal. He gives them to whom He wills. It is His pleasure to give His ‘little flock’ the kingdom, not just half (Lk 12:32). The king’s offer – for us: from God – is a blank check. The Almighty says, ‘What is your request?’, and to faith He says: “It shall be done to you according to your faith” (Mt 9:29).

On Esther rests an enormous burden. The fate of the whole people depends on her. What will she say? She acts wisely, with a wisdom she must have received from God. In her answer, Esther adopts the king’s words and says, “My petition and my request is: ...” (verse 7). We would expect her to then ask for the salvation of her life and the life of her people, but she does not. Her response to the king’s first offer is already astonishing (verse 4); the answer she gives now is even more astonishing: she invites the king and Haman to a new meal which she will prepare for that purpose (verse 8). There she wants to disclose the evil of Haman.

Because of this action there seems to be a delay for the salvation of the people. The situation becomes dire for Mordecai and his people. Even before the next meal Haman will have Mordecai hanged. However, God is above and behind all this. The wickedness of Haman must come to its apogee. That coincides with that special night we will read about in the next chapter.

### Verses 9-12 | Haman’s Boast

*9 Then Haman went out that day glad and pleased of heart; but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king’s gate and that he did not stand up or tremble before him, Haman was filled with anger against Mordecai. 10 Haman controlled himself, however, went to his house and sent for his friends and his wife Zeresh. 11 Then Haman recounted to them the glory of his riches, and the number of his sons, and every [instance] where the king had magnified him and how he had promoted him above the princes and servants of the king. 12 Haman also said, “Even Esther the queen let no one but me come with the king*

*to the banquet which she had prepared; and tomorrow also I am invited by her with the king.*

Immediately after the meal Haman leaves (verse 9). He is in a very good mood, completely in the clouds, both by his participation in the meal that has just been held and by the invitation to the next meal. He is blown up. His character becomes public. God allows evil to mature in some people, so that His judgment may prove completely justified.

However, Haman's good mood turns to anger as soon as he sees Mordecai in the gate. This time he does not need to be reminded of Mordecai (Est 3:4), but immediately notices that he does not receive the obligatory tribute. This Jew has become a stumbling block for him. He will fall over it because of his pride. Thus, the Lord Jesus, of whom Mordecai is a picture, is to apostate Israel and his captain the Antichrist, of whom Haman is a picture, "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense" (1Pet 2:7; Rom 9:31-33).

Haman does not perceive any respect or awe in Mordecai, to him, the great Haman. Mordecai remains unmoved, without any expression of fear of him. He just ignores him. It brings Haman's anger to its boiling point. As for Mordecai, we see in his fearless attitude a confirmation of his conviction (faith) that salvation will come (Est 4:14).

Although Haman is furious, he does nothing yet (verse 10). He controls himself out of pride and arrogance and piles up his anger, laying the foundation for his coming downfall and fall (Pro 16:18). After all, his haughty plan is to exterminate not only Mordecai, but all the Jews. When he has come home, he calls his friends and his wife with him to boast to them with his nose in the height of how big he is (verse 11). Like an overconfident fool he measures his greatness widely by speaking about his wealth, his many children and the high position the king has given him. What he lists here in his megalomania, he will soon lose all (Est 8:2,7; 9:7-10).

After this boasting, he proudly points out that he is the only one who was allowed to take part in Esther's banquet together with the king (verse 12). Then he raises his voice high from the invitation for the next day. He is the fool whose own lips praise him (Pro 27:2). He is the fool who thinks he can dispose of "tomorrow", while he is blind to the calamity that will strike him the next day (Pro 27:1; cf. Lk 12:20-21). This is always the case with people who boast in their pride. Such glory is evil (cf. Jam 4:13-16).

Because we know the story, we know that it will soon end dramatically with Haman. But that is not how it looks in the story now. It seems that Haman is very much on a roll, even though he is a wicked and ruthless man. It raises the question why the wicked are often successful, while the God-fearing often have to suffer. Why does God let evil do its work and not intervene? An adequate answer is difficult to give. There are, however, a few thoughts we find in this section that help us think about this question.

1. The wicked must become great in order to promote the welfare of God's people. David is formed by the persecution of Saul so that he can later exercise justice. Haman must become a prince to give honor to Mordecai, which makes Mordecai's greatness all the greater.
2. The wicked people must become great in order to be revealed in their full wickedness. God does not judge because He has the greatest power, but because the wicked man deserves it.

Asaph also struggled with that problem of the prosperity of the wicked and the misfortune of the righteous. He reflects his struggle in Psalm 73. He has thought about it and comes to the conclusion that the solution can be found in the sanctuary of God:

“When I pondered to understand this,  
It was troublesome in my sight  
Until I came into the sanctuary of God;  
[Then] I perceived their end” (Psa 73:16-17).

### Verses 13-14 | The Hatred Against Mordecai

*13 Yet all of this does not satisfy me every time I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.” 14 Then Zeresh his wife and all his friends said to him, “Have a gallows fifty cubits high made and in the morning ask the king to have Mordecai hanged on it; then go joyfully with the king to the banquet.” And the advice pleased Haman, so he had the gallows made.*

However, all greatness and prestige are overshadowed for Haman by the thought of Mordecai in the gate. Mordecai is his obsession. In his blind hatred of that man he finds no satisfaction in his own greatness. He is inspired by only one thing and that is to get rid of Mordecai. To him the word

from Proverbs 21 applies more than to anyone else: ““Proud,” “Haughty,” “Scoffer,” are his names, who acts with insolent pride” (Pro 21:24).

“Zeresh his wife” is the first to respond to his anger at Mordecai. She supports and encourages her husband in evil. Thus, Sapphira supports her husband Ananias in an evil cause (Acts 5:1-2a,9). We can learn from this that our marriage can be a blessing, but also a curse. Haman’s wife also has a proposal and that is that a gallows be erected for his enemy. His friends wholeheartedly agree with the proposal.

The sinister company encourages Haman to act immediately. Tomorrow, at the first opportunity he has to speak to the king, he must tell him that Mordecai should be hanged on the gallows he has had made. His ‘counselors’ don’t talk about making a request to the king, but rather use the commanding form.

Haman’s wife may have been “a beautiful woman”, but she is a woman who “lacks discretion” and therefore she is “[as] a ring of gold in a swine’s snout” (Pro 11:22). Haman’s friends prove to be foolish counselors by joining Zeresh’ foolish proposal. They expect a favorable effect of their counsel. This is evidenced by their encouragement that Haman can “go joyfully with the king to the banquet”. According to them this is going to be all right tomorrow.

Rage is rarely patient. Outraged Haman cannot wait the day for his enemies to be killed. That would take months. He embraces the proposal of his wife and friends to hang Mordecai the very next day at a height that everyone can see him hanging. Haman sees his triumph. He will sleep well. But while he sleeps, another does not: the king. This is where the next chapter begins.

## Esther 6

### Verses 1-5 | The King Wants to Honor Mordecai

*1 During that night the king could not sleep so he gave an order to bring the book of records, the chronicles, and they were read before the king. 2 It was found written what Mordecai had reported concerning Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who were doorkeepers, that they had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. 3 The king said, "What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" Then the king's servants who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him." 4 So the king said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace in order to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows which he had prepared for him. 5 The king's servants said to him, "Behold, Haman is standing in the court." And the king said, "Let him come in."*

"During that night" (verse 1), emphasizing "that", so in this very night, Ahasuerus could not sleep. He, who commands 127 provinces, cannot command sleep for one hour. That is because another does not sleep: He who keeps Israel (Psa 121:3-4). He brings about a miracle in providence. God is going to do something only He can do. How He controls everything can only cause us to be in awe.

It is a special night. In this night everything revolves around Mordecai. Haman thinks of him. Esther will have been busy with him, too. The king will also remember him that night. This happens in a strange way that makes it clear that God's hand leads things.

Because the king cannot sleep, he orders to bring the book of records, a book in which the memorabilia are written down, also called 'the chronicles'. Certainly, Ahasuerus did not let himself be read from it to fall asleep. To fall asleep, music or singing are more suitable. God gives it to him in the heart to ask for it. From the many records precisely, the role is taken in which is written down what Mordecai has done and from it is "read before the king". The writing has also been done "in the king's presence" (Est 2:23).

By reading this event the king is reminded of the danger he was exposed to about four years ago and how Mordecai averted this evil by making it known (verse 2). Here again we see a parallel with the history of Joseph. Pharaoh, too, is reminded of Joseph only a few years after his conversation in prison with the cupbearer (Gen 40:23; 41:1,9).

