



# First Baptist Church Selmer

FIRM FOUNDATION • ESTHER • ESTHER 7:1-10; 8:1-17 • 11/19/2023

## MAIN POINT

We can trust and obey God in complete confidence that He is sovereignly working all things together for our good and His glory.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Do you tend to ask and expect God to do big things, little things, or not much of anything at all? Why?**

**Has God ever exceeded your greatest expectations in answering prayer? What happened?**

**When has God not come through in the way you had hoped? Does that mean He failed to work things together for your good in that instance? Explain.**

The Book of Esther tells the story of God's sovereign control and protection of His people, the Jews. Esther was brought to the king's court *"for such a time as this"* (4:14). The purpose of all that had taken place to this point was so that the Jews would not be destroyed by Haman's evil plot. Because of the faithfulness of Esther and Mordecai, the Jewish people were protected, and God received the glory for everything He had done.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**Briefly summarize the events of Esther 1-6 to put today's study in context.**

Esther 1–6 describes the rise of Esther to the place of queen alongside the evil plot of Haman to gain his own power and prestige. Although the king had elevated him to a position above “*all the other officials*” (3:2), Haman had felt snubbed by Mordecai, another court official. Mordecai was Jewish, whereas Haman was an Agagite. Jews and Agagites had been mortal enemies for nearly a thousand years. Haman then attempted not only to destroy Mordecai but all other Jews as well. He deceitfully manipulated King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) into issuing an edict authorizing the systematic killing of all Jews in the Persian Empire. Unknown to Haman, the queen also was Jewish and the adopted daughter of Mordecai. In Chapter 6, Haman’s plans began to unravel as the king remembered Mordecai had previously uncovered a conspiracy to assassinate him. The king honored Mordecai, and in so doing began Haman’s downfall. As chapter 7 begins, we find King Xerxes and Haman at the banquet Esther requested in order to expose Haman’s evil (5:8).

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ESTHER 7:1-10.

*1 So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther. 2 And on the second day, as they were drinking wine after the feast, the king again said to Esther, “What is your wish, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled.” 3 Then Queen Esther answered, “If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be granted me for my wish, and my people for my request. 4 For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have been silent, for our affliction is not to be compared with the loss to the king.” 5 Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, “Who is he, and where is he, who has dared to do this?” 6 And Esther said, “A foe and enemy! This wicked Haman!” Then Haman was terrified before the king and the queen.*

*7 And the king arose in his wrath from the wine-drinking and went into the palace garden, but Haman stayed to beg for his life from Queen Esther, for he saw that harm was determined against him by the king. 8 And the king returned from the palace garden to the place where they were drinking wine, as Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was. And the king said, “Will he even assault the queen in my presence, in my own house?” As the word left the mouth of the king, they covered Haman's face. 9 Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, “Moreover, the gallows that Haman has prepared for Mordecai, whose word saved the king, is standing at Haman's house, fifty cubits high.” And the king said, “Hang him on that.” 10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the wrath of the king abated. (ESV)*

**What does verse 4 indicate to you about the risk Esther took in bringing this matter to the king?**

**When have you confidently obeyed God, not knowing how it would turn out? Why did you do it?**

**Have you ever disobeyed God because you were fearful? What happened?**

There are many times in our lives when it seems that evil prevails over good. However, from the standpoint of eternity and God's sovereignty, good will always prevail. Faithfulness is not only seen but rewarded by God, despite the earthly hardships we may face.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ESTHER 8:1-17.

