

Esther 3:1 - 5:8

Day 1

Read Esther 3:1-11

1. List the details given about Haman in 3:1,2.

Digging Deeper

See Deuteronomy 25:17-19 about Amalekites (probably synonymous with Agagites).

FYI: "Some believe Agagite is a reference to the historical district of Agag within the Persian Empire. Others believe this term more likely linked Haman's descent with the Amalekites. These people, descendants of Esau were ancient enemies of the Hebrews (see Exodus 17:8). Agag, a king of the Amalekites, was captured by King Saul (see 1 Samuel 15:8). If Mordecai descended from Saul, and Haman from the Amalekites ...then what follows is the continuation of a long-standing hostility between their families." - The Nelson Study Bible (815)

2. How did Mordecai respond to Haman? 3:2c
 - What reason did Mordecai give for not paying honor/homage to Haman? 3:3,4 (What was Mordecai refusing to acknowledge about Haman?)
3. How did Haman respond to Mordecai?
 - 3:5
 - 3:6
4. When Haman cast lots to see when to carry out his plan, how long a time was determined? 3:7 (Nisan=1st month; Adar = 12th month) *See Proverbs 16:33*
 - Why do you think he depended on a superstitious/idolatrous way to determine the date instead of just picking one?
 - How long had Esther been queen? Compare 2:16

FYI: "The word *pur* was the basis for the name of the Feast of Purim in ch. 9...The Babylonian religion maintained that the gods gathered at the beginning of each year to establish the destiny of human beings."

- The Nelson Study Bible (815)

"This decision by the lots (possibly specially marked stones), rather than helping Haman, turned out to have been so ordered by the Lord that a wait of almost a full year was required. It thus provided ample time for all the events to be set in motion which would finally bring Haman's evil scheme back on his own head." - Henry Morris

5. What reasons did Haman give the King for distrusting a “*certain people*”? 3:8 (Why do you think he didn’t identify them as Jews?)

- How did he sum up the reason for their destruction? 3:8c
- What about his statement was true, what was untrue?

6. What other incentive did Haman give? 3:9 What does this say about his hatred?

FYI: “There are no specific allegations, just a collection of ideas that give the impression that this people have wide influence, are guilty of disobedience, and deserve punishment....In short, Haman’s words slander the Jews by insinuation...The slander is supported by a ready-to-go strategy and a monetary bribe...It seems that Haman anticipates that loss of revenue or the cost of the operation would deter the king’s co-operation, so he reassures him that money will not be a problem”
- Debra Reid (93)

“Haman played on the two worst impulses of the king - his fear and his greed. He portrayed the Jewish people as a threat to the king’s throne...Haman offered the king a way of making his throne more secure while also enriching the treasure. Haman knew exactly what to say in order to manipulate the king.”
- Ray Stedman (49)

“Ten thousand talents of silver is an enormous amount-over two tons! The total income of the Persian Empire under...Darius was 14,560 talents. Haman offered to increase the king’s treasure by about two-thirds the nation income, presumably by plundering the wealth of the Jews.”
- The Woman’s Study Bible (791)

“Persia, the conqueror of both Assyria and Babylon, allowed nations to keep their own religion and culture. Therefore Haman had to make a special case out of the Jews.”
- Margaret Hess (66)

7. How much power did the King give to Haman? 3:10,11 (Note the title used for Haman in 3:10. See Proverbs 6:16-19)

Digging Deeper

In contrast to enemies like Haman, what was the purpose of Jesus’ life? John 10:10,11.

- How precarious would you say the situation was for Jews in Persia?
- How do you explain the King being so passive, callous and quick to agree to such a heinous crime? How far was he willing to sacrifice others for his own personal comfort and security? (Note: What didn’t he know about Esther at this point?)

FYI: “The king’s signet ring symbolized his authority...The mark of a signet ring was similar to an official signature in our own day. (1 Kings 21:8)”
- The Nelson Study Bible (816)

In other words, a wicked man with a vendetta held in his hand the authority to kill God’s people.”
- The Tony Evans Study Bible

Applying the Word: Do you have people in your life who are trusted counselors? How should you respond/regard/evaluate what they tell you?