That it is only now known to the king is because not only is Mordecai to be honored, but also Haman is to be unveiled and judged. In his ignorance and negligence, of course, Ahasuerus is not a picture of God. What does apply to him is that in His time God will openly glorify both the Lord Jesus and completely humiliate satan. The glorification of the Lord Jesus is related to the humiliation of satan.

The answer to the king's question as to what honor and dignity Mordecai has been granted for his deed is: "Nothing has been done for him" (verse 3). It reminds us of the Lord Jesus, Who is not yet openly honored before the eyes of the world and seems to have been forgotten (cf. Ecc 9:14-15). He came for His people as a Messiah, but was rejected by them. In this respect He has not yet received anything (cf. Dan 9:26a). To the world Christ seems to be the loser and satan seems to be the victor.

The devil has brought the Lord Jesus into the greatest humiliation and defamation. It is precisely because of this that the greatest and most glorious exquisite things have become manifest in Christ for which God and we too honor and admire Him. The time will come for God to act in order to openly give Him the glory that is due to Him. For faith God has already glorified Him, for "we do see Him ..., namely, Jesus, ... crowned with glory and honor" (Heb 2:9) in heaven. God does not wait with the glorification of His Son, but has glorified Him directly after His work on the cross (Jn 13:31-32).

The king is wide awake. He must make up for an omission and do so immediately. Not a minute more must be lost. The hand of God is unmistakably present in the way in which he wants to make amends for his omission. He won't let Mordecai fetch him to apologize and give him a great reward in money. He could also have called his wise men to consult with them, as he did when Vashti refused to come. No, he gets the prompting to ask who is in the court (verse 4).



That is a very strange prompting, because it is still night. We don't know how long the chronicles have been read before we read what Mordecai did. It is not plausible that this took hours. In any case, it is an unusual time to ask for the presence of someone in the court.

Before the king gets an answer to his question, the author of the book tells us that Haman has entered the court and also why he is there. The case is that – by God's control – Haman has just entered the outer court of the king's palace to tell the king to let Mordecai hang on the gallows that he had erected for him.

Haman is so impatient to have Mordecai hanged that he went to the palace very early. He wants to bring this to the attention of the king as soon as the king has risen and before he has to deal with anything else. On the other hand, the king is so impatient to see Mordecai honored, that he asks who is in the court that might be suitable to be used for this purpose.

What a miraculous coincidence. Think about the situation. The moment the king is looking for a suitable way to exalt Mordecai, Haman enters the court. Haman is also busy with the exaltation of Mordecai, but on the gallows. This is not a coincidence, but a directing from God, Who is working behind the scenes for Mordecai and the people of Mordecai.

When the servants have told the king that Haman is in the court, the king's command is: "Let him come in" (verse 5). The brevity of the announcement accentuates the urgency of the tribute that the king wants to pay to Mordecai. It also increases the dramatic effect that this order will have for Haman. History is now developing at an accelerated pace.

### Verses 6-9 | Haman Advises the King

*6 So Haman came in and the king said to him, "What is to be done for the man whom the king desires to honor?" And Haman said to himself, "Whom would the king desire to honor more than me?" 7 Then Haman said to the king, "For the man whom the king desires to honor, 8 let them bring a royal robe which the king has worn, and the horse on which the king has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown has been placed; 9 and let the robe and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble princes and let them array the man whom the king desires to honor and lead him on horseback through the city square,*

*and proclaim before him, 'Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor.'*"

When Haman has entered, the king asks him what is to be done with the man whom the king desires to honor (verse 6). It is striking that the king does not mention the name of the person whom it concerns. Haman has done the same with his proposal to annihilate a people. He then also did not mention the name of that people (Est 3:8). This concealing speech gives the story a tension that remains until the moment of denouncement. It also means that Haman has to honor the Mordecai he hates and that at the same time he works out his own humiliation.

Before we hear the answer from Haman's mouth, the Spirit of God, the actual Author of this book, gives us a glimpse into Haman's inner being. Before God, all things are naked and open (Heb 4:13). Haman only thinks of his own greatness. It does not occur to him to ask the king who that man is. He is so full of himself, that he can think of no other possibility than that the king means him. He uses exactly the same words as the king in his hidden consideration. In this way Haman becomes the instrument both of Mordecai's exaltation and of his own downfall. God, in His righteous reign, causes everyone to receive what they have done or wanted to do themselves (Psa 7:16).

Those who admire and flatter themselves deceive themselves. It is extremely foolish for any of us to think that we are the only deserving persons or that we are more deserving than anyone else. The deceitfulness of our hearts is nowhere more evident than in the high opinion we have of ourselves. It is important that we are aware of this and constantly watch and pray over it.

Completely ignorant of the king's plan, Haman seeks out the means by which his greatest enemy will be honored. In his imagination, he is "the man whom the king desires to honor". This is how he begins his answer (verse 7). Then he fills in what is to be done with that man – with himself, he thinks. In what he enumerates, there is no modesty whatsoever. He is not satisfied with royal honor, but his desire is for the king's place. This is the archetypal sin of the devil who at a certain point in his heart said: "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High" (Isa 14:13-14).

In the first place that man is to be brought “the royal robe”, which is the robe “which the king has worn” (verse 8). It is not a robe from the royal wardrobe, a robe that gives him royal dignity, but the robe of the king himself. The horse on which that man is to ride is not a horse from the royal stables, but the horse on which the king himself has ridden. To rule out any misunderstanding that it really is the king’s own horse, “a royal crown” must be placed on the horse’s head.

Next, that robe and that horse must be placed in the hands of one of the king’s most noble princes – not some insignificant lackey of the king (verse 9). That noble person must dress that man “whom the king desires to honor” with the king’s robe. Then that distinguished person must “lead him on horseback” of the king’s horse “through the city square”. It must become a public homage. In order not to escape anyone’s attention, it must also be proclaimed before him: “Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor”!

### Verses 10-11 | Haman Honors Mordecai

*10 Then the king said to Haman, “Take quickly the robes and the horse as you have said, and do so for Mordecai the Jew, who is sitting at the king’s gate; do not fall short in anything of all that you have said.” 11 So Haman took the robe and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and led him [on horseback] through the city square, and proclaimed before him, “Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor.”*

The king immediately accepts Haman’s proposal. As soon as Haman has finished describing what tribute the man whom the king wishes to honor should receive, the king orders him to do so “for Mordecai the Jew, who is sitting at the king’s gate” (verse 10). He also expressly commands Haman not to fall short in anything he suggested that should happen to that man. He, who has come to ask for the death of Mordecai, is obliged to proclaim for him that everyone must honor him (verse 11). That is the irony of God.

The honor that Mordecai receives has not yet changed the delicate position of the people. Esther has yet to make her request. But the honor that Mordecai has received is the guarantee for the honor that will be given to his people. What has happened to Mordecai will benefit all Jews.

We see the same with the Lord Jesus. He has already been honored by God, while the church still goes through struggle and suffering. But the victory and glorification of Christ is the guarantee that also the church will share in that victory and glorification. We will share in all that He has received through His work on the cross as His reward. Both the fate of God's heavenly people in this time and the fate of God's earthly people, the faithful remnant of Israel in the end times, are connected to Him with the most intimate and unbreakable bonds.

### Verses 12-14 | Haman Begins to Fall

*12 Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman hurried home, mourning, with [his] head covered. 13 Haman recounted to Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him. Then his wise men and Zeresh his wife said to him, "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish origin, you will not overcome him, but will surely fall before him." 14 While they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hastily brought Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared.*

The ways of Mordecai and Haman now separate forever (verse 12). The quiet Mordecai returns to the place he has always taken. He resumes his usual place because Esther is dear to him, as well as the welfare of his people. That is where his heart goes, and that is more important to him than his own honor and fame.

Not a word comes out of his mouth. Things happen to him. He is as faithful after his being honored as he was before. He is not proud of what has happened to him, but takes his normal place in the gate again. He is humble in spirit and therefore holds on to the honor granted to him. He is a great contrast to Haman, who is filled with megalomania after his promotion. The honor granted to him has made him drunk with power, so that he is now in the process of falling from his height and undergoing even greater and deeper humiliation (Pro 29:23).

Haman, who wanted so much to see himself honored, has been humiliated by this state of affairs. Only God can humiliate a man, a powerful one, just as He humiliated Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 4:29-33). Nebuchadnezzar has ac-

knowledged this (Dan 4:34-36), Haman has not. He hurries home. His joy has turned to grief. As a sign of this, he covers his head.

When he comes home, he tells his wife and all his friends what has happened to him (verse 13). The reaction of his friends, here called "his wise men", and his wife is not very encouraging to him. His friends are now the first to react. His wife was the first to respond to the proposal of the gallows (Est 5:14). In the opinion that there is honor to be gained, she wants to appropriate it through her husband. But in the prospect of dishonor she withdraws.

