

April 19, 2020

“An Executed Scoundrel”
Lesson 3 of Unit

Esther 7:1-10

Intro

Most of us have heard stories of miscarriages of justice, like a person who served 25 years for murder, and then was released when DNA evidence proved his innocence. Miscarriages of justice or abuses of power frustrate and anger all the more when they involve officials who have been entrusted with maintaining a just society. Today’s lesson will deal with a corrupt, prejudiced official whose abuse of power was being used in an attempt to destroy God’s chosen people.

The book of Esther is one of several OT books to show Israel’s successes in foreign surroundings (think of Joseph, Nehemiah, and Daniel).

Esther takes place during the reign of Xerxes I of Persia, called Ahasuerus in most texts, (485-465 BC) in the city of Susa. Esther and Mordecai are part of a Jewish community that stayed in Persia after a decree in 538 BC allowed the Jews to return home after their captivity.

You may want to read the entire book of Esther to get the full picture. It takes between 20-25 minutes total.

Some background questions:

1. Who is Esther to Mordecai (2:5-7) ?
2. How did Esther become queen? What advice has Mordecai given to her about her background? (See 2:1-4, 8-16)
3. What has Mordecai done to show loyalty to King Ahasuerus? (2:21-23)
4. What is Haman’s political position? Why is he so angry with Mordecai (3:1-6)? What is he planning on doing to all the Jews in the kingdom (2:7-14), and to Mordecai specifically (5:13-14)?

Note: One Jewish Rabbinical Tradition says that Haman had an idolatrous image on his robes, so that anyone who bowed to him was also bowing to the image.

Read Esther 7:1-10

1. This is actually the second banquet Esther holds for Xerxes and Haman. Why do you think she may have chosen this method to accomplish what Mordecai asked her to (4:8, 13-15)?
2. What was Haman's response to the first banquet (5:9-12)? What has happened between the first and second banquet in Haman's life (5:13-14, 6:1-14)? How do you imagine he's feeling? What might he be thinking at this second banquet?
3. In verse 2, the king asks for the third time what Esther's request is. How might her putting off making her request work in her favor? How should we interpret the phrase, "up to half the kingdom"?
4. How long has it been since Haman enacted his plan (see 3:7 and 8:9)? Though mult-day feasts were common (see 1:5), why might Esther have been interested in speeding up her request?
5. Look up how big the Persian Empire was in total miles and from eastern to western ends. How might this information also factor in to Esther's thinking?
6. How might Hester's request in vs. 3 have raised the King's interest and concern?
7. Compare 7:4 with 3:13. What do you notice about the phrasings? For what purpose might Esther have used these words?

8. What two negative conditions of her people does Hester bring to the king's attention in verse 4? What is the difference between them? Which is worse, and why?

9. What does the king's response in vs.5 reveal about his views toward Hester and the situation in vs.4?

10. What words does Hester use to describe Haman in vs. 6a? How has Haman abused the king's trust?

11. In vs. 7a, if the king is in a rage, what might be his purpose / intention in leaving?

12. What is both ironic and fitting in what Haman does and the consequences of it in vs. 7b-9?

13. Why does the king's fury subside in vs. 10 after the actions taken against Haman?

Application: This story shows God's care for the people He made His covenant with. Esther and other OT leaders are used by God to influence situations, especially when they faced opposition, criticism, and ill-treatment. Likewise, we are God's imperfect servants that He can and does work through to rectify the wrongs in the world despite our faults and failings. Confronting evil and isn't all up to us, and it isn't all up to God. He has a plan and a purpose for us, and we seek to work within His will as led by the Spirit. We can be assured of this by Romans 8:28: "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

Prayer: Father God, help us see the opportunities you have for us daily. Give us courage to act based on our Scriptural knowledge, and on our faith and trust in You and Your plans for us. Help us uphold Your name and honor by upholding your standards of justice and righteousness. In Jesus' name, Amen.