

*Chosen - a Study of Esther*  
*Part 1 - Background & Intro*

**Opening Questions:**

- 1) What books of the Bible are named for or about women? Why these?
- 2) When do you engage in a feast or banquet?
- 3) What is a “trophy wife”?

**I) The ousting of Vashti (Chapter 1)**

**A) A brief history of the Persian Empire**

- 1) 539 BC - Cyrus (the great) conquers the Babylonian Empire
- 2) 538 BC - Cyrus allows for the return of the Jewish exiles to Jerusalem
- 3) 494 - the Greeks in Ionia revolt against Darius I and burn the temple
- 4) 490 - The battle of Marathon (Darius defeated)
- 5) 485 - Ahasuerus (Xerxes in Greek) becomes King of kings in Persia
- 6) 481 - launches attacks on Greece / battle of Thermopylae (the 300)
- 7) 481 - Athens plundered and burned
- 8) 480 - Naval battle at the straits of Salamis (Greeks won)
- 9) 479 - Battle of Plataea (Persians withdraw - heavy losses both sides)
- 10) 478-465 Xerxes retires to Susa “harem intrigues” follow
- 11) 464 - Artaxerxes becomes king of Persia (Nehemiah his cup bearer)
- 12) Esther takes place just before the Greek invasion (482-481)
- 13) 312 - Alexander of Macedon destroys Darius III > Greeks take over

**B) In the days of Ahasuerus (Esther 1:1-2)**

- 1) How vast was the Persian Empire during his reign?
- 2) How can one person rule such a vast territory?
- 3) Why did some Jews decide to stay behind in Persia after Cyrus’ edict 50 years earlier?
- 4) What do we know (archeology) about the city of Susa?
- 5) Ahasuerus inherited his empire. According to **Ephesians 1:11-14** what will we inherit as God’s people?
- 6) What is a *chiasm*? How is this seen through our faith story?
- 7) Is Esther history, theology, parable, fiction, allegory?

**C) The first feast (Esther 1:3-4)**

- 1) How many days was the king’s feast?
- 2) Why did it take so long?
- 3) What was the purpose of such a feast?

**D) The second feast (Esther 1:5-8)**

- 1) What is “livery”?
- 2) How long was the peoples’ feast?
- 3) How else did this feast differ from the first?
- 4) Where did this feast take place? Why here?
- 5) What was the compulsion for drinking?
- 6) Look at Isaiah 39:1-7
  - How was Hezekiah much like Ahasuerus?
  - How did Hezekiah’s plan backfire?
  - What happens when a king (or nation) trusts in its wealth?
- 7) How do you practice godly contentment each day?

**E) Vashti’s “Girls night out” (Esther 1:9-12)**

- 1) Vashti is Aramaic for “my best” / the best of me
- 2) Why did Vashti hold her own feast?
- 3) How important is physical beauty to a princess / queen?
- 4) Why does Ahasuerus want Vashti to come before him?
- 5) Some scholars have claimed “with her royal crown” means wearing ONLY her royal crown. Was this uncommon in the ancient world?
- 6) Why did the king (besides being drunk), become angry at her refusal?
- 7) What does **Proverbs 16:32** say regarding anger?

**F) Leaders without backbones (Esther 1:13-22)**

- 1) What was the main problem with Vashti’s refusal?
- 2) What did the king’s advisors fear?
- 3) Why make her dismissal a matter of royal law?
- 4) How did Christ treat the Law in **Matthew 5:17-20**?
- 5) Can women be coerced into respecting their husbands by use of law?
- 6) What is the king’s decree in verse 22?
- 7) What does **Romans 13:1-2** say about human laws?

Conclusion: What three things from this first chapter jump out at you?

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_

*In the eye of the beholder*  
Esther - Chapter 2

**Opening discussion:**

- 1) What is the difference between beauty and attractiveness?
- 2) What “heroes” appear in your family tree? Is this important?
- 3) Does the saying, “When I do good, no one remembers. When I do bad, no one forgets” apply to you? How so?