Their 'counsel' sounds different from the foolish counsel they gave him to have a gallows and let Mordecai hang on it (Est 5:14). They acknowledge Mordecai's victory and draw the right consequences for the future. As a result, their previous counsel is unmasked as foolishness, for that very counsel contributed to Haman's defeat and humiliation.

They add that Haman has begun to fall and that that fall will be unstoppable, because the man he is dealing with is "of Jewish origin". Their comment means that they are convinced that the Jews will not perish. How they know that is not explained, but they are right. Not the Jews, but Haman will certainly fall, "before him", that is for Mordecai. In this way they accentuate Mordecai's greatness and exaltation. That is the opposite of the fall they spoke to Haman about.

In their words to him sounds how this man has changed from a megalomania to a disillusioned one with no other perspective than total disillusionment. At first the fate of Mordecai seemed hopeless, now it is the part of Haman.

Satan knows he is the loser, but will never admit his loss. He continues to act according to his own evil nature. He knew that Christ would come from the people of the Jews. However much he tried to prevent that, Christ was born. At the death of Christ, satan seemed to have gained the victory, but Christ has risen from the dead.

Satan now seems to be the ruler of the world and to succeed in his persecution of those who belong to Christ, but he faces his downfall, as does Haman here. The roles will be visibly reversed at the coming of Christ.

Satan will eventually have to acknowledge his loss when he is in hell. The triumph is to Christ and in it all may share who are of Christ.

Haman will not have the chance to say anything more. While his friends and his wife talk to him, the king's eunuchs come to bring him to Esther's banquet (verse 14). They can no longer provide him with any good advice or even encourage him. His friends fall silent in this hour of truth for Haman. When things go well, there are plenty of friends, but when things go badly, they disappear (Pro 14:20).

## Esther 7

### Introduction

The hour of truth has come. Haman's role is over. The diabolical plan he devised to kill Mordecai has been thwarted. Now Haman's devilish plan for the annihilation of Mordecai's people has yet to be undone. It will be done by a supplication of Esther. Before us here is the lesson that God would like to save by the prayer of His people. This applies to us and it also applies to the faithful remnant in the end times. It is a tremendous exhortation for us to pray more for God's people!

### **Verses 1-4 | Esther's Request**

*1 Now the king and Haman came to drink [wine] with Esther the queen. 2 And the king said to Esther on the second day also as they drank their wine at the banquet, "What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be done." 3 Then Queen Esther replied, "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me as my petition, and my people as my request; 4 for we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed and to be annihilated. Now if we had only been sold as slaves, men and women, I would have remained silent, for the trouble would not be commensurate with the annoyance to the king."*

Ahasuerus comes with Haman to Queen Esther to drink with her (verse 1). It reads as if the king takes Haman by the hand. Haman has nothing to say, but only to do what the king wants. It is the same in the relationship between God and Satan. Satan is not an equal match for God, but only a creature that is completely subject to God.

As they drink the wine, the king also asks Esther on the second day, that is, the day of the second banquet, what her petition is and what her request is (verse 2). His offer remains valid. He has not changed his mind and has not forgotten that Esther has a petition and what he has promised her in connection with it.

In her answer Esther first appeals to her personal relationship with the king that is based on grace (verse 3). Then she appeals to the king on his mind of favor. Then she first asks for her own life; then she asks for the life of her people. She does not yet say which people are involved. She does, however, speak of “my people”. In doing so, she presents the people as her own endangered possessions. The way she expresses herself shows that she presupposes that the king’s kind offer testifies to his concern for her and her people, a concern that is greater than for anyone and any other people.

She cautiously motivates her petition and her request. She talks about the fact that she and her people have been sold (verse 4), without speaking of a seller. The ‘seller’ is in fact the king himself! But she avoids any suggestion in that direction. She does say that the sale means that she and her people are sold “to be destroyed, to be killed and to be annihilated”. That goes much further than selling them as slaves, men and women. How sad that might be, in that case she would have remained silent, because that would not have been an exceptional fate. History has shown this in what happened to the people in Egypt, Assyria and Babylon. Now, however, they have been sold to be annihilated.

The meaning of the last part of verse 4 is probably that in case of sale as slaves, men and women, the need of slavery would not outweigh the burden the king would have. Esther says slavery alone isn’t enough to bother the king. The fact that she is now bothering the king means that the situation is much more serious than that it would ‘merely’ be slavery. It’s about life and death.

God wants to work through the prayer of His own. God puts us in trouble, so that we can learn to intercede for His whole people with an appeal to His grace. Esther has no sword to defend herself, but a much more effective weapon: a supplication. If we were to use it more and more intently, how much it would benefit the people of God. God could give more blessing.

### **Verses 5-10 | Haman Unmasked and Judged**

*5 Then King Ahasuerus asked Queen Esther, “Who is he, and where is he, who would presume to do thus?” 6 Esther said, “A foe and an enemy is this wicked Haman!” Then Haman became terrified before the king and queen. 7 The king*



*arose in his anger from drinking wine [and went] into the palace garden; but Haman stayed to beg for his life from Queen Esther, for he saw that harm had been determined against him by the king. 8 Now when the king returned from the palace garden into the place where they were drinking wine, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was. Then the king said, "Will he even assault the queen with me in the house?" As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. 9 Then Harbonah, one of the eunuchs who [were] before the king said, "Behold indeed, the gallows standing at Haman's house fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai who spoke good on behalf of the king!" And the king said, "Hang him on it." 10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai, and the king's anger subsided.*

Her veiled way of speaking forces the king to ask the next question. Because Esther has introduced the king into her great distress in what she has said, it is as if the king asks his question with suffocated breath: "Who is he, and where is he, who would presume to do thus?" (verse 5). The first part of the question concerns the person, who and where he is. The second part is a condemnation of that person's inner motives. In order to come to an actual conviction, it is necessary to know who that person is and where he is, so that he can be arrested and punished.

Esther's answer is now straightforward and with absolute precision. She says, as it were, with her finger pointed at Haman: "A foe and an enemy is this wicked Haman!" (verse 6). With these names we must remember that they are mentioned in the king's palace. Esther unmaskes at the place of the greatest majesty someone who has penetrated into the inside of the palace, not as a friend, but as an opponent and enemy. The words Esther uses evoke the thought of a palace revolution. Only the death sentence can be pronounced on such a person.

Haman realizes this immediately. He becomes terrified. He is unmasked as someone who threatens the king by trying to kill his wife. He also threatens the queen by trying to kill her people. The star of Haman already falling falls deeper and deeper.

Part of our weak prayer life is that we do not distinguish the enemy. Esther knows how to identify him by name. She can bring the danger directly to

the king's attention. If we could and did that more, we would have more answers to our prayers. Haman is a picture of what the enemy will do to the people in the future as an oppressor.

The king also immediately realizes what a terrible man Haman is and becomes angry (verse 7). That is a messenger of death, but there is no one here to reconcile (Pro 16:14). As if to consider the situation, the king removes himself from the dining room and goes into the garden. Immediately Haman uses the opportunity to make another desperate attempt to avert doom. He wants to beg the queen for his life. Here we see that the roles are reversed. He who seeks the life of the Jewish people to kill them now begs a Jewess to spare his own life. Just as Haman had to humiliate himself before for Mordecai, so he humiliates himself now before Esther.

He sinks on his knees in front of a Jewess, a woman. To save his skin, he's not ashamed of that now. Demons can also behave very pitifully (Mt 8:31). What Haman does, those who have distressed the Jews will once do to the same Jews (Isa 60:14). Something similar we read in the promise to the church in Philadelphia: "Behold, I will cause [those] of the synagogue of satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will [make them] come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you" (Rev 3:9). The day will come when those who now hate and persecute God's elect will want to stand with them in favor, but must then discover that it is too late, forever too late.

When the king returns from the garden to the dining room, he sees that Haman has fallen down on Esther's couch (verse 9). The bed on which Esther sought rest and now has found it cannot be a rest bed for Haman. That he falls down there symbolically represents the even deeper fall he will make. He no longer stands up, but sinks even deeper.

Esther's resting bed is in any case already an extremely inappropriate place for a subject, no matter how distinguished he may be. Moreover, in these circumstances, it is an act that grieves the king to the depths of his innermost being. He makes a direct judgment on Haman and lets it be carried out without delay. Haman's attempt to save his life is counterproductive, as it accelerates his judgment.