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

*3 Then Esther spoke again to the king. She fell at his feet and wept and pleaded with him to avert the evil plan of Haman the Agagite and the plot that he had devised against the Jews. 4 When the king held out the golden scepter to Esther, Esther rose and stood before the king. 5 And she said, "If it please the king, and if I have found favor in his sight, and if the thing seems right before the king, and I am pleasing in his eyes, let an order be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, which he wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the provinces of the king. 6 For how can I bear to see the calamity that is coming to my people? Or how can I bear to see the destruction of my kindred?" 7 Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows, because he intended to lay hands on the Jews. 8 But you may write as you please with regard to the Jews, in the name of the king, and seal it with the king's ring, for an edict written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's ring cannot be revoked."*

*9 The king's scribes were summoned at that time, in the third month, which is the month of Sivan, on the twenty-third day. And an edict was written, according to all that Mordecai commanded concerning the Jews, to the satraps and the governors and the officials of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, 127 provinces, to each province in its own script and to each people in its own*

*language, and also to the Jews in their script and their language. 10 And he wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed it with the king's signet ring. Then he sent the letters by mounted couriers riding on swift horses that were used in the king's service, bred from the royal stud, 11 saying that the king allowed the Jews who were in every city to gather and defend their lives, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate any armed force of any people or province that might attack them, children and women included, and to plunder their goods, 12 on one day throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar. 13 A copy of what was written was to be issued as a decree in every province, being publicly displayed to all peoples, and the Jews were to be ready on that day to take vengeance on their enemies. 14 So the couriers, mounted on their swift horses that were used in the king's service, rode out hurriedly, urged by the king's command. And the decree was issued in Susa the citadel.*

*15 Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal robes of blue and white, with a great golden crown and a robe of fine linen and purple, and the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced. 16 The Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor. 17 And in every province and in every city, wherever the king's command and his edict reached, there was gladness and joy among the Jews, a feast and a holiday. And many from the peoples of the country declared themselves Jews, for fear of the Jews had fallen on them. (ESV)*

**From verses 1-7, what happened that you think exceeded every hope and expectation Esther had?**

**What hope and expectation still had not been met?**

When Esther bravely confronted Xerxes and exposed Haman's sinister plot, Xerxes immediately had Haman executed. He then gave her Haman's estate and presented Mordecai with Haman's signet ring. However, the edict remained in effect because, under Persian law, Xerxes could not revoke it.

Trusting God with our whole hearts requires more than one faithful act of obedience. Esther had to go the extra mile; in effect, she risked her life a second time by asking the king again to revoke the edict against the Jews.

**Have you ever felt like you had to go above and beyond in order to obey God or remain faithful to Him?**

**What was the result of the king's second edict?**

Long before Esther was queen, God, in His sovereignty, began to move the pieces into place. God had a plan to use Esther to save the Jews from annihilation by the sinister plots of Haman. Even when things seemed impossible, God made them possible. The Jews received a newfound hope that God would protect them and care for them even during the most difficult of times.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**How have God's mighty acts in your past influenced your level of trust toward Him today?**

**In what ways do you need God to act on your behalf today?**

**On a scale of 1 to 10, how strongly do you believe that God is working all things together for your good?**

**How does your belief in the character of God impact your obedience to Him?**

## PRAYER

Close in prayer by thanking God for His protection and care of His people throughout history. Ask Him to help you trust in His ultimate protection over your lives and obey Him wholeheartedly, regardless of the circumstances you face.

## COMMENTARY

| ESTHER 7:1-10

7:1-10 Up to this point two intertwined conflicts have remained unresolved: the primary conflict, the threat of extinction of the Jews because of Haman's royal edict; and the secondary conflict, the personal struggle between Mordecai and Haman. The national threat is not resolved until chapter 9. This short chapter concludes the confrontation between Haman and Mordecai with poetic justice.

7:2 King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) did not literally expect Esther to ask for half the kingdom, but her delayed answer must have convinced him that she had a well-thought-out, significant request.

7:3-4 Esther's request was direct and to the point: spare her life and spare her people. Esther continued with a carefully nuanced assertion: For my people and I have been sold out. She could hardly charge her husband directly ("You sold me out"), but she couched it in an indefinite passive voice ("have been sold out"; Hb *nimkarnu*). Esther had not told the king she was Jewish, and she did not identify "her people." But as she continued her plea, the king was given a clue: they had been sold out to destruction, death, and extermination, a direct quote from the edict crafted by Haman and authorized by her husband (3:13).