Day 2

The Edict is Distributed. Read Esther 3:12 - 15

8. To whom was the edict sent? 3:12

- Who wrote it?
- Under whose authority were the orders given?

FYI: "Many languages were spoken such as Old Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian dialects, as well as Assyrian, Arabic, and Indo-European dialects. Aramaic was the *lingua franca* used for trade and diplomacy across the empire. Inscriptions from the reign of Xerxes are mostly trilingual." - The Woman's Study Bible (786)

"The edict is written down and sealed on the eve of the Passover...As the Jews are preparing to celebrate God's act of deliverance in their distant past, the present threat to their survival emerges." - Debra Reid (95)

9. How extensive was the destruction to be? 3:13 (Mark the words "each, every and all" in vv. 12-14)

- What reward was given for the Jew's destruction?

FYI: "The couriers were royal messengers stationed at various spots along the main roads who would carry messages on horseback." - The Nelson Study Bible (816)

10. What does 3:14 add to the atmosphere?

- List the contrast that is given in 3:15.

FYI: "The king is deluded, thinking he is acting in his own interest and the interest of the kingdom. Even though Haman has deceived him, manipulated him, and used him, King Xerxes is grateful for Haman's professed concern of the king's welfare. So the king invites Haman to celebrate with him with a glass of wine (or two or three)." - Ray Stedman (51)

confusion/bewildered/perplexed "A verb meaning to be confused...to mill around, wander aimlessly. It indicates a confused state of mind and activity (Ex. 14:3; Esth. 3:15) because of not knowing what to do." - The Complete Word Study Dictionary Old Testament

"That **the king and Haman sat down to drink, while the city...was in confusion** is an ominous insight suggest that there seemed to be no stopping the madness. Nevertheless, God was at work behind the scenes." - The Tony Evans Study Bible (554)

11. What happens to people when wickedness rules or to the wicked themselves?

- Proverbs 28:12 When the righteous triumph, there is great elation; but when the wicked rise to power, men go into hiding. NIV
- Proverbs 29:2 When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, But when a wicked man rules, people groan. NASU
- Proverbs 29:4 By justice a king gives a country stability, but one who is greedy for bribes tears it down. NIV
- Proverbs 29:16 When the wicked increase, transgression increases; But the righteous will see their fall. NASU
- Psalm 9:16 The LORD is known by his justice; the wicked are ensnared by the work of their hands. NIV

12. What adjectives would you use to describe King Ahasuerus in this chapter?

FYI: "Satan's first attempt to prevent the coming of the Seed of the woman foretold in gen. 3:15. If this could be accomplished, God's Word would have failed, and his own doom would be averted...This great conflict may be seen throughout the Bible, and it forms a great and important subject of Biblical study. In each case the human instrument had his own personal interest to serve, while Satan had his own great object in view. Hence God had, in each case, to interfere and avert the evil and the danger, of which his servants and people were wholly ignorant. The following assaults of the great Enemy stand out prominently :

- The destruction of the chosen family by famine, Gen. 50:20.
- The destruction of the male line in Israel, Ex. 1:10, 15, &c. Cp. Ex. 2:5. Heb. 11:23.
- The destruction of the whole nation in Pharaoh's pursuit, Ex. 14.
- In Captivity, Haman was used to attempt the destruction of the whole nation (Est. 3:6, 12, 13. Cp. 6:1).
- Herod sought the young Child's life (Matt. 2).
- At the Temptation, "Cast Thyself down" was Satan's temptation.
- At Nazareth, again (Luke 4), there was another attempt to cast Him down and destroy Him..."