For Haman the judgment is irrevocable. For him there is no golden scepter to touch, it is not given to him. From that moment on it becomes dark for him. His face is covered because he is not worthy to behold the king and the king does not want to see him anymore. He has seen nothing more of the king and of Esther. The darkening of his face is the harbinger of eternal darkness. Thus, the lamp of the wicked is extinguished (Pro 13:9; 24:20).

Then Harbonah comes forward (verse 9). He is one of the seven eunuchs who had to fetch Queen Vashti to appear at the feast of Ahasuerus (Est 1:10). He has important information, with which he now comes forward. He is pointing out to the king the gallows that Haman had erected for Mordecai. He also knows how high it is and tells that to the king as well.

Then he gives a beautiful testimony of Mordecai. Harbonah also knows that Mordecai “spoke good on behalf of the king”, which means that Mordecai spoke in the interest of the king. He also appears to be aware of the discovery of Mordecai’s conspiracy and royalism (Est 2:21-23).

Harbonah speaks to the king about what Mordecai did out of love for him. Thus, we may speak to God about what the Lord Jesus did out of love for Him. Everything the Lord Jesus has done has been for the good of God. Let us also seek the interests of the Lord Jesus and not those of ourselves.

In what Harbonah says, for the king lies the solution to the question of what to do with Haman. A brief and powerful command sounds from his mouth toward Haman: “Hang him on it.” Ahasuerus gives Haman the place that Haman thought for Mordecai. In the next chapter Mordecai gets Haman’s place.

The change in fate between Mordecai and Haman can also be seen in the men who have let Daniel be thrown into the lion’s den. They end up there themselves, after Daniel has been taken out (Dan 6:24-25). Evil returns on the head of the one who invented it (Psa 7:16; 9:17). Man is trapped by his own works.

The hanging of Haman at a great height is an open exhibition of the execution of the enemy of God’s people. This public execution of the judgment of the enemy can be seen in the work of Christ on the cross: “When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him” (Col 2:15).

When Haman is hanged “on the gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai” the king’s anger subsides (verse 10). God’s anger over sin is appeased by what Christ did on the cross and where He bruised satan’s head (Gen 3:15). How great is His work and how glorious are its results for everyone who believes! How great is He!

## Esther 8

### Verses 1-2 | The Exaltation of Mordecai

*1 On that day King Ahasuerus gave the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews, to Queen Esther; and Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had disclosed what he was to her. 2 The king took off his signet ring which he had taken away from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.*

King Ahasuerus gives the possession of Haman to Queen Esther (verse 1). All that the wicked have built up shall be possessed by the saints (Job 27:16-17; Pro 13:22b). Haman wanted to capture the possessions of the Jews, but the opposite happens. Haman, the opponent of the Jews, loses his possessions to a Jewish woman. We will often get that in this chapter. We have seen the same with Haman, who has been given the place he had assigned to Mordecai (Pro 11:8), while Mordecai is now given Haman's place.

Thus, the power of satan as the ruler of the world will soon come to an end. Christ, as the true Mordecai, will take control of the government of the world. Now satan still has the power over all the kingdoms of the earth (Lk 4:6). When Christ returns, satan will be thrown bound into the abyss and Christ will reign in peace for a thousand years and the saints with Him (Rev 20:1-6). Then the final reversal of affairs will take place. The now persecuted saints will then share in the glory of Christ. Those who are now persecutors will then suffer the judgment (2Thes 1:6-7).

Then Mordecai comes to visit the king. Esther has told the king "what he was to her", that is, in what relationship he stands to her. Now there is complete openness. This leads the king to give his signet ring, which he first gave to Haman, but took back, now to Mordecai (verse 2). This is where the official change of power takes place.

In picture God, when the adversary has been dethroned, hands over the authority over the world to Christ. The same happens to Joseph when he becomes viceroy. Pharaoh appoints him over all Egypt: he takes off his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand (Gen 41:41-42).

Then it is not the king, but Esther who appoints Mordecai over the house of Haman. That is the reason for the king to make Mordecai great. This shows us in picture that God is using the remnant of His people for the glorification of the Lord Jesus. The remnant will in the future, after the deliverance out of the great tribulation, will volunteer freely in the day of the power to honor their Savior (Psa 110:3a).

Christ will be glorified by a willing people. It is as if He is overcome by their willingness: "Before I was aware, my soul set me over the chariots of my noble [or: willing] people" (Song 6:12). This is how He wishes to experience it. He does not want to violently take His place in the hearts and lives of His own. Surely it is true that He is made great by God. At the same time it is true that He also likes to be made great by His own people (cf. 1Chr 11:10; cf. Phil 1:20). This also applies to the church in all places where they come together. Christ desires to be the center of the assembled church, a place which He does not compel, but which we may give Him.

### Verses 3-6 | Esther's Pleading

*3 Then Esther spoke again to the king, fell at his feet, wept and implored him to avert the evil [scheme] of Haman the Agagite and his plot which he had devised against the Jews. 4 The king extended the golden scepter to Esther. So Esther arose and stood before the king. 5 Then she said, "If it pleases the king and if I have found favor before him and the matter [seems] proper to the king and I am pleasing in his sight, let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the king's provinces. 6 For how can I endure to see the calamity which will befall my people, and how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?"*

Esther appears again in the presence of the king to speak to him (verse 3). When she is with him, she falls down at his feet and weeps and implores. She comes to him in this way, because of the plan Haman devised against the Jews. Haman may have been killed, but not what he devised. The creator of the annihilation has been judged, but the threat of annihilation has not been removed. Evil can survive a human being and the evil he devised can be carried out after his death. What people plan and write can be very useful or very harmful after their death.

Esther can't really be happy with the threat of annihilation still hanging over her head. She lives for her people and also wants to die for them, to which she goes again in the presence of the king. By going to the king to plead for her people, she shows true brotherly love (1Jn 3:16). The king again grants her the golden scepter as a sign that she is in favor with him (verse 4; Est 5:1-2). This time she does not touch the scepter, but takes the liberty of standing before the king without giving up the place of complete dependence.

Her approach to the king shows both trust and dependence. She appeals to him in the awareness that everything depends entirely on his goodness. This is apparent from a fourfold appeal to the king's mind with which she introduces her question:

“If it pleases the king  
and if I have found favor before him  
and the matter [seems] proper to the king  
and I am pleasing in his sight” (verse 5)

There's no sign of any posturing. She's modest. Nor is there any reproach as to why the king has still not answered that part of her question in which she asked for the life of her people (Est 7:3).

Then Esther makes her proposal. She suggests that the king will write a letter to revoke the letters from Haman with his plan for the annihilation of the Jews (verse 5). She avoids any thought of reproaching the king that those letters were written in his name and sealed with his signet ring (Est 3:12). She places all the responsibility for the evil plan with its inventor, “Haman, the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite”.

In the motivation of her request, Esther identifies herself fully with her people in a penetrating, emotional way (verse 6). She asks the question in a way that the answer is clearly and unequivocally contained in the question. By doing so, she takes the king into her feelings. She wants it to penetrate deeply within him: “For how can I endure to see the calamity which will befall my people, and how can I endure to see it? And how will I be able to see the destruction of my family?” She's saying that she's absolutely not going to be able to do that.

She is the advocate of her people here with the king par excellence. We hear a similar way of speaking from the mouth of Judah when he pleads with Joseph to take Benjamin back home. Judah does this in view of his father's grief if they would return to him without Benjamin (Gen 44:34).

### Verses 7-9 | The King's Second Command

*7 So King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Behold, I have given the house of Haman to Esther, and him they have hanged on the gallows because he had stretched out his hands against the Jews. 8 Now you write to the Jews as you see fit, in the king's name, and seal [it] with the king's signet ring; for a decree which is written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's signet ring may not be revoked." 9 So the king's scribes were called at that time in the third month (that is, the month Sivan), on the twenty-third day; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded to the Jews, the satraps, the governors and the princes of the provinces which [extended] from India to Ethiopia, 127 provinces, to every province according to its script, and to every people according to their language as well as to the Jews according to their script and their language.*

Ahasuerus answers and acts as God will for the benefit of His people. He addresses his answer to Esther and Mordecai, who will have been present at Esther's plea (verse 7). First, he refers to two favors he has already granted. The first favor is that he gave the house of Haman to Esther. Thus, in the future, God's people will receive all that Satan has possessed. The second favor is that Haman – "him", with emphasis first mentioned – has been hanged. The king's justification for Haman's execution is interesting. After all, Haman was hanged "because he had stretched out his hands against the Jews".

