

Outlines for Country Preachers by a Country Preacher
Sermon Outlines by Milburn Cockrell

THE BOOK OF ESTHER

TITLE:

The book is named from its principal character. Her Hebrew name “Hadassah” means “myrtle.” The name “Esther” (‘ester) is derived from the Persian word for star (stara). The Jews call it Megilloth Esther, that is, the Esther Roll. The Esther Roll was read at the Feast of Purim.

Chronologically, though this book comes after the book of Nehemiah, yet its events antedate Nehemiah by about 30 years. Esther may have made possible the work of Nehemiah.

The Jews returned from Babylon to Jerusalem in 536 B.C, and the temple was rebuilt in 536-516 B.C. Esther became queen of Persia in 478 B.C. and saved her people from massacre in 473 B.C. Ezra came from Babylon to Jerusalem in 457 B.C., and Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem in 444 B.C. Esther appeared about 40 years after the temple was rebuilt.

The book concerns those Jews who stayed in Gentile lands and did not return to Jerusalem after the Babylonian Captivity ended. They loved the prosperity of Gentile lands to the ruined condition of their homeland.

What would the world be like had there been no Esther? No Hebrew nation and no Messiah! No New Testament and no New Testament church!

AUTHOR:

The book does not give the name of its author. Some Jewish scholars say Mordicai was its author, but 10:2-3 seem to oppose this. Others suggest Nehemiah or Ezra, but the linguistic evidence is against this, judging from the style or diction of the three books concerned. The writer was very familiar with the customs of the Persian court.

CRITICISM:

For a long time it was debated as to who Ahasuerus was. He was finally identified as Xerxes who reigned over Persia from 485-465 B.C.

Other critics complained that Herodotus refers to Amestris as the Persian Queen, with no mention of Esther or Vashti. Esther was not the only queen, but one of many in the royal harem.

Still others say there is no mention of the name of God. The writer may have intended to do this to show that God will not associate His name with His people who are worldly minded. The name Jehovah is secretly hidden 4 times in the book in the acrostic form and the name Eheyeh (“I am that I am”) once (1:20; 5:4,13; 7:7,5).

DATE:

After the death of Xerxes in 465 B.C. (10:2). This would put it in the late fifth century.

CONTENTS:

It is a history of real persons. Five persons are seen: Ahasuerus, the Persian King; Vashti, the disposed queen; Haman, the Jew-hater; Mordecai, the Jewish leader; and Esther, the Jewish orphan girl who became queen. In the background is the royal palace in Susa and several millions of Jews scattered throughout the emperor’s domains. The book covers a period of about 12 years.

DIVISIONS:

The crisis anticipated (1-5) and the crisis overruled (6-10).

PURPOSE:

To demonstrate the providential care of God over His people even in foreign lands. The central theme is providential preservation. The spiritual message is that amid the shadows God stands, keeping watch over His own. He sees and knows and cares for His own. God may be out of sight, but His people are never out of His sight.

IMPORTANT FEATURES:

The key verse is 4:14 and the longest verse in the Bible is 8:9.

The courage of Vashti (1:10-12) and her punishment (1:19). Then there is Esther's great beauty (2:8-10), the plot of Haman (3:8-15), the courage of Esther (5:1-3), the disappointment of Haman (6:4-12) and his end (7:1-10). In this book we have the origin of the Feast of Purim (9:23-32).

TYOLOGY:

In this book Esther is a type of the church, Haman a type of Antichrist, and Mordecai of the Jewish remnant.

THE BOOK OF ESTHER <i>THE BOOK OF PROVIDENTIAL PRESERVATION</i>	
GOD IN THE SHADOWS WATCHES HIS OWN	
CRISIS ANTICIPATED (i.-v.) QUEEN VASHTI DEPOSED (i.) ESTHER BECOMES QUEEN (ii.) HAMAN PLOTS MASSACRE (iii.) MORDECAI PLEADS HELP (iv.) ESTHER CONTRIVES AID (V.) CRISIS OVERRULED (vi.-x.)	MORDECAI IS HONOURED (vi.) HAMAN IS EXECUTED (vii.) THE JEWS ARE AVENGED (viii.) PURIM IS INSTITUTED (ix.) MORDECAI MADE PREMIER (x.)

Chapter One

I. THE KING'S FEAST FOR HIS PEOPLE (1:1-9).

1. Ahasuerus and his vast kingdom (v. 1).

(1) In the time of Daniel there were 120 provinces (Dan. 6:1); now there are 127.

(2) Ahasuerus was an official name of the Persian kings. This king was the famous Xerxes who invaded Greece and Egypt.

2. Shushan the palace (v. 2). The king was well settled on his throne at this time, having defeated Egypt a year before. Shushan was the royal city of the kings of Persia (Neh. 1:1; Dan. 8:2).

3. The feast of 180 days was in connection with his contemplated expedition against Greece (v. 3). The prophet Daniel had said that he would attack Greece (Dan. 11:2).

4. He shows the riches of his kingdom (v. 4). This was really a show of his power and pride!

5. The seven-day feast for the common people was held in the court of the garden (vv. 5-6).

6. No man was forced to drink (vv. 7-8).

(1) The Targum says these vessels were the golden vessels from the Temple in Jerusalem. This could not be since Cyrus had already delivered them to Zerubbabel (Ezra 1:7-10).

(2) As a rule a man must drink or leave the feast. Here an exception was made. This shames some Christians today (Hab. 2:15-16).

7. Vashti and the women feast separately in the royal house (v. 9).

- (1) This was unlike the feast of Belshazzar (Dan. 5:2). Persians did not admit women to their feasts.
- (2) Vashti is said to mean “beautiful.” However, her name is the same with Vesta, a deity worshipped by the Persians and which signified “vehement fire.”
- (3) Some say she was the daughter of Cyrus. Others say the daughter of Evil-Merodach, the son of Nebchadnezzar. Her true identity is uncertain.