- Appendix 23 To The Companion Bible <https://www.therain.org/appendixes/app23.html>

Applying the Word: *What heroic Christians in recent times do you admire for standing up for their faith? What consequences did they face?*

Day 3

Mordecai Informs Esther. Read Esther 4:1-15

13. How did Mordecai respond to the edict? 4:1,2 Why might he have felt especially burdened?

- How did the Jewish people respond? 4:3

14. How did Esther learn about Mordecai? 4:4

- What does her strong reaction indicate about her relationship with her uncle even after becoming queen?
- Why do you think she offered Mordecai clothes? Compare 4:2

FYI: "The verb distressed (anguish 4:4) is strong, suggesting the idea of writing in severe pain or anguish."
- The Nelson Study Bible (816)

15. How did Esther learn what was wrong? 4:5-7 *What does this say about her situation/ accessibility in the palace? About her relationship with her maidens and eunuchs? Compare 2:9*

16. What information did Mordecai send back to Esther? (How do you think he had obtained this information?)

- 4:7 (*Compare with the king's statement about money in 3:11.*)
- 4:8a

17. What order/command did Mordecai give Esther? 4:8b What would she have to reveal about herself?

Order/urge/command/charge Strong's OT:6680 *tsavah*; "The word means to give an order or to command, to direct someone." - The Complete Word Study Dictionary Old Testament (6680)

Implore/beg Strong's OT:2603 *chanan*; to bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior; to favor, bestow; causatively to implore (i.e. move to favor by petition)

18. Why was Esther concerned about making a request of the king?

- 4:11a
- 4:11b

FYI: "Esther came up with an excellent excuse for not acting in the crisis. People could come to the outer court and present requests for an audience. But all requests would doubtless go through Haman. The rule protected the king from would-be assassins and dissatisfied subjects, including disgruntled wives and concubines. The king did he summoning.

"History records many intrigues involving women of the harem. Courtiers did their best to weaken a queen's influences with the king. Esther certainly couldn't expect to go through regular channels." - Margaret Hess (77)

"A carved relief excavated from the royal city of Persepolis shows Darius 1 seated on his throne with the royal scepter in his right hand and Crown Prince Xerxes standing behind him. The royal bodyguards, complete with ax, sword and bow, flank the throne."
- The Woman's Study Bible (792)

19. What consequences did Mordecai say there would be for Esther if she didn't speak?
4:13,14a

20. How did Mordecai change Esther's outlook as she faced this choice? 4:14b What did Mordecai's reply indicate about his understanding of God's sovereign control?

Digging Deeper

What promises were yet to be fulfilled for the nation?

- Genesis 12:1-3
- 2 Samuel 7:15,16 (See also Jeremiah 33:20,21)

FYI: "This verse constitutes the classic reference to the providence of God in the book. Mordecai, by his confidence that relief and deliverance would come from another place, was strongly asserting his faith in God and His promised protection of the Jewish people."
- The Nelson Study Bible (817)

"God promotes us or puts us in a place for a reason, and we need the courage and wisdom to see that reason and to walk in it. 'You have been wishing for another position where you could do something for Jesus: do not wish anything of the kind, but serve Him where you are.' (Spurgeon)"
- David Guzik

"We as Christians need to keep our theology straight, too: God is sovereign and will accomplish His program with or without us. He certainly desires to use you. Yet no one is indispensable. If you refuse to obey Him, He will still carry out His agenda through someone else, and you will have miss an opportunity to serve His kingdom purposes."
- The Tony Evans Study Bible (554)

21. 1 Corinthians 1:27-28 says, "God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty" In what ways was Esther a "weak" (powerless)? (e.g. an orphan...)

22. Underline the power that God has over people or nations. (See also Psalm 2)

- Daniel 2:21 "And it is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men, And knowledge to men of understanding.
- Daniel 4:35 5 All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"
- Psalm 33:10-11 The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.

Applying the Word: When have you accepted an intimidating task or taken a frightening stand for the Lord? What motivated and encouraged you?