The direct reason for the execution is Haman's supplication to Esther, where he fell on Esther's couch, which the king interpreted as sexual assault (Est 7:8). This happened in the privacy of the king's palace. The king's observation and conclusion are correct. Haman had nothing to do with Esther. Although he did not try to approach her physically, he did try to persuade her to adopt an attitude that would make her unfaithful to her calling. This showed blatant overconfidence and could only be punished



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in this way. Here we see the devil's work and fate in the secrecy of the heavenly realms, according to God's judgment.

Now it is about what Haman has been in public. He has revealed his depraved plans everywhere and they will be carried out because they are written down in an irrevocable law. This applies to the remnant in the future as well as to us. The power of the enemy remains and turns against the people of God. Nothing can be changed. Even the greatest faith cannot stop that oppression. But the salvation is also unstoppable!

To undo Haman's plans, a new order must be issued, a counter-order. The king hands the matter over to Mordecai and Esther with the order to write a new letter (verse 8). They may do so as is right in their eyes and in his name. They must then seal this letter with the king's signet ring. This results in a new law that cannot be revoked. This new law does not replace the previous law, but makes it powerless.

Thus, death as the wages of sin is an unchangeable law. God cannot take back that word. That is why Christ died. Thus, the law of sin is met, and then God's love can go out to sinners. We can say that Christ is the second commandment for us, enabling us to escape the first commandment.

The solution is not that God takes away oppression, but that He gives His people the strength to fight and overcome their enemies. This also applies to us. Satan has been sentenced – of which the hanging of Haman is a picture – but his power has not yet been taken away from him. We live in the midst of hostile elements, so to speak in the midst of 'the sons of Haman', who have not yet been put to death – that will happen in the next chapter. The consequences of sin are not yet gone. We still have to go through a hostile world. But we have the strength to overcome. Through the struggle of the present, we are being formed for the reign of the future. Our lives are a preparation for our final destiny.

The scribes of the king are called (verse 9). They write everything "according to all that Mordecai commanded". Not Esther, nor Esther and Mordecai together, but only Mordecai writes in the name of the king what must be done. Earlier the commands of Haman were written down (Est 3:12a), now everything Mordecai commands is written down. Mordecai takes

Haman's place in all things. And not only that. Mordecai's authority and splendor are beyond those of Haman.

We can already see that from the content of the writing. Haman has written to all nations in their own writing and language (Est 3:12b). Mordecai also writes to all in the same way, adding "to the Jews", specifically saying that the writing is directed "as well as to the Jews according to their script and their language". Mordecai's letter is not only about the Jews, but is also addressed to the Jews.

### Verses 10-14 | The King's Command Made Known

*10 He wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, and sealed it with the king's signet ring, and sent letters by couriers on horses, riding on steeds sired by the royal stud. 11 In them the king granted the Jews who were in each and every city [the right] to assemble and to defend their lives, to destroy, to kill and to annihilate the entire army of any people or province which might attack them, including children and women, and to plunder their spoil, 12 on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, the thirteenth [day] of the twelfth month (that is, the month Adar). 13 A copy of the edict to be issued as law in each and every province was published to all the peoples, so that the Jews would be ready for this day to avenge themselves on their enemies. 14 The couriers, hastened and impelled by the king's command, went out, riding on the royal steeds; and the decree was given out at the citadel in Susa.*

The letter dictated by Mordecai is a letter "in the name of King Ahasuerus" (verse 10). What Mordecai speaks and causes to be written down are the words of the king. That the letter indeed comes from the king can be seen on the seal that is attached to the letter with the king's signet ring. Everything that Mordecai commands bears the authority and stamp of the king's approval. After the letter has been translated, the letters are sent. Haman sent his letters by couriers (Est 3:13), Mordecai sends them "by couriers on horses". Mordecai's messengers are much faster and can spread the new command throughout the kingdom as quickly as possible.

This second command indicates how the Jews can avert the threat of the first command (verse 11). They are told by the king that they may assemble. Being together gives strength and encouragement. We experience this

when we gather as believers while the world threatens us (cf. Acts 4:23-31). It is not good for believers to forsake their own assembling together (Heb 10:25) because then they become an easy prey for the opponent. In the assembling together, believers build each other up and exhort each other to remain faithful to the Lord.

Haman has issued his command to “to destroy, to kill and to annihilate all the Jews” (Est 3:13). Mordecai’s command reverses and allows the Jews to “to destroy, to kill and to annihilate” those who threaten them, wherever they live. According to the first command, the enemies must kill the Jews’ wives and children and plunder their possessions. Mordecai’s command states that the Jews may kill the women and children of the enemies and plunder their possessions. Mordecai enables his people to defend themselves against anyone who threatens them, without calling for them to slaughter at random.

Mordecai’s law has the same scope and validity as Haman’s (verse 12). It concerns the whole area of authority of King Ahasuerus and it concerns that one day, “the thirteenth [day] of the twelfth month (that is, the month Adar)”. On that day the Jews may, in accordance with the written law that has been promulgated, “be ready ... to avenge themselves on their enemies” (verse 13). This contrasts with the first commandment issued and “published to all the peoples so that they should be ready for this day” (Est 3:14) to annihilate the Jews.

Mordecai is given a free hand to do whatever is necessary. Thus, the Lord Jesus will soon lead His people along the path of battle to victory. He will make His now still divided people one people again and give them the strength to be one people to defeat the enemies (Isa 11:14).

The extensive similarities between the two commands increase the effect of the differences. The main difference is that the roles are reversed and that the Jews may do to their enemies what their enemies are commanded to do to them. This fits in with the Old Testament command to retaliate evil with evil, according to the principle of retaliation as the law says: “Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot” (Exo 21:24). For the New Testament believer, he should not retaliate evil with evil, but learn to endure and seek what is good for all men (Rom 12:17).

The announcement of the command runs parallel to the first announcement, except that the couriers now ride on horses (verse 14; Est 3:15a). There is more haste in the salvation of the people than in the imminent annihilation of the people. If we apply this to the gospel, we see that the gospel is a power that can save the deepest fallen man under judgment from judgment. But there is an urgent need to bring the gospel. The message of grace must, as it were, overtake the message of judgment.

Permission to resist comes from the highest authority, for us from God. It means that He is for us. We have every reason to start this battle courageously. The enemy is judged on the cross – see verse 7, where the king refers to the hanging of Haman – and the Victor is with us. God says, as it were: “See what I have done for you on the cross. Then we may say: “If God [is] for us, who [is] against us?” (Rom 8:31b). As believers, we are not left on earth to become the happiest people, but to be delivered from our own will, so that we will dedicate ourselves to His cause. We have received the greatest blessings (2Pet 1:3-4), but does it encourage us to serve Him faithfully?

### Verses 15-17 | The Glory of Mordecai

*15 Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal robes of blue and white, with a large crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple; and the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced. 16 For the Jews there was light and gladness and joy and honor. 17 In each and every province and in each and every city, wherever the king's commandment and his decree arrived, there was gladness and joy for the Jews, a feast and a holiday. And many among the peoples of the land became Jews, for the dread of the Jews had fallen on them.*

These verses elaborate on the contrast between Haman and Mordecai and the consequences of the change of power for the Jews. The glory of Mordecai can be seen in his clothing. The man who was shortly before dressed in a sack clothing (Est 4:1) now walks in royal clothes. The ashes on his head have been replaced by “with a large crown of gold”. In this way he leaves the king to appear in public. This had not yet happened. Just as Mordecai comes out of the presence of the king, so the Lord Jesus will appear when He returns from heaven, from the presence of God where He is already clothed with glory by God.

The blue reminds us of the glory of heaven from which the Lord Jesus descends. The white speaks of His spotless cleanliness. The fine linen shows His perfect righteousness that has been visible on earth in all His deeds and will be visible when He returns to earth to reign. The (red) purple is a reminder of the blood, of His suffering, and points to the foundation of His reign. That foundation is the atonement which He has made and which is the basis for God to give the reign over creation into the hands of His Son. He has earned it; He is worthy of that place and that honor!

The fabric from which the clothes are made is a reminder of the exuberant and eye-catching decoration of the king's feast in the beginning of this book (Est 1:6). Remarkably, we first have a description of Mordecai's clothing, then of his crown and then an additional description of his clothing. The mention of his crown is therefore between two descriptions of his clothing. Thus, we see that his crown is as it were surrounded by the breathtaking glory of the feast. Mordecai, as crowned viceroy, is in the center of glory.

The combination of these different colors of the garments can also be seen in the fabrics of the tabernacle and the garment of the high priest (Exo 26:1-6; 28:6). Because of this we can also see Mordecai as someone who acts as a mediator with the king for the benefit of the people. He looks after the affairs of his people with the highest power. This is very reminiscent of the Lord Jesus as the High Priest who makes intercession for us with God (Heb 4:14-16; 7:25).