II. THE KING DIVORCES THE QUEEN BECAUSE SHE REFUSED TO COME TO HIM WHEN HE SENT FOR HER (1:10-22).

1. The king is merry with wine (vv. 10-11).

- (1) He was intoxicated and knew not what he said nor did. Perhaps the men were discussing the beauty of women, and the king had asserted that the queen outstripped all the women of Persia and Babylon.
- (2) “Seven chamberlains”—the eunuchs who had charge of the royal harem.
- (3) This was contrary to Persian custom because the queen was secluded from public gaze, and the king was to protect her from such exposures (Gen. 20:16).
- (4) The king wanted her to make an indecent exposure of herself before a company of drunken men. This was unbecoming to her sex and her rank as queen.

2. The queen refuses to come to the king (v. 12).

- (1) Why she refused we are not told. Was she weary from the long feast with the women? Did she feel she was not so queenly and beautiful at the moment? Did she feel it would injure her womanhood and her queenliness?
- (2) The king is angered and perhaps sobered a bit by her unexpected refusal. He was greatly embarrassed before the princes. He ruled 127 provinces and had no rule over his own spirit or over his wife!

3. The king sought the advice of his counselors (vv. 13-15).

- (1) These were astrologers whose advice was often sought by the kings in that day (Ezra 7:14). Or, they may have been practical men of wisdom who knew the law and the histories of the past.
- (2) Carshena was next to the king in authority. Admatha was Xerxes’s uncle. “Seven princes”—families of the first rank in Persia from which alone the king would, as a rule, take his next wife.
- (3) The king would act according to law in this matter. Not even the queen was above the law.
- (4) One wrong act seldom stands alone. It necessitates other wrong acts.

4. The council of Memucan (vv. 16-20).

- (1) Josephus tells us Xerxes had strong affection for Vashti and would not have divorced her for this if he could have legally passed it by.
- (2) Memucan’s advice had a sincere regard to justice and the public good.

- (3) This disobedience would reach the ears of the wives of all his subjects. Wives, following the queen's example, would everywhere rebel against their husbands. Confusion and disobedience would reign in the kingdom.
 - (4) A rebellious wife is a terrible thing (Prov. 27:15; 21:9). A wife is to reverence her husband (Eph. 5:33) and be subject to him (I Pet. 3:1).
 - (5) Make her a public example. This judgment could never be reversed, except by a special act of the king (Dan. 6:8, 15).
 - (6) This would enable every man to bear rule in his own house and would make good order in private families.
5. The decree is passed in due and solemn form (vv. 21-22).
- (1) The queen was divorced for disobedience to her husband. This was not a scriptural divorce by any standard.
 - (2) She was deprived of her royal dignity. What a warning to other women throughout the empire.
6. Practical points to ponder.
- (1) How many marriages have been severed by drunkenness, a fit of passion, or some thoughtless word? In some cases love has not cooled, like in this case!
 - (2) Sometimes the King of kings commands us to appear before Him in the beauty of holiness. Often we are feasting on worldly things and refuse to obey His command. Such disobedience causes us to lose the fellow-ship of the King. We lose the crown we could have had by obedience (Rev. 3:11). There will be days of shame and bitterness of soul.

Chapter Two

In chapter 1 we saw how that a proud woman was humbled. In chapter 2 we see a humble woman exalted (I Sam. 2:4-8; Luke 1:48-52).

I. A NEW QUEEN IS SOUGHT (2:1-4).

1. The passing of almost four years (v. 1).

- (1) There are about four years between chapter 1 and 2. The feast was held in the third year (1:3). The queenly throne was not filled until the end of the seventh year (2:16).
- (2) Xerxes was absent from Persia during this time due to wars with Greece. The winter of the fourth year of his reign was spent in Sardis. In the summer of the year following, the battle of Thermopylae occurred. The year after, the battles of Plataea and Mycole were fought. After this he returned to Sardis and then finally to Shushan in defeat.
- (3) The vanquished king must have success at home or lose his throne. He must have a queen and an heir.

2. The king seeks a new wife (vv. 2-4).

- (1) He loved Vashti and would have taken her back had the law not prohibited it.
- (2) The servants of the king may have feared Vashti's restoration and her vengeance.
- (3) "House of women"—the harem where the monarchs often maintained, besides their legitimate wives, as many as 300 or 400 concubines.

II. THE FIRST MENTION OF MORDECAI AND ESTHER (2:5-7).

1. The family tree of Mordecai (vv. 5-6).

- (1) All the captives from the kingdom of Judah were called Jews.
- (2) Some say this is the man who came with Zerubbabel from Babylon to Jerusalem and returned to Persia again (Ezra 2:2; Neh. 7:7). Others say he was not descended from Kish, the father of Saul, but was a more obscure person.
- (3) Kish, the great-grandfather of Mordecai was taken from Judah. This would put Mordecai at about 30 to 40 years and Esther in her 20's. If otherwise, Esther would have been about 75 and not a young virgin.

2. Some facts about Esther, Mordecai's cousin (v. 7).

- (1) Hadassah, her Hebrew name, means "myrtle," to which the Israelites are compared (Zech. 1:8). Her Persian name was "Esther" which means, "star" or "the star of Venus."
- (2) Her father and mother were both dead. She was a poor orphan girl (Ps. 10:17; 27:10; 68:5). Orphans were to be treated kindly in Israel (Deut. 24:17; Ex. 22:22; Jas. 1: 27).
- (3) She possessed unusual beauty. Perhaps her wisdom and virtue were her greatest beauty.