Day 4

Esther Goes to the King. Read Esther 4:16 - 5:8

23. List the requests that Esther sent back to Mordecai. 4:16 Where was she putting her trust?
24. Write out Esther's resolve. 4:16b (Compare Matthew 10:28; Philippians 1:21)

FYI: "It is Esther who emerges as the figure of hope upon whom the outcome of the story depends. At this point in the story she has stature of her own. She displays emotion that is real but restrained and is a determined and cunning strategist (thus mirroring but surpassing the figures of power in the king's court)." - Debra Reid (98)

"Some think Esther's fears make her less the heroine. They really make her more human. A rash person may do the brave thing without thinking of dangers involved. The really brave person acts, with full knowledge of the dangers." - Margaret Hess (77)

25. Compare Esther's choice to others in the Bible. (Pick one)

- Daniel 3:15-18
- Acts 5:27-29, 40-42
- Hebrews 11:32-38

Digging Deeper

What principle did Jesus give in Mark 8:34-37 for determining what is important in life?

26. Why do you think Esther wanted all the Jews of Susa to fast with her? (Compare Ephesians 6:18-19)

Digging Deeper

See other situations when Israelites fasted.
2 Chronicles 20:1-4;

Ezra 8:21,23;

Nehemiah 1:4,11

FYI: "According to Jewish reckoning, three days meant part of the first day, the full second day, and part of a third day. Esther and her maids spent those days fasting, and by implication, praying." - Margaret Hess (84)

27. How did Esther dress to appear before the King? 5:1 Why? (What kinds of emotions do you imagine her experiencing?)

FYI: "Greek historians described the **royal robes** of the Persian king. The outer robe was dyed with Phoenician purple and embroidered with gold in patterns of fighting hawks or serpents. White or crimson trousers edged with purple were worn under the robe. Gold jeweled earrings, bracelets, and a filigree collar adorned the king. The king's sword, with a sheath reportedly made of a single precious stone, was supported by a belt made of gold. Bright colors, precious gems, and abundant gold made the royal dress a glittering splendor. The queen's royal robes were no doubt commensurate with the riches of her position." - The Woman's Study Bible (793)

28. How did the King respond? What did he realize about her coming unsummoned?
5:2,3

FYI: "The phrase *up to half the kingdom* was a court idiom used by kings in the ancient Near East to indicate their generous disposition toward the person in view. It was probably not to be understood as a literal offer."
- The Woman's Study Bible (794)

29. What was Esther's request? 5:4 What advantage would there be to making her request at a private banquet rather than in the throne room?

FYI: "Esther...had decided not to blurt out her request before all the attendants. First, she would get the king into a mellow and amiable mood. Haman would be needed at hand to face up to her accusation...Esther understood the king's love of high living. She also knew how much he valued Haman." - Margaret Hess (87)

30. How did the King respond? 5:5 What tone do you read in his words? (Compare Proverbs 21:1)

FYI: "It seems the author wants us to understand that Esther is biding her time rather than losing her nerve....Esther also adds flattery to flattery by suggesting she wants to honor Xerxes with a banquet. By so doing she surpasses any flattery Haman has ever afforded him. In chapter 1, Xerxes had to put on a banquet to applaud himself as a means of self-honouring. Esther here offers him the more meaningful honour that comes by other people's recognition."
- Debra Reid (108)

31. What effect did Esther's first banquet have on the King? 5:6

32. How was Esther's invitation to a second banquet honoring to the king? 5:7,8

- Why do you think Esther decided to wait and give another banquet before making her request? 5:8 (*What may have shown her the timing wasn't right? See Acts 16:6,7 What feelings/thoughts do you think this was producing in the king?*)

FYI: "In her wisdom and deference Esther presents herself as passive: she finds favor; it is given to her rather than extracted by her. 'Esther is shrewdly and subtly pursuing a well-designed plan by which she has maneuvered the king into committing himself in advance' (Bush)"
- Debra Reid (109)

Applying the Word: *In what areas of your life, if any, do you see God calling you to take a risk? List what your fears are about taking this risk. [How did you determine that this is a step the Lord really wants you to take? Are there any circumstances in your life that call for a need to wait? As you look at the list, can you identify any fears that are unfounded? Do all these fears need to be overcome in order to take a risk?]*