The city of Susa is confused by the command of Haman (Est 3:15), but the command and the exaltation of Mordecai cause cheer and joy in the city. Mordecai has been exalted and "with joy a city jumps up over the prosperity of the righteous" (Pro 11:10a). Haman has been hanged on the gallows (Est 7:10) "and when the wicked perish, there is cheer" (Pro 11:10b).

In the reversal of circumstances, the Jews also share in the whole realm of Ahasuerus. This is all due to the exaltation of Mordecai. His exaltation is the exaltation of his people. He, the highest of his people, identifies the people with himself. At that time the Jews mourned, fasted, wept and wailed (Est 4:3). These four expressions of misery are replaced by four expressions of happiness: "Light and gladness and joy and honor" (verse 16).

Light comes first. Darkness has given way to the light of the day brought into its power by the rising sun. Here we can see Mordecai as a picture of the Lord Jesus Who is “the Sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2). That “it will come about that at evening time there will be light” (Zec 14:7), is through Him.

Joy and honor are with the Jews wherever the word of the king and his law have arrived (verse 17). This causes fasting to give way to “a feast and a holiday” (cf. Isa 61:3a). For the saved there is eternal joy. Actual salvation has yet to come, but Mordecai in his glory is the guarantee that salvation will come. What the king has written also gives that guarantee. For us it means that we believe in the written Word in which we read that Christ has “obtained eternal redemption” (Heb 9:12). If we rest in what God has said, we will have “peace with God” (Rom 5:1) and “the peace of God”, which is the peace that characterizes God, “will guard” our “hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:7).

If the Jews had not been threatened and distressed, they would have had no reason for that extraordinary joy. God’s children sometimes have to sow tears so that they will reap with all the more joy (Psa 126:5). The sudden and surprising change of affairs, was so favorable to them, it contributed much to their joy. It seemed as if they were dreaming, but when they realize what happened, they say: “Then our mouth was filled with laughter” (Psa 126:1a-2).

Many people who see this become Jews. Haman wanted to annihilate the people; the opposite happens. Instead of annihilation, there is an increase. Many from the nations become Jews (cf. Zec 8:23). This happens for the dread of the Jews that has fallen on them (cf. Deu 28:10; Jos 2:9; Psa 105:38). This dread is the work of the God hidden in this book Who is working behind the scenes for the benefit of His people.

## Esther 9

### Verses 1-10 | The Jews Kill Their Enemies

*1 Now in the twelfth month (that is, the month Adar), on the thirteenth day when the king's command and edict were about to be executed, on the day when the enemies of the Jews hoped to gain the mastery over them, it was turned to the contrary so that the Jews themselves gained the mastery over those who hated them. 2 The Jews assembled in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm; and no one could stand before them, for the dread of them had fallen on all the peoples. 3 Even all the princes of the provinces, the satraps, the governors and those who were doing the king's business assisted the Jews, because the dread of Mordecai had fallen on them. 4 Indeed, Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces; for the man Mordecai became greater and greater. 5 Thus the Jews struck all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying; and they did what they pleased to those who hated them. 6 At the citadel in Susa the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men, 7 and Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, 8 Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, 9 Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai and Vaizatha, 10 the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Jews' enemy; but they did not lay their hands on the plunder.*

This chapter begins with a detailed description of the date (verse 1). There are about eight months between this date and the events in the previous two chapters. A new section begins here. The date is also mentioned in the command of Haman eleven months ago (Est 3:13) and the command of Mordecai eight months ago (Est 8:12). Now that important day has arrived.

It is “the day when the enemies of the Jews hoped to gain the mastery over them”. On this day “it was turned to the contrary so that the Jews themselves gained the mastery over those who hated them”. The day of oppression of the Jews by their enemies turned into a day of triumph of the Jews over their enemies. Both one and the other happen to execute “the word of the king and his law”. What the enemies wanted to do is according to the word of the king and his law (Est 3:12-14) and what the Jews do is also according to the word of the king and his law (Est 8:8-11).

In its application to the believer, we see the miraculous result of God's action through Christ. Through Him and His work on the cross, the believer has been freed from one law, that of sin and death, and that law has been replaced by another law, that of the Spirit and of life (Rom 8:2).

On this particular day the Jews come together to kill all those who want to harm them (verse 2). They assemble in their cities which the king had allowed them to do (Est 8:11). Together they are strong. No one is equal to them. Yet even as a group they do not form a majority. Their strength is the hidden power of God Who let dread fall upon all the peoples (cf. Exo 15:15; Jos 2:9,11; 1Sam 14:15; 2Chr 14:14; 17:10; 20:29; Psa 105:37-38). Dread has a paralyzing effect. God thus makes the nations powerless, so that they cannot withstand the Jews (cf. Jos 10:8; 21:44; 23:9). The Name of God is not mentioned, but for faith it is unmistakably His work that we see here.

The Jews assemble "in their cities". They seek one another in the cities that have been given to them by the king as dwelling places. Only there they kill their enemies with the sword (verse 5). They do not seek the enemy and do not challenge him. If we go to places without the Lord telling us to go there, we expose ourselves to the attacks of satan and will be defenseless. It is important that we go to places where we can come together with fellow believers to honor the Lord and strengthen each other in the spiritual warfare. If the enemy wants to attack us there, he will suffer defeat. To resist him, we have been given "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph 6:17).

In addition to the dread of the Jews, there is also the "dread of Mordecai" (verse 3). The people are weak in themselves, but the Mordecai of these people inspires dread. This brings all the dignitaries and all those who work for the king to support the Jews and help them in their struggle. Everything revolves around Mordecai. His position is the foundation of the triumph of the Jews. The people owe everything to him who is fully committed to them.

Mordecai is "great in the house of the king" (verse 4), the center of power. As a result, his fame is spreading throughout all the regions and he is gaining more and more prestige (cf. 1Chr 11:9). His person and his name are emphasized: "The man Mordecai." It's him and no one else. In this he



is a picture of the Lord Jesus, Who will soon be publicly held in high esteem and will gradually become greater in prestige (Lk 1:32-33; Mic 5:3b; Jn 3:30).

According to the righteous law of retribution, the Jews act without pity with “all their enemies” and “those who hated them” (verse 5). Through their connection to Mordecai, they are able to defeat their enemies. Thus, “the remnant of Jacob will be among the nations, ... like a lion among the beasts of the forest” and annihilate all their enemies (Mic 5:7-8). Their enemies are not only people who want to do them harm for the benefit it would bring them, but they are also driven by intense hatred of the Jews. Their actions are evil and their motives are evil.

A census at the citadel in Susa shows that the Jews there alone “killed and destroyed five hundred men” and also “the ten sons of Haman” (verses 6-10,12). Haman has already been killed, but now his descendants are being killed as well. Haman is mentioned here for the last time in this book. With another mention that he was “the Jews’ enemy”, he disappears from history without any offspring.

Similarly, first the leaders of the great rebellion against Christ and His people, the beast and the false prophet, are “thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone” (Rev 19:20). Then, “the rest” (Rev 19:21) are killed, all those who have followed these two and in whom their marks have become visible.

Although the Jews have permission to plunder the spoils of their opponents (Est 8:11), they do not (verse 10; verses 15-16). It seems that the people uphold the old tradition that the spoils of the enemy fall to God, although nothing is said about this here (cf. Jos 6:17-21).

### **Verses 11-14 | Supplementary Request From Esther**

*11 On that day the number of those who were killed at the citadel in Susa was reported to the king. 12 The king said to Queen Esther, “The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men and the ten sons of Haman at the citadel in Susa. What then have they done in the rest of the king’s provinces! Now what is your petition? It shall even be granted you. And what is your further request? It shall also be done.” 13 Then said Esther, “If it pleases the king, let*

*tomorrow also be granted to the Jews who are in Susa to do according to the edict of today; and let Haman's ten sons be hanged on the gallows." 14 So the king commanded that it should be done so; and an edict was issued in Susa, and Haman's ten sons were hanged.*

The king is told of the number of those killed in the citadel of Susa (verse 11). He tells Esther about this in the last conversation we hear between them in this book. He says that the ten sons of Haman suffered the same fate as their father. It is as if he wants to give her certainty that all danger from that side has been averted. The death of the sons of Haman is a picture that those who follow satan will share in his fate. They will hear from the mouth of the Lord Jesus: "Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt 25:41).

We can also see in the sons of Haman a picture of the works of the flesh. If the flesh wants to assert itself in us, we will have to consider ourselves to be dead to it (Rom 6:11). This is possible if we let the Spirit work in us (Rom 8:13b). Then we will be able to consider the members of our earthly body as dead (Col 3:5).