III. ESTHER IS FAVORABLY RECEIVED BY THE KEEPER OF THE WOMEN (2:8-11).

1. She is brought to Hegai (v. 8). He was the chief eunuch, usually a repulsive old man, on whom the court ladies were very dependent. Josephus says 400 ladies were gathered at this time.
2. The chief eunuch is impressed by her beauty and behavior (v. 9).
3. She concealed her country (v. 10).
 - (1) Mordecai did not tell her to deny her country or to lie about her parentage. All truths are not to be spoken at all times; though an untruth is not to be spoken any time.
 - (2) The Persians did not despise the Jews but they did captives. Her new name made her pass as a native Persian.
4. Mordecai was probably a doorkeeper at the main entrance of the palace (v. 11, 21).
 - (1) He was greatly concerned with her welfare - -her health and prosperity.
 - (2) Did he fear for her life? Was he distressed that she might marry a Gentile? If married to the king, how would he treat her if he knew she was from Judah? How could she keep the Sabbath and the law and be the queen?

IV. SHE PLEASES THE KING (2:12-17).

1. The 12 months of purification for virgins (v. 13). For six months she was bathed in musk or myrrh and six months with sweet perfumes. This was to make her skin soft and to remove ill smell. Also to make sure the woman was not with child.
2. The state of things in that day (vv. 13-14). These women could not marry, nor go to the king until summoned. They remained shut up in the house.
3. Esther was obedient to Hegai (v. 15). She let Hegai dress her as he would. She wanted only her beauty, modesty, and virtue to recommend her. It was not by choice but by constraint she must appear before the king.
4. Esther appears before the king (v. 16).
 - (1) She did not return to the house of the king's concubines, but was retained in the palace to become the queen.
 - (2) This was near our months of December and January.
5. The king fell in love with her (v. 17).
 - (1) A husband should love his wife (Eph. 5:25), even above all other women.
 - (2) A man should marry a virgin (Lev. 21:13-14).
 - (3) How blessed we are to be loved by the King of kings. This love has opened a way for us into the kingdom of Christ.

V. ESTHER IS MADE QUEEN BY XERXES (2:18-20).

1. Esther's great feast (v. 18).
 - (1) She may have made a public appearance, which Vashti refused to do, in obedience to the king.
 - (2) "Released to the provinces" –either taxation or military service, or both. He may have released some prisoners, as did Pilate.
 - (3) "Gave gifts"–to the provinces or even to Esther. He may have given her a province.
 - (4) She is now in a position to protect her people.
2. Mordecai sat at the gate (v. 19).
 - (1) "Sat at the gate" may mean more than that he was a porter. He may have been high in office.
 - (2) This second collection of virgins was made solely for the gratification of the king (see v. 8).
3. Esther continues to conceal her identity (v. 20).

VI. A CONSPIRACY IS UNCOVERED BY MORDECAI (2:21-23).

1. The plot against the life of the king (v. 21).
 - (1) This conspiracy may have arose out of revenge for the divorce of Vashti, or because Esther was made queen against their wishes.
 - (2) Conspiracies were common inside the palace of Persia. Xerxes was ultimately murdered by Artabanus, the captain of the guard, and his chamberlain at night in his bed.
2. Mordecai learns of the plot to kill the king (v. 21).
 - (1) Did he overhear them talking in the Tarsian language and understand it, although they thought he could not? Did they consult him? Did someone tell him about it? Did the Spirit reveal it? We are not told.
 - (2) Esther informs the king of Mordecai's discovery.
 - (3) What a warning to all conspirators!
 - (4) It is our duty as citizens to report treason to the government to preserve public peace. There are some who are traitors to Christ the King of kings who claim to be His subjects.
3. The conspirators were condemned and executed (v. 23).
 - (1) Full proof and evidence were presented, and they were properly hanged for treason to the crown.
 - (2) The act of Mordecai was recorded in the king's journals.
 - (3) Mordecai was not presently rewarded, but a book of remembrance was written by the king. So it is that our rewards must wait the judgment seat of Christ (Mal. 3:16-18; Heb. 6:10).
4. Look at the providence of God in all these events.

The Book of Esther - Chapter Two

- (1) A most unlikely woman made queen. What if Vashti had come when called? Nothing would have happened!
- (2) What if Esther's parents had not died? She would have been home with them.
- (3) Esther was made queen to protect her people for the future attempt to destroy the Jews.
- (4) Mordecai's discovery increased his standing with the King, and furthered the national interest of the Jews.
- (5) The smallest things in life are the objects of Divine providence. Hairs are numbered (Matt. 10:30) and tears are kept in a bottle (Ps. 56:8), and other things (Ps. 139:1-4).

Chapter Three

I. HAMAN'S PROMOTION AND MORDECAI'S REFUSAL TO RECOGNIZE HIM (3:1-4).

1. Haman is advanced to prime minister—a position of vast importance (v. 1; II Kings 25:28).
 - (1) Haman was not a man of honor or justice, but a proud, ambitious, and passionate man. Kings can make bad choices, and often do.
 - (2) Here we see Satan working. His man knows how to exact homage, secure smiles and frowns, win people and terrify his enemies.
 - (3) “The Agagite”— a common name of the princes of Amalek (Ex. 17:16; Num. 24:7) and the enemies of Israel (Deut. 25:17-19; Num. 14:45). An Amalekite was spared by Saul, and he lost his kingdom (I Sam. 15:8-9). This Amalekite was later killed by Samuel (I Sam. 15:33).
 - (4) He may have been a genuine Persian according to some (9:7-9). More than likely he was an Amalekite and his family had long lived in Persia.
2. Mordecai refused to reverence Haman as the other people of the court did (v. 2).
 - (1) Mordecai took Deuteronomy 25:17 seriously (Ps. 15:4). He would not bow to a doomed and accursed race.
 - (2) This was not civil honor and respect, for the Jews did not refuse to do this (11 Sam. 14:4; 18:28; I Kings 1:16). This must have been something uncommon. It must have involved divine honors to him as a deity of some
3. His friends tried in vain to persuade him to show respect (vv. 3-4).
 - (1) They knew he was not ignorant of the king's commandment.
 - (2) This conduct could have serious consequences to him, and maybe even to Esther.
 - (3) As a Jew he could not worship man as God. Some Persian kings were called Lord and God and said to see all things.