7:5-6 Both Ahasuerus's questions and Esther's reply reflect the intensity of their emotions. The term terrified (Hb *niv'at*) is the same word used to describe King David's terror when he was confronted by the angel of the Lord with a sword in his hand at Araunah's threshing floor (1Ch 21:30), and to portray Daniel's intense fear when the angel Gabriel approached him (Dan 8:17).

7:7 For the first time in the book of Esther the king had to make crucial decisions without his counselors. Suddenly he was forced to choose between his prime minister and his wife. But if he deposed Haman for threatening his wife and her people, would not Haman counter by revealing that the king himself had approved of the plan? While the king struggled with his decisions in the garden, Haman stayed back with Esther to beg (Hb *lebaqqesh*) for his life. Before, it was Esther (v. 3) who had sought ("desire," Hb *baqqashah*) to be spared, but now the tables were turned.

7:8 If the king was still undecided about Haman's fate as he returned from the garden, his decision was made certain as he caught Haman fawning over the queen. Court documents from the Assyrian period state that a man must not come closer than seven steps to one of the women in the palace (D. J. Clines).

7:10 The irony demonstrated in this verse is stated proverbially in Pr 26:27 and Mt 26:52.

## | ESTHER 8:1-17

8:1-2 All in the same day Haman was forced to honor Mordecai (6:4-11), went to the second banquet and was charged with trying to kill the queen and her people (7:1-8), and

was hanged. The theme of reversal continues into chapter 8, as Esther, once threatened by Haman, was awarded his estate, which elevated her uncle Mordecai.

8:3-4 Many commentators have maintained that verse 3 introduces a new scene into the story, but the phrase then Esther addressed the king again need not be understood this way. While Esther was certainly pleased with the king's honoring of Mordecai, the larger issue of the death sentence upon her people had not been addressed. Rather than being annoyed at Esther's breach of royal protocol by falling at his feet, the king extended the gold scepter toward Esther, allowing her to state her request.

8:5-6 Esther prefaced her request with an extended version of the normal deferential statement one would make to a king. The first two phrases were standard (1:19; 5:4; 7:3), but she continued in order to make the king's decision seem like a referendum on his love for her. Esther did not point out the injustice of the decree (which the king had approved), but focused on how it would impact her.

8:7-8 The king's response is ambiguous in the Hebrew Bible. While some commentators think he was positive toward her request, others suggest a tone of exasperation or even irritation. Possibly the Greek (LXX) translation suggests this, as the king reminded her about all he had done for her and added, "What do you yet seek?" (Gk ti eti epizeyteis). Nevertheless, the king gave Esther and Mordecai the opportunity to write a new decree that would counter but not rescind his original order.

8:9 Since the Jewish people were speaking Aramaic, as were many in the Persian Empire, the counter-edict that was written in their own script must have been written in Hebrew.

8:10 The edicts were sealed with the royal signet ring, once worn by Haman in order to destroy the Jews, but now worn by Mordecai to save the Jews.

8:11-12 Just as Haman's edict decreed the destruction of the Jews on the thirteenth of Adar (3:12), the Jews now had the legal right to defend themselves that same day.

8:15-17 Mordecai had once torn his clothes and gone around in "sackcloth and ashes" (4:1); now he wore the royal purple and white. Once the city of Susa was "in confusion" (3:15); now the people shouted and rejoiced. The Jews had once "fasted, wept, and lamented, and... lay on sackcloth and ashes" (4:3); now they celebrated with gladness, joy, and honor. While the Jews had once been in fear of the ethnic groups among whom they lived, now some of the ethnic groups were in fear of the Jews. The phrase professed themselves to be Jews is a single word in Hebrew (Hb mityahadim). Found only here in the

OT, it is a reflexive verb derived from the proper noun “Jew” (Hb yehudi). Some understand the verb to mean “to become a Jew”—to convert to Judaism; this interpretation is supported by the Greek text (LXX). However, it is more likely that the term means that the people identified themselves with the Jewish people; this meaning may be supported by the Latin Vulgate.