After his announcement of the people killed at the citadel of Susa, the king asks out loud what happened in the rest of his kingdom (verse 12). Immediately thereafter he asks Esther the question he has asked her several times before (Est 5:3,6; 7:2). The previous times this happened in response to a question from Esther herself, but now the king himself comes unasked with the question: "What is your petition now ... and what is your further request? He agrees to give her what she asks and to grant her request. It is again the invitation to ask indefinitely with the assurance that he will give. The difference with the previous times is that this time he doesn't add that she can ask for up to half of his kingdom.

There's no golden scepter here either. It seems to indicate that Esther has been in the king's favor and with him all the time since last time. Esther's answer shows that as well. With due respect – "if it pleases the king" – but also with boldness – she now goes straight to her goal – she asks for two favors.

First, she asks that the permission given to the Jews to annihilate their enemies may be valid for the next day as well. She asks if the law that only applies to thirteen Adar can be extended by one day. Apparently, she asks only for Susa (verses 15,18). Esther does not want an extra day of slaughter, but an extra day on which the Jews can defend themselves against all who attack them. Secondly, she wants the ten sons of Haman to be hanged on the gallows.

The king responds, as he has promised, consenting to both questions (verse 14). He gives the order to carry out both of Esther's requests. To extend the validity of the law, a new, additional law is enacted, and the ten sons of Haman are hanged.

Unlike in the cases of Haman and Mordecai's orders, the scribes are not summoned. Also, the words of the law are not reproduced exactly. This time it is about the extension and not about the content. The content does not change.

### Verses 15-19 | Rest, Joy and Feast

*15 The Jews who were in Susa assembled also on the fourteenth day of the month Adar and killed three hundred men in Susa, but they did not lay their hands on the plunder. 16 Now the rest of the Jews who [were] in the king's provinces assembled, to defend their lives and rid themselves of their enemies, and kill 75,000 of those who hated them; but they did not lay their hands on the plunder. 17 [This was done] on the thirteenth day of the month Adar, and on the fourteenth day they rested and made it a day of feasting and rejoicing. 18 But the Jews who were in Susa assembled on the thirteenth and the fourteenth of the same month, and they rested on the fifteenth day and made it a day of feasting and rejoicing. 19 Therefore the Jews of the rural areas, who live in the rural towns, make the fourteenth day of the month Adar [a] holiday for rejoicing and feasting and sending portions [of food] to one another.*

The Jews in Susa, with the permission of Ahasuerus (verses 13-14), also gather on fourteen Adar and kill another three hundred men in Susa (verse 15). Again it is mentioned that the Jews do not lay their hand to the plunder (verse 10).

In the rest of the provinces, which is the whole large area outside of Susa, the Jews also gather “to defend their lives” (verse 16). They do this successfully, because they get rest from their enemies. Rest, after a time of hard fighting, is a blessing. Peace and safety are also connected with rest. The enemies are eliminated, the haters no longer live. This speaks of the peace of the realm of peace. Then the Lord Jesus rules as the true Prince of Peace and His reign extends to the end of the earth.

The number of people killed is mentioned. These killed enemies are again called “those who hated them”, which again indicates that these enemies, enemies with such feelings, will never reconcile with the Jews. For the third time it is said that the Jews do not lay their hand to the plunder. The first time it is said of the Jews in general (verse 10), then especially of the city Jews (verse 15) and now of the Jews of the provinces (verse 16).

What the rest of the Jews did took place on thirteen Adar (verse 17). The next day, on the fourteenth Adar, they enjoy a well-earned rest. They make this resting day a day of feasting and rejoicing. Rest is a gift from God. He has worked that rest, only He can give that rest to His people (Deu 3:20; 12:10), although this work is not openly attributed to Him here.

Verses 18-19 are a summary of events. First it says what the Jews in Susa did (verse 18), then what the Jews who live in the rural towns did (verse 19). Because the Jews in Susa had an extra day of fighting, they rested on the fifteenth of that month and made that day “a day of feasting and rejoicing”. The Jews of the rural areas make the fourteenth Adar “[a] holiday for rejoicing and feasting and sending portions [of food] to one another”.

It is remarkable how important the festive nature of the two days of rest is. In verses 17-19 it is mentioned up to three times that they are days of “feasting and rejoicing”. This must have something to do with the disappearance of a major threat. We can also understand this if we at least realize what it means that the Lord Jesus redeemed us from the power of the one who had the power to kill us, the devil. To him we were enslaved throughout our lives for fear of death (Heb 2:14-15).

Through the redemption worked by the Lord Jesus, we were delivered from the power of satan and from eternal judgment, hell. If this penetrates well into us, it cannot be otherwise, or we will also be full of joy. We

will share this joy with each other by having feasts. For us Christians, the Lord's Supper is a special occasion to remember and celebrate that great salvation (1Cor 11:23-25). We may also have love feasts (cf. Jude 1:12a) to share with each other during those feasts all that we owe to Him.

### Verses 20-32 | Establishment of Purim

20 Then Mordecai recorded these events, and he sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far, 21 obliging them to celebrate the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same month, annually, 22 because on those days the Jews rid themselves of their enemies, and [it was a] month which was turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and rejoicing and sending portions [of food] to one another and gifts to the poor. 23 Thus the Jews undertook what they had started to do, and what Mordecai had written to them. 24 For Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the adversary of all the Jews, had schemed against the Jews to destroy them and had cast Pur, that is the lot, to disturb them and destroy them. 25 But when it came to the king's attention, he commanded by letter that his wicked scheme which he had devised against the Jews, should return on his own head and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. 26 Therefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur. And because of the instructions in this letter, both what they had seen in this regard and what had happened to them, 27 the Jews established and made a custom for themselves and for their descendants and for all those who allied themselves with them, so that they would not fail to celebrate these two days according to their regulation and according to their appointed time annually. 28 So these days were to be remembered and celebrated throughout every generation, every family, every province and every city; and these days of Purim were not to fail from among the Jews, or their memory fade from their descendants. 29 Then Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail, with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim. 30 He sent letters to all the Jews, to the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, [namely], words of peace and truth, 31 to establish these days of Purim at their appointed times, just as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had established for them, and just as they had established for themselves and for their descendants with instructions for their

*times of fasting and their lamentations. 32 The command of Esther established these customs for Purim, and it was written in the book.*

Mordecai recorded the celebration of salvation in writing, and informed all the Jews in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, “both near and far” (verses 20-21). No Jew, no matter how far away he lives from Susa, is excluded from this feast, but hears of it. The Purim feast is for all Jews. Just as he commanded the salvation, so he commands the remembrance of it.

The establishment of days of remembrance also took place during the exodus from Egypt. The LORD commanded that salvation be remembered in the month of Abib, the first month (Exo 13:3-4). For this the yearly celebration of the Passover is prescribed (Exo 12:1-14). The Passover finds for us its counterpart in Christ: “For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed” (1Cor 5:7). The Supper is a meal of remembrance, in which we remember the death of Christ to Whom we owe salvation (1Cor 11:23-26).

The Passover and other days of remembrance are prescribed in the law of Moses (Lev 23:4-43). There is nothing in the law of Moses about the Purim Feast as a feast of remembrance. The Purim Feast appears for the first time in the Bible here. It is a new feast. The earlier feasts all take place in the first seven months of the year. The Purim Feast takes place in the last month of the year and therefore does not conflict with any other feast.

Mordecai points out in his writing that the days to be celebrated are to be held as days on which the Jews have received rest from their enemies (verse 22). The month in which the days are celebrated is also emphasized. It was the “month which was turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday”. In this way he declares that it is not just two days, but that the whole month, the last month of the year, bears the stamp of the great reversal for the better.

The feasting and rejoicing that are taking place on those days are exuberantly expressed by sending gifts to one another and by “sending ... gifts to the poor”. The latter is intended to enable those who are not able to feast to participate in it. The sending of gifts to each other is an exchange of gifts. You give something and you get something. That is not so with giving gifts to the poor. It’s just giving. The people here learn to give without expecting anything in return. That is what the Lord Jesus teaches us (Lk 6:33-35).

What Mordecai commands is in line with what the people have already started to do (verse 23). Therefore, this command is not a hard thing. Every command of the Lord Jesus corresponds to the desires of those who belong to Him. Celebrating the Supper, of which He has said “do this in remembrance of Me” (1Cor 11:24-25), is not an unpleasant duty, but a great desire of all who love Him. It is therefore incomprehensible that there are groups in Christianity that say that celebrating the Supper every week is a little too much of a good thing.

In verses 24-25 there follows a summary of the events that led to the establishment of the Purim Feast. It is a summary of what is described in Esther 3-8. Haman is here called “the adversary of all the Jews” (verse 24), which connects with the letter of Mordecai, which is also addressed “to all the Jews” (verse 20). Haman devised the plan to kill the Jews and to do so by casting “Pur, that is the lot”. He did this “to disturb them and destroy them”. Here the word “Pur” is used for the second time (Est 3:7). It occurs six more times in the next section, five of them in the plural (“Purim”).

Next, Esther is mentioned to the king as an advocate for the Jews (verse 25). At her request, the king lets out letters that have the effect that the evil that Haman has devised has landed on his own head. The result is that Haman and his sons have been hanged on the gallows. Mordecai is not mentioned, nor is the defense of the Jews. The main theme of the summary is Haman, his plan and his end. With the death of Haman and his sons all fear has come to an end.

The Purim Feast contains God’s promise that He will completely redeem His people. It is the certainty that God will save His people in the greatest need. The people will have this experience again in the end time, in what is called “the time of Jacob’s distress” (Jer 30:7) from which God will deliver His people.

The summary forms the background of the name given to these feast days. This is apparent from the word “therefore” with which verse 26 begins. The word ‘Purim’ is the plural of ‘Pur’. The days are called Purim because they are several days.

The words of Mordecai’s letter and what they themselves saw and experienced lead the Jews to decide to celebrate this Purim Feast of two days

“according to their appointed time annually” (verses 26-27). They celebrate this feast not only because Mordecai ordered it in writing, but also because they experienced what is remembered in this feast. This shows us in picture the beautiful combination of the written Word of God and our feelings. Reading and studying God’s Word should not be a purely intellectual matter, but should touch our hearts. The obligation to celebrate this feast is not just for themselves, but is also “for their descendants and for all those who allied themselves with them”.

The rule is imperative for every next “generation, every family, every province and every city” (verse 28). The Purim Feast is permanent (at all times) and valid everywhere (all places). Time and space are unlimited. The double denial for maintaining the celebration underscores the prohibition of ever ceasing. It means that the Purim Feast may never be skipped by them and their offspring and may never end.

The feast must be celebrated annually by the Jews from generation to generation in memory of this miracle work that God has done for them. It should be a lasting remembrance that each generation passes on to the next, so that each new generation is led to place its hope in God (Psa 78:5-7).

The portion of verses 20-32 begins with a letter from Mordecai and ends here with a common letter from “Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail, with Mordecai the Jew” (verse 29). In this letter they confirm with all their authority the establishment of the Purim Feast. The Jews throughout the empire receive this letter. No one should be ignorant of the fact that these days have been established and are to be held (verses 30-31).

This is the second time Esther has been called “the daughter of Abihail”. The first time is when she is a candidate to take the place of Vashti (Est 2:15). Then she is completely unknown. Now she is queen and gives the people the precept concerning the Purim Feast. The addition of her father’s name makes it clear where her ancestry lies; she is part of her own people. The same goes for the addition of “Jew” to the name “Mordecai”. He is great in the world empire of the Medes and Persians, but belongs to his own people. The same goes for Christ to Whom we owe our salvation. Of Him we read: “For salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22). We must never forget this.



The letter also contains “words of peace and truth”. The “words of peace” refer to the state of peace and rest that arose on the fourteenth Adar after the violence on the thirteenth Adar. The “words of ... truth” refer to the faithful observance of the precepts of the Purim Feast. The application for us is that words of peace and words of truth enter our hearts when the Lord Jesus and His people, the church, have their place in our hearts.

The letter also writes about fasting and the accompanying loud lamentations. What is written about fasting is consistent with the fasting to which Esther called the Jews before her visit to the king (Est 4:16). The lamentation is consistent with the lamentation of Mordecai and the other Jews when the command of Haman became known (Est 4:1,3).

Finally, Esther’s order concerning the Purim Feast is established and written in a book (verse 32). This means that a copy of the letter is included in the historical annual reports or chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia, underlining its great importance.

God does not do miracles for a single day, but to be kept in eternal remembrance. We may say with the Ecclesiastes: “I know that everything God does will remain forever; there is nothing to add to it and there is nothing to take from it, for God has so worked that men should fear Him” (Ecc 3:14).

## Esther 10

### Verses 1-3 | The Greatness of Mordecai

*1 Now King Ahasuerus laid a tribute on the land and on the coastlands of the sea. 2 And all the accomplishments of his authority and strength, and the full account of the greatness of Mordecai to which the king advanced him, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia? 3 For Mordecai the Jew was second [only] to King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews and in favor with his many kinsmen, one who sought the good of his people and one who spoke for the welfare of his whole nation.*

The power of the king is shown by the fact that he can impose taxes on all areas of his kingdom, even the most hard-to-reach parts of it (verse 1). He is the undisputed ruler to whom each one is obliged to give what he asks. "All the accomplishments of his authority and strength" are "written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia" (verse 2). What gets special mention in the Book of the Chronicles is "the full account of the greatness of Mordecai to which the king advanced him".

The reason for this is Mordecai's place in the realm of this mighty and great ruler. For "Mordecai the Jew" is in that realm "second [only] to King Ahasuerus" (verse 3). Mordecai holds the highest office in the realm. He is second in rank after the king, which is also the case with Joseph, who is second after Pharaoh (Gen 41:40-44). Like Mordecai, Joseph is the savior and protector of the people.

He holds his high office in a way that makes him "great among the Jews" and through which he is "in favor with his many kinsmen". Indeed, he is constantly seeking "the good of his people" and speaking "for the welfare of his whole nation". He is working for them in such a way that his work is also of use to his offspring.

In this last chapter we clearly see Ahasuerus again as a picture of God and Mordecai as a picture of the Lord Jesus. In the greatness of the king we see the greatness of God. Just as the greatness of the king is expressed in the greatness of Mordecai, so the greatness of God is expressed in the Lord Jesus.

Prophetically we see here a picture of the glorious reign of God and His Christ in the realm of peace. The realm of peace begins after the return of the Lord Jesus to redeem His people and destroy their enemies. Christ's reign is not limited to Israel, but extends to the ends of the earth, the distant and isolated "coastlands of the sea".

To the Lord Jesus "all authority has been given" by God (Mt 28:18). In turn, Christ works through His power that glory and honor be given to the triune God throughout the earth. God gives the dominion over His kingdom into the hands of the Lord Jesus as the Son of man (Dan 7:13-14). After His millennial reign of peace, Christ gives the kingdom back into the hands of God (1Cor 15:24-28).

Christ will reign, but He does so in the Name of God the Father (cf. Eph 5:5; Rev 11:15). He, Who Himself is the eternal Son, is as the Son of man subject to God, He is the second. The kingdom is the kingdom of God, but God has subdued it all under the feet of the Son of man (Heb 2:8). The Father has also given "Him authority to execute judgment, because He is [the] Son of Man" (Jn 5:27).

Christ will be respected by the Jews during His reign, as Mordecai is here, for they realize that they owe their salvation to Him. Their outward position is not the greatest, but their lives. They love Him, for He concerned Himself with their fate and has become like them. He calls them His brethren; for that He is not ashamed (Heb 2:11). He is the true Asher, of whom Moses says: "May he be favored by his brothers" (Deu 33:24).

He seeks the good for His people. He does everything to please them. This is an example for us. Are we seeking the good for our brothers and sisters? If we seek our own interests and not the interests of the Lord Jesus, their interests disappear from our eyes and hearts (cf. Phil 2:20-21).

Also in His speaking He is focused on blessing His people. His speaking is not only directed to His people here and now, but also to those who will come in the future. That is what makes His speech so reliable. His Word is for all times. He directs Himself in His speaking both to God and to His people. He speaks to God for His own in view of their life on earth (Rom 8:34). He also speaks to His people that in listening to Him they may

receive blessing. Psalm 119 is one great song of praise on the speaking of God and the blessed consequences of listening to Him.

The book does not end with the death of Mordecai, but with a man at the height of power and glory, a man of great stature and great power, while constantly concerned with the welfare of his people. He is one and all activity. He remains in our memory as someone who lives on forever.

The Lord Jesus did indeed pass through death, but became alive for all eternity. He remains for all eternity and is constantly busy for His people: "Because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore, He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb 7:24-25).

In the way Mordecai has gone, we see the truth of the word that "the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until the full day" (Pro 4:18). He has gone the path of the righteous and has reached the full day of glory. This is already the case for the Lord Jesus in glory and will be seen by everyone on His return to earth. Then the full day has come without clouds and He shines like the Sun of righteousness.



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