II. HAMAN PLANS A HOLOCAUST (3:5-6).

1. Haman goes into a rage (v. 5).
2. Haman plots the destruction of the Jews (v. 6).
 - (1) The head must come off that will not bow to Haman. If he can't have Mordecai's honor, he will have his blood.
 - (2) Haman would sacrifice thousands of innocent lives to pacify his indignation. He assumed they all would refuse to bow to him (Ps. 83:4).
 - (3) The king's treasuries would be enriched with the spoils of the doomed people. Never mind the mother and her little helpless child who will perish, even in Jerusalem which is now a province.
 - (4) What courage was in Haman's plot? A poor, scattered people, no organization, no weapons of war, and almost no political ability!

- (5) But in Heaven: a Hater of wrong, a Helper of the helpless, a Divine Controller of providence was looking on.

III. THE DATE IS SET TO HAVE THEM ALL MASSACRED (3:7-15).

1. The first month of the sacred year of the Jews (v. 7; Ex. 12:2; 13:4). February or March.
 - (1) This is four years after the marriage of Esther (2:16).
 - (2) The lot was probably cast by a diviner. It was cast before Haman to see what the luckiest month would be to perform this deed. None could be found even though a lot was cast each day of the month and for each month of the year until the 12th month—January and February.
 - (3) God was overruling in this (Prov. 16:33).
 - (4) Lucky and unlucky days are a heathen superstition.
2. Haman accuses the Jews (v. 8).
 - (1) He gave them a bad name to justify his bad deed.
 - (2) Their diet and their holy days were different from other people.
 - (3) These Jews didn't observe the laws of the kingdom; therefore they were not fit to live in it.
3. Some 10,000 talents of silver were to be paid to the receivers of the king's treasury if this was done (v. 9). Haman probably planned to get this from the spoils of the Jews.
4. The king's agrees (vv. 10-13).
 - (1) He gives his ring as a token of friendship and to seal the letters (v. 10).
 - (2) Haman's money is returned to him (v. 11).
 - (3) Letters are written (vv. 12-13).
5. This order is sent to all the provinces (vv. 14-15).
 - (1) They sought to drown their consciences in drink.
 - (2) The people are disturbed (Eccl. 3:16).

Chapter Four

I. THE JEWS LAMENT THE BLOODY EDICT OF THE KING (4:1-4).

1. Mordecai cried bitterly (vv. 1-2).
 - (1) This was the custom used in mourning by both the Jews and the Persians (Job 2:8,12; Dan. 9:3).
 - (2) Access to the king's presence in a disfigured state was impossible (v. 2; Matt. 11:8). It was considered an evil omen.
 - (3) Would the refusal of Mordecai to bow to Haman be the means of his people's destruction? Does God reward obedience in this manner?
2. The Jews are distressed in every place (v. 3).
3. The Jews' danger was considered by Esther to be her danger (v. 4).
 - (1) Although she was a queen, she did not forget her relation to the Jews.
 - (2) Her relationship to Mordecai was probably known by her attendants, though still concealed from the king (7:4).

II. ESTHER ENQUIRES OF THE PROBLEM OF MORDECAI (4:5-7).

1. She wants to know why he wears sackcloth and mourns (v. 5). Communication with the women in the harem was difficult, and it could be done only through the eunuch who kept the harem.
2. Hatach and Mordecai conversed of the problem (vv. 6-7).

III. MORDECAI PLEADS WITH HER TO INTERCEDE WITH THE KING (4:8-9).

1. Mordecai sends her a copy of the bloody edict (v. 8).
2. Hatach relates the message to the queen (v. 9).

IV. ESTHER OBJECTS TO GOING INTO THE ROYAL PRESENCE UNBIDDEN (4:10-12).

1. She felt he had asked her to do the impossible (vv. 10-11).
 - (1) All the king's subjects knew this law. It was an inflexible custom of the court. All business had to be transacted through the ministers of the king.
 - (2) This law may have been for the king's protection. Or, it may have allowed him more freely to enjoy his concubines.
 - (3) This was not a good law, for it made the royal palace into a royal prison. It did not allow the subjects to apply for a redress of grievances. It was bad even for the queen!
 - (4) In the court of the King of kings we may come boldly anytime (Heb. 4:16).
 - (5) Esther feared that the royal affections had been alienated from her, as she has not seen the king for a month. Her faith and courage must be tested!

2. Mordecai is told (v. 12).

V. MORDECAI'S FINAL MESSAGE TO ESTHER (4:13-14).

1. No excuse will do for she too faces certain death (v. 13). Her being the queen and in the palace would be no protection.
2. She had come to the kingdom for such a time as this (v. 14).
 - (1) This is the language of strong faith when the danger was most threatening. Instruments may fail; God's covenant does not!
 - (2) God had made her queen that she should do this work. She must not neglect this opportunity of service, which Providence had permitted her to have.
 - (3) God has put us all in a place that we may serve Him. We are not where we are that we may be seen, talked of, admired, and envied. Woe to us if we fail, for Divine vengeance will overtake us for neglecting our duty.
 - (4) It is better to perish in a good cause than a bad one.