**II) Long live Queen Esther! Vivat! Vivat! Vivat!**

**A) Understanding the times**

- 1) 4 years have past since Vashti was deposed (chapter 1)
- 2) Xerxes has gone to Greece and back
- 3) Battle of Thermopylae (the hot gates) - last stand of the 300
- 4) Naval battle at the straits of Salamis
- 5) Athens burned to the ground
- 6) Xerxes cannot support his large army afield and withdraws
- 7) No major battles between Greece and Persia until Alexander
- 8) Our attention now turns to Susa and “palace intrigues”
- 9) Xerxes needs a new queen as he (at this time) has no heir

**B) The Miss Persia contest (2:1-4)**

- 1) When / how did the Miss America competition begin?
- 2) How large is the beauty industry in the US?  
cosmetics + botox + BBL + other surgeries = \$\_\_\_ TRILLION / year
- 3) What is the “end game” of all these products / procedures?
- 4) What is the “problem” with outward beauty?
- 5) What does God say about beauty in the following passages:  
**I Samuel 16:7**  
**Proverbs 11:22**  
**Proverbs 31:30**
- 6) Why was the king searching for only virgins? He had just made about 100,000 widows with his Greek war; certainly there must have been at least a few “age appropriate” candidates?
- 7) Why are youth, fertility, and physical beauty (those 3 tend to go together) still the primary attractive attributes today?
- 8) What is / are the primary attractive attributes for men?
- 9) What does this beauty pageant say about Xerxes?

**C) Uncle Mordecai (2:5-7)**

- 1) What do we learn of him from his genealogy?
- 2) “The daughter of his uncle” makes Mordecai Esther’s \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3) This is the first time the word “Jew” appears in the Bible - this is a Persian or Aramaic term which is a contraction of Judahite.
- 4) What does the name Hadassah mean?
- 5) What does the Persian name Ishtar (Esther) mean?
- 6) What thoughts go through your head when you hear “adopted”?  
See **Romans 8:14-17**  
Also **Galatians 3:25-29**
- 7) How is this relationship a sign of God’s providence?

**D) Esther’s spa year (2:8-11)**

- 1) Who was Hegai? Why was he in charge?
- 2) What is a “Drama queen” or “Diva”? Was Esther one?
- 3) What was Mordecai’s involvement during this year?

**E) Hail Queen Esther! - Vivat! Vivat! Vivat! (2:12-20)**

- 1) What happened to those the king did not choose?
- 2) What was Esther’s “ace up her sleeve”?
- 3) Where do you turn for advice, especially in unfamiliar areas of life?
- 4) What is God’s inner beauty treatment according to **I Timothy 2:9-10**?
- 5) What do we learn of the nuptials making Esther queen?
- 6) What else did the king do to honor his new queen?
- 7) What was the role of the queen in the Persian Empire?

**F) A foul plot’s afoot (2:21-23)**

- 1) Explain the importance of the city gate  
**Genesis 19:1**  
**Deuteronomy 21:18-19**  
**Ruth 4:1-12**  
**I Samuel 4:16-18**
- 2) What does it say of Mordecai that he had *a seat* at the gate?
- 3) What were Bigthan and Teresh angry about?

- 4) Why did Mordecai speak to Esther and not go through official channels?
- 5) Have you ever done something for which someone else got the credit?
- 6) What was done with the two traitors?
  - historical note: Ahasuerus / Xerxes would be assassinated by a court official about 12 years later. Few kings died of natural causes.
- 7) What does **Galatians 6:9** tell us about good deeds being noticed?

# Genocide

## Esther - Chapter 3

### Introductory Questions:

- 1) Why would one ethnic group want to completely wipe out another?
- 2) How does God use even our own wrong decisions for His glory?
- 3) When is it most difficult to take a stand for what you know is right?

#### A) Meet our antagonist (3:1)

- 1) What is an Agagite?  
See I Samuel 15:1-22, 32-33
- 2) What else did the sons of Amalek (Amalekites) do?  
See Exodus 17:8-16
- 3) How long can a feud between people groups last?
- 4) What was Haman's position within the governance structure?
- 5) What does this tell us about the King?

#### B) Better to die on your feet than live on your knees (3:2-6)

- 1) Why did the king have to order people to bow to Haman?
- 2) How did Mordecai show his protest of Haman (person, not office)?
- 3) How do we see a similar situation in Acts 5:27-32
- 4) What is the reaction of the crowd at the city gate?
- 5) What was the root cause of Haman's fury?
- 6) What is the greatest fear of one who comes to power without ability?
- 7) Why would Haman seek to destroy *all* Jews in the Persian realm?

#### C) Kill 'em all, let God sort 'em out. (3:7-9)

- 1) What does the term "diaspora" mean?
- 2) How much will cost to eradicate the Jews from all of Persia?
- 3) Why did Haman cast the *purim* (lots)?
- 4) What "fortune tellers" do people use today?
- 5) How did Haman carefully word his request to Xerxes?
- 6) What part(s) of his report are true, which are lies?

7) How much would 10,000 talents of silver be worth in today's funds?

**D) The king's seal (3:10-12)**

- 1) What is the significance of *giving* the signet ring?
- 2) Here we have the first sign of Haman's true identity (verse 10)
- 3) What "triple threat" did Haman exemplify?
- 4) Why would the king so readily hand over his signet ring?
- 5) What was noteworthy about the date the edict was drafted / sealed?
- 6) Who would receive this sealed edict?
- 7) Why not just issue a royal decree to be read aloud in each place?

**E) Feasting amid preparations for slaughter (3:13-15)**

- 1) When has it seemed like God was on vacation?
- 2) Given the time it takes for messages to travel (even by horseback), there probably would have been 8-10 months of waiting for the 13<sup>th</sup> of Adar. Does knowing what's coming make things better or worse?
- 3) What does **2 Kings 19:30-31** tell us of God's protection of His people?
- 4) Why is it important that these murderers be granted the plunder?
- 5) What did the king and Haman do as the edict went out?
- 6) Why was "the city of Susa was thrown into confusion"?
- 7) Do you agree with the saying, "All that is need for evil to prosper is for good men to do nothing." Why / why not?

*For Such a Time as This*  
**Esther Chapter 4**

**Engage your brain:**

- 1) Have you ever felt you happened to be in the right place at the right time?  
- What do you think of coincidence or fate or destiny or...?
- 2) In what crisis would you defy authority / law to find a solution?
- 3) In what way(s) can fear be paralyzing (and dangerously so)?

**A) Mordecai's reaction (4:1-3)**

- 1) What is your "normal" reaction to bad news?
- 2) What was the "bad news reaction" in each of the following?  
**2 Samuel 1:11-12**  
**Job 1:13-20**  
**Job 2:11-13**
- 3) How can grief be both a curse and a blessing?
- 4) Besides traditional grief rituals, what else did Mordecai do?
- 5) Why did Mordecai want to "go public" with his grief?
- 6) Who is to "blame" for this evil?
- 7) Why is it impossible for a human being to truly "blame" God?

**B) Esther's reaction (4:4-5)**

- 1) Has it ever seemed that the "powers that be" are "out of touch" with those not in positions of power?
- 2) What was Esther distressed about?
- 3) The word for *distressed* is the same used by Xerxes father as he stood outside the lion's den. How was it resolved in **Daniel 6:20**
- 4) How does Paul use the word in **Romans 9:1-5**
- 5) Have you ever tried to fix a problem before understanding the problem?
- 6) What do the following tell us about life's distresses?  
**Isaiah 41:13**  
**Psalms 34:18**  
**Deuteronomy 31:8**  
**2 Corinthians 4:8-10**
- 7) How is being God's child a call to action and a call to rest / peace?



**C) We have nothing to fear, but fear itself. (Esther 4:8-11)**

- 1) What three things did Mordecai do in this passage?
- 2) Read the king's decree on page 129 of *Chosen* if possible
- 3) What does Mordecai want Esther to do with this new information?
- 4) What is the penalty for an unannounced / uninvited court visitor?
- 5) How does this contrast with Queen Vashti from chapter 1?
- 6) What is God's answer to the "what if's" of life?

**Luke 12:32**

**Matthew 14:2**

**I John 4:18-19**

- 7) Explain the following, "Be a voice, not an echo".

**D) Perfect Timing (Esther 4:12-14)**

- 1) Have you ever played the game "telephone"?
- 2) Is Esther in danger of losing her identity?
- 3) What "identity change" do we go through as God's people in Christ?

**John 1:12-13**

**I Peter 2:9**

**Galatians 3:27-29**

**Ephesians 4:22-34**

**I Peter 2:9**

**II Corinthians 5:17**

- 4) How does knowing your identity change how you live?
- 5) Does Mordecai still trust in God to bring salvation?
- 6) What does Paul say in **Ephesians 5:16**?
- 7) "All we have to decide is what to do with time given us."  
- Is the the modern version of the book of Esther's key phrase?

**E) Do or die (Esther 4:15-17)**

- 1) When have you played "the unlikely heroine" (or hero) ?
- 2) What changes do you see in Esther?
- 3) How does Esther "rally her team"? How do we?
- 4) How large was Esther's support network?
- 5) Having break-fast. A few passages on fasting

**Ezra 8:21-23**

**Joel 2:12**

**Luke 2:36-38**

**Acts 13:3**

**Isaiah 58:1-12**

6) How do we practice fasting today and why?

7) How is Esther like Jesus in Gethsemane?



Next week: Keep your friends close and your enemies closer - Esther 5

*Daring to be Great*  
Esther Chapter 5

**Brain Strain:**

- 1) When did you have a “dare to be great” moment?
- 2) Have you ever found yourself unsure of manners / protocol?
- 3) What are some Christian expressions of the Hindi concept of Karma?

**A) Attending to formalities (Esther 5:1-2)**

- 1) What was your first “formal” event?
- 2) Why does Esther “dress to the nines”?
- 3) What is significant about the day she decides to see the king?
- 4) What does where the king is sitting signify?
- 5) What does touching the tip of the sceptre signify?
- 6) How does God extend His grace to us?
- 7) What does our response to that grace show?

**B) We need to talk (Esther 5:3-5)**

- 1) What usually follows the words above?
- 2) Why does the king begin the conversation?
- 3) Where else has the “up to half of my kingdom” been spoken?
- 4) How does Esther know it’s “not the right time” to talk in full?
- 5) What does she do instead? Why is this important?
- 6) What is the king’s reaction?
- 7) How can we have dinner with our King every night?

**C) The post-revels (Esther 5:6-8)**

- 1) How do you know when dinner is over (Esp a formal dinner)?
- 2) Is “a way to a man’s heart is through his stomach” true?
- 3) How do we continue this tradition of “after dinner party” today?
- 4) Why does Xerxes repeat himself?
- 5) Why did Esther hesitate to tell the king of her troubles?
- 6) What do the following say about when “to pull the trigger”?

**2 Peter 3:8-9**

**Proverbs 16:9**

- 7) Is patience among your virtues? (Let us pray...)

**D) Envy is the thief of joy (Esther 5:9-13)**

- 1) When have you felt “puffed up”?
- 2) How is Haman swollen with pride?
- 3) How do Mordecai’s actions “burst his bubble”?
- 4) What’s the difference between happiness and joy?
- 5) What do the following tell us about worldly based pride?

**Psalm 73:12-13**

**Romans 8:33-34**

**Isaiah 1:17**

- 6) How are we to determine what is “fair” or “unfair”?
- 7) How do you usually react when you see evil prosper?

**E) Sowing the seeds of his own destruction (Esther 5:14)**

- 1) What comes to mind when you think of “gallows”?
- 2) How high is 50 cubits?
- 3) Where does Haman turn for advice? Is this a good idea?
- 4) When and how have you gotten bad advice?
- 5) How does Mordecai “control” Haman?
- 6) How is holding on to anger like holding a live coal (Buddha)?
- 7) What is the difference between anger and malice?



*Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?*  
**Esther chapters 6-7**

**Provoking your thoughts:**

- 1) What is the most important dinner party you've ever thrown?
- 2) What causes "sleepless nights" for you?
- 3) When have you seen justice done?

**A) The king's restlessness (6:1-2)**

- 1) When you can't sleep, what usually "puts you out like a light"?
- 2) What are the best "bedtime stories"?
- 3) What did