VI. ESTHER IS EQUAL TO HER OPPORTUNITY (4:15-17).

1. A time of fasting and prayer (vv. 15-16).
 - (1) There can be no doubt that prayer was joined with fasting.
 - (2) In her apartment of the palace she and her maids would fast. These maids were either Jewesses, or had been converted by Esther. What a queen!
 - (3) Those who cannot join the assembly of God's people may be present in spirit. Those who desire the prayers of others must pray themselves.
 - (4) I do not count my life dear to me. I will risk my life for the good of God's people, and trust Him in life or death. I leave myself in the hands of God. Better to do my duty and die for my people than to shrink from my duty and die with them (11 Kings 7:4).
 - (5) It is a bold step, but if nothing is ventured, nothing can be gained. The law was against her, but God controlled the king's heart (Prov. 21:1).
2. Mordecai obeys the queen (v. 17).

CONCLUSION.

1. What would the world be if all such as Hatach were taken out of it? Abraham had Eliezer, Sarah had Debo rah, Naaman's wife had a little maid, Moses had Aaron and Hur, Saul had an armor-bearer, etc....
2. Human life has its critical times, which try us and develop our character. There must be a laying of it all on the altar, losing all for Christ (Matt. 10:39).

Chapter Five

I. ESTHER VISITS THE KING AND GIVES A BANQUET (5:1-8).

1. Esther boldly goes before the king in peril of her life (v. 1).
 - (1) Some say this was on the third day of the Passover (4:16), but I doubt that we can be sure. It was near the time of the Jews' execution, of that we can be sure.
 - (2) This was after that Esther had fasted and prayed earnestly to God. She now goes before the king in her royalty.
 - (3) "Inner court"—the place over which the prohibition has been made, over which the death-sentence hangs (4:16).
 - (4) The king sat at the upper end of the hall on his throne, seeing all who came in to the court.
 - (5) Esther did not take two maids as some have supposed (4:16).
2. Esther was favorably received by the king (v. 2). The golden scepter of grace is in the hands of Jesus Christ who sits on a throne of grace. When we touch the scepter we submit to His lordship and show proper respect.
3. Xerxes encourages her to make a request (v. 3; Mark 6:23).
 - (1) This meant merely a reasonable request, and that he would be very liberal with her.
 - (2) He had divorced one wife for not coming when she was sent for. Now he has no desire to kill one who comes unresented for.
 - (3) God generally proves our fears are ill founded and gives us more than we expect. Esther expected to die (4:16). Consider Luke 18:6-8.
4. She seems afraid to make her real request (v. 4).
 - (1) She shows how she values his favor and company. She would please him by inviting his court favorite, Haman.
 - (2) She sought a fair and favorable opportunity of presenting her petition. Wisdom is profitable to direct us in how to deal with people.
5. Haman and the king come to the banquet (vv. 5-6).
6. Esther requested that they return to the banquet the next day (vv. 7-8).
 - (1) Did her heart fail her? Did she want more time for prayer and planning? Queen Esther, "O why not tonight?" Are not Haman and the king present? Did she want to heighten the importance of the communication?
 - (2) God caused her to delay for just and holy ends.

II. HAMAN IS VEXED AGAIN BY MORDECAI (5:9-14).

1. One man poisoned his joy and successes (v. 9)
 - (1) Haman is happy that the queen has honored him by a second invitation. He knows not that it is to accuse him.
 - (2) Thousands bow to Haman; one refuses. He considers this a serious breach of Persian etiquette and is angered (Job 31:31). Ahab wanted Naboth's vineyard.
2. Haman calls a meeting of his family and friends (vv. 10-13).
 - (1) The Targum says his wife was the daughter of Tatnai, the governor on the other side of the river (Ezra 5:3).
 - (2) Haman bragged about his riches and position, hoping to ease his conscience over Mordecai's refusal to bow to him.
 - (3) Haman is proud and feels he is second in power only to the king. He had been twice invited to a banquet with the king, by the queen personally, and not by a servant.
3. His family and friends plot the death of Mordecai (v. 14).
 - (1) They tell him to make a gallows to hang Mordecai upon. Make it 75 feet high so it may be seen from afar over the entire city. Note that his wife led in this whole affair.
 - (2) Hanging was not a Persian punishment. The intention was to crucify (2:23). It was a cross that they would make.
 - (3) They advised him to go early and get permission to hang Mordecai. If Haman could get all Jews killed surely he could get one killed.
 - (4) Haman retires confident that Mordecai shall die the next day.

III. PRACTICAL POINTS TO PONDER.

1. The best method of prevailing with men is first to prevail with God by earnest fasting and prayer.
2. We must trust providence and use good sense and manners.
3. Prosperity may stir up enmity and envy. The best way to avoid these sins is to have the love of God (I Cor. 13:5-7).
4. Hundreds of years later an Edomite consented to the death of another to be crucified. Herod did not stop the death of Christ. There was no Esther to plead for the life of Christ.

Chapter Six

I. THE KING'S SLEEPLESS NIGHT (6:1-3).

1. The king is denied sleep on the night after Esther's banquet (v. 1).
 - (1) Why could he not sleep? Recent sin? Great sorrow? Brain excitement? Sickness in the body? No!
 - (2) Even a banquet of wine could not make him sleep when Providence ordered that he stay awake.
 - (3) Sleep is the gift of God (Prov. 3:24; Eccl. 5:12).
 - (4) He who commanded 127 provinces could not command one hour of sleep. He asked for no music, dancers, or play actors.
 - (5) He called for the court journals to be read by a scribe. In Eastern countries, there were scribes whose duty was to keep a record of every occurrence worthy of notice. These were the court historians.
 - (6) If we can't sleep, then use the time wisely (Ps. 77:2-12).
2. The record is read of how Mordecai saved the king's life (v. 2).
 - (1) This had been recorded (2:21-23).
 - (2) Why did the book open at this place out of the hundreds of chapters to choose from? God's providence superintends the most minute concerns of men.
3. The king wants to know what reward had been given to Mordecai (v. 3).
 - (1) Gratitude is practiced by few men (Gen. 41:9), least of all by those who have most in their power. Persian monarchs as a rule were open handed.
 - (2) No reward had been given to this faithful foreigner who did what he did in simple honesty and truth.
 - (3) Great men take little notice of inferiors. The greatest services are often overlooked and go unrewarded among men.
 - (4) Good services may not bring preferment but protection. Those who serve God are never ill paid.

II. THE KING COMMANDS HAMAN TO HONOR MORDECAI (6:4-11).

1. Haman is in the outer court (v. 4).
 - (1) He is there to get a warrant for the execution of Mordecai very early in the morning. The gallows is ready.
 - (2) The king knows nothing of the quarrel between the two men.
2. Haman is invited into the king's bedchamber (v. 5). What if Haman had spoken first? Haman thinks all is well!
3. The king asked advice but gave no name (v. 6).
4. Haman, believing he is the man to be honored, prescribes the highest honor possible (vv. 7-9).

- (1) Purple was the royal apparel, and it was to be worn only by the king in Persia.
 - (2) No man as a rule was to ride on the king's horse. The crown may have been set on the head of the horse, which was the custom in that day.
 - (3) There was to be public proclamation (Gen. 41:43).
 - (4) Each act would have been a capital offense if done without permission. Such honor was rarely allowed in those days.
 - (5) It is foolish to think of ourselves as the only ones deserving, or more deserving than others.
5. The king's commandment is to be carried out by Haman (v. 10; Prov. 25:3).
 6. Haman obeys the king (v. 11).
 - (1) Haman must have been thunderstruck, but he obeys without delay.
 - (2) Haman wanted to hang Mordecai, not honor him; strip him of his clothes, not clothe him with royal apparel; dance on his grave, not help him on the king's horse; prepare a tree, not a triumph; make him cry for mercy, not to have to cry out in his defense and honor!

III. THE KING'S COMMANDMENT IS CARRIED OUT AND HAMAN GOES HOME LIKE A CON- DEMNED MAN (6:12-14).

1. Mordecai is at the post of duty; Haman is in mourning (v. 12).
 - (1) How Haman got the nerve to carry out his duty we may well wonder. He goes home ashamed to be seen.
 - (2) Mordecai is not elated with the honor he received. He returns to his duty without being filled with pride.
2. Haman tells his family and friends what has happened (v. 13).
 - (1) The wise men were astrologers and magicians (3:7). They say these events are a fatal omen of worse things to come and his wife agrees with them. She was like Job's wife.
 - (2) They should have told him to repent and seek forgiveness.
 - (3) The feeble Jews often prove to be formidable Jews.
3. Haman is called to the banquet (v. 14). Maybe he thought it would cheer his drooping spirit and save his sinking honor, but not so!

IV. PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

1. God promised a curse on the enemies of the Jews (Gen. 12:3; Ex. 23:22).
2. A good man can wait to receive honor. Mordecai waited six years. He expected nothing—complained about nothing—was faithful to his duty, and feared God. God's time is always the best time!
3. Don't expect Haman at your door the next day after you do your duty. Righteousness has its own reward, and we are never as righteous as God would have us until we feel this deeply and act accordingly.

The Book of Esther - Chapter Six

4. How great it will be with those the King of kings delights to honor—glory, honor, and immortality.
5. Evil brings its own penalty; passion bears its own punishment.
6. The Providence of God is always at work.

Chapter Seven

I. ESTHER'S SECOND BANQUET (7:1-4).

1. The king and Haman meet at Esther's table (v. 1; 5:8).
2. The king repeats his promise (v. 2). This was the third time he had put the question to the queen (5:3,6).
3. Esther's petition for her life and the life of her people (vv. 3-4).
 - (1) She asks not for wealth or honor, nor preferment of some of her friends or family to a high position in the kingdom.
 - (2) She asked for her own life and the life of her people. A nation dear to her heart and soul.
 - (3) She would not have asked if her people had been sold into slavery. They are about to lose both their liberty and life (3:13). If the Jews die they cannot serve the king nor pay taxes.

II. ESTHER TELLS THE KING OF HAMAN'S PLOT TO DESTROY HER AND HER PEOPLE (7:5-6).

1. The king stands amazed (v. 5).
 - (1) What? Contrive the murder of the queen and her people? Who would be so bold to do such a thing?
 - (2) The Devil had filled Haman's heart to do this (Acts 5:3).
2. Esther charges Haman to his face (v. 6).
 - (1) Haman is the enemy of her people and the king's adversary by persuading him to make such a decree.
 - (2) She charges Haman with wickedness. This was not done when Haman was absent. This was an honest, straight forward, above-board statement.
 - (3) Strong words sometime need to be spoken. Such cruel, malignant, inhuman men like Haman need to be publicly denounced. We must not put a cover over wrong. Such is spurious charity (I Cor. 13:6).
 - (4) What courage! How many women would have fainted through fear! Been carried by excitement into premature disclosure of the secret! Changed her plans! Esther was calm and resolved to do right.
 - (5) Haman feared for his life. The queen was his prosecutor, the king his judge, and his own conscience a witness against him. His mind was troubled, his countenance fell, his looks paled, his limbs trembled, and his lips were silent and quivering!

III. THE KING ORDERS THE HANGING OF HAMAN (7:7-10).

1. The king retires in anger and Haman begs for his life (v. 7).
 - (1) The king feels like a fool for having condemned a nation and his queen to death. His self-will has led him to self-reproach.
 - (2) He humbly entreats for his life. Cruel men are cowards (Luke 1:48,51; Rev. 3:9). The upright shall have dominion in the morning.

The Book of Esther- Chapter Seven

2. The king returns and his anger is again kindled (v. 8).
 - (1) Like the Greeks, Romans, and Jews, the Persians reclined on couches at their meals. Haman had thrown himself upon the couch at Esther's feet (11 Kings 4:27).
 - (2) The king said, "Will he rape the queen and then murder her with me in the house? If he has no regard for her life, he surely has none for her chastity!"
 - (3) The courtiers cover Haman's face as a condemned criminal. He can see the king's face no more!
3. The king is told of Haman's gallows (v. 9).
 - (1) Harbonah was one of the seven chamberlains (1:10).
 - (2) He may have been the one who had just brought Haman to the banquet (6:14).
4. Haman is hanged on his own gallows (v. 10).
 - (1) Pride brought Haman low. God resists the proud, and those whom God resists find Him irresistible.
 - (2) Evil returns upon the one who plots it against another (Ps. 7:15-16; 9:15-16; 28:3-5; Prov. 11:8). Haman was justly hanged on the very gallows he had unjustly prepared for Mordecai.
 - (3) The king was comforted and so was God (Ezek. 5:13).
 - (4) He who died in disgrace and shame might have lived differently! He could have been a blessing, not a burden.
 - (5) Here we see the futility of race hatred.
 - (6) Evil men plotted the death of Christ and crucified Him. But he made the cross a throne of glory and a chariot of triumph.

Chapter Eight

I. HAMAN'S ESTATE IS GIVEN TO ESTHER AND MORDECAI (8:1-2).

1. Haman's estate was forfeited to the crown (v. 1).
 - (1) Haman's houses, lands, and money will now be put to good use (Prov. 13:22; Job 27:17-18).
 - (2) Mordecai came because he was sent for. The king had been told of his kindness to an orphan girl.
 - (3) Both the king and the queen owed their lives to Mordecai.
2. Mordecai is advanced by the king (v. 2).
 - (1) He is owned as the queen's cousin. Who but humble Mordecai would have remained so silent about this for four years?
 - (2) The king's signatory ring with which he signed laws, edicts, and letters was given to Mordecai. He became the keeper of the king's seals.
 - (3) Esther makes him the steward of Haman's estate (Ps. 39:6; Eccl. 2:19). One day the saints will possess the kingdom (Dan. 7:27).

II. ESTHER INTERCEDES FOR THE REVERSING OF THE EDICT AGAINST THE JEWS (8:3-6).

1. She pleads with the king to put away Haman's bloody edict (v. 3).
 - (1) Haman is dead but the edict is still in force. The evil that men do live after them.
 - (2) Let us stoop and offer our prayers before the great King in tears for deliverance for our lost relatives (Rom. 10:1).
2. The golden scepter is held out (v. 4). This showed the king's approval of her coming uninvited into his presence.
3. She presents her request in great submission (vv. 5-6).
 - (1) Note her good manners and humility! She would abide by His will. Let us pray to the great King thusly (I John 5:14-15).
 - (2) We read of no tears when she begged for her own life!

III. ANOTHER EDICT IS SENT FORTH (8:7-14).

1. Her petition is granted (vv. 7-8).
 - (1) No law after it was passed, could be repealed or recalled. Reversal of the decree was impossible. There is no human possessed of infallibility. Men want to be as gods!
 - (2) The right to enact implies the right to repeal. It is God's prerogative not to repent and to say what can never be changed.
2. The second decree permitted the Jews to defend themselves (vv. 9-14).

The Book of Esther- Chapter Eight

- (1) The secretaries of state drew up a second edict (v. 9). This was two months and ten days after Haman's edict, and nine months before the time of its execution (3:12).
- (2) The letters were given authority and sent swiftly (v. 10). Dromedaries were either swift camels or swift mares (Jer. 2:23). They had camels that could run 100 miles a day.
- (3) The Jews could fight for their lives (v. 11). This was the same power that had been given to their enemies (3:13).
- (4) The day appointed in the former letters for the destruction of the Jews (v. 12; 3:13).
- (5) A copy of the letters sent to the governors (v. 13).
- (6) The Jews must have time to prepare for their defense (v. 14; 3:15).

IV. THE GREAT JOY OF THE JEWS (8:15-17).

1. Mordecai is dressed in royal apparel (v. 15).
 - (1) A few days ago he had been in sackcloth. The crown mentioned could have been a crown carried in the hands, or it may have been a golden band or coronet (6:8; Dan. 5:29). Only the king could wear a crown on his head.
 - (2) It is a time of rejoicing when the righteous are in power (Prov. 29:2; 11:10; Ps. 30:5, 11-12).
2. A feast and a great day (v. 17).
 - (1) They had sown in tears; now they reap in joy (Ps. 126:1-2).
 - (2) Instead of them being exterminated they are increased. Many embraced the religion of the Jews and became proselytes of righteousness.

CONCLUSION

1. We have the right to bear arms and to protect ourselves
2. This is a foreview of the endtime scene. Antichrist will seek to destroy the Jews (Rev. 12:1-6, 13-17). The plot will not be totally successful. Israel will be delivered by Christ and greatly increased (Deut. 33:29; Zech. 8:18-23).
3. It is folly to think of contending with Israel's God. It is wisdom to submit to Him.

Chapter Nine

I. THE DAY APPOINTED FOR THE SLAUGHTER COMES (9:1-16).

1. The fatal day of the decisive battle had arrived (v. 1).
 - (1) Two royal edicts are in force. One bearing the date of the 13th day of the first month (3:12), which said that all Jews should be killed. Another bearing the date of the 23rd of the third month (8:9), allowing the Jews to defend themselves.
 - (2) It would appear that none of the Jews fled the country.
2. The Jews form a confederacy (v. 2). Haman had been hung—Mordecai advanced—the queen is a Jew (Ps. 132:13; Josh. 2:9; 5:1).
3. The rulers of the provinces favored the Jews (v. 3). These were probably Persians who formed the standing army, which kept the empire in subjection.
4. Mordecai was the chief minister of state (v. 4). Great men can do great good!
5. The Jews killed a great number (vv. 5-10).
 - (1) Some 500 men were killed in Shushan (v. 6), and so were the ten sons of Haman.
 - (2) Only men were killed (v. 6), although the decree allowed for the slaughter of women and children (8:11).
 - (3) The king's commission had allowed the Jews to take spoil (8:11), but they took none (vv. 10,15-16). Haman wanted to enrich himself (3:13).
6. The king is informed of the number slaughtered and tells the queen (vv. 11-12).
7. The queen asked that the decree might be extended another day (v. 13).
 - (1) The Jews would be allowed another day of defense since the assault had not ceased in the city.
 - (2) Haman's ten sons were hanged to scare the anti-Jewish faction.
8. Haman's sons are hanged (v. 14).
9. The Jews killed 300 more in Shushan (v. 15). This was a just and necessary defense of their lives and families. If these were Amalekites as the Jews say, then Amalek was utterly put out (Ex. 17:14).
10. Throughout the provinces 75,000 were slain (v. 16). All the provinces contained about 100 million people. The Jews probably numbered about 3 million, and 3 million people could send out 500,000 men easily. No doubt many Jews died in the fighting, but the number is not known.

II. THE JEWS REJOICE IN THEIR DELIVERANCE (9:17-19).

1. The Jews in the provinces rested on the 14th day (vv. 17,19).
2. The Jews in Shushan rested on the 15th day (v. 18). This was due to the extra day of slaughter in Shushan.

III. THE FEAST OF PURIM IS INSTITUTED (9:20-32).

1. The history of these events were written and copies dispersed among the Jews (vv. 20-22).
 - (1) Unlike Nehemiah, Mordecai does not mention the name of God. Mordecai wrote in Shushan where policy reigned more than piety.
 - (2) This day would be observed by future generations (v. 22). It was to be on the 14th and 15th days of the 12th month (v. 21). They were to keep the days they rested, not the day they fought.
2. It was called the feast of Purim (vv. 23-28).
 - (1) "Pur" is the Persian word that signifies "a lot." Haman had by lot determined the time of the Jews' destruction (v. 24; 3:7).
 - (2) It is to remind them how the God of Israel took the prognosticators in their own craft (Isa. 47:13; 44:25-26).
 - (3) Even proselytes would keep this day (v. 27).
3. It was not a divine but a human appointment (vv. 29-32).
 - (1) In our time, the modern Jews read over the Book of Esther in their synagogues. The names of the sons of Haman must be pronounced in one breath. When Haman's name is pronounced they make a terrible noise.
 - (2) There was originally a three-day fast before this in imitation of Esther's. Some now have reduced it to one day.

Chapter Ten

I. THE CONCLUSION (10:1-3).

1. The powerful king laid additional taxes upon his subjects (v. 1).
 - (1) He squeezed and oppressed his people by arbitrary power. “The isles of the sea” are probably Cyprus, Aradus, the island of Tyre, and Platea. This was not a local tax.
 - (2) This may be the renewal of the taxes removed in 2:18. Or, it may have been done after his war with Greece.
2. The greatness of Mordecai (vv. 2-3).
 - (1) The other acts of Xerxes are not recorded in the Scripture. The Persian Chronicles have long since been lost and buried in oblivion. The Sacred Book of Esther still lives in honor.
 - (2) Nations are mentioned in connection with Israel (Deut. 32:8).
 - (3) Mordecai was good and great. He was great with the king and the subjects of the kingdom. His faith was openly avowed. His influence was used for the good of the Jews and for advancing the glory of God. “Mordecai the Jew.”
 - (4) He did not seek his own wealth. He raised no estate for himself and his family. He used his power to promote the public good. So should we.
 - (5) He spoke peace—good words and good deeds. He gained the good word of all his brethren.
 - (6) History says that Mordecai was buried in the city of Shushan. On the day of Purim, the Jews came from all over the empire to sing and rejoice over the miracle wrought in his day. Esther’s grave was one half mile from Tzephath. The Jews did the same at her grave, also reading the Book of Esther that bears her name.

II. A BRIEF CHARACTER STUDY OF THE PERSONS IN THE BOOK.

1. Ahasuerus—Xerxes: The Persian monarch who invaded Greece and suffered defeat. He built a bridge over the Hellespont, which was destroyed by the elements. He liked wine, wealth, and women. He could rejoice after signing the death warrant of three million Jews. He was a slave in a monarch’s dress!
2. Haman: A Jew hater who was full of pride and power. He died on his own gallows as a monument to all persecutors of the Jews.
3. Haman’s wife: She saw the death of her husband and her ten sons. Her fair-weather friends, who once had esteemed it their pride to be among her guests, probably neglected her. It is said that she took to begging!
4. Mordecai: A Jew of transcendent political ability. He was a humble man who did not seek great things for himself. His greatness was won by his statesmanship. He sought the wealth of his people and was a peace maker. God send us more!
5. Esther: A Jewish orphan girl raised by Mordecai. She became queen. She was very beautiful in body and more beautiful in deeds. She is remembered by the feast of Purim. She was pure, brave, and noble. Many daughters have done virtuously, but she excelled them all. She was a blessing to her people to the end of her life.

III. PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

1. See the providence of God in this book. It overthrew Haman and lifted up Mordecai and Esther. God is still at work in providence. Let us never lose sight of the presence of a personal God. "Jehovah is King." He protects those who trust Him and punishes the wicked (Ps. 9:1-10).
2. Earthly kingdoms fail, but the kingdom of God stands fast forever (Dan. 2:21,44).
3. The proud and wicked are humiliated (Job 9:13; Prov. 11:5; Jas. 4:6).
4. Worthy men will be discovered and preferred at last (Gen. 39:5). Consider Daniel, Moses, David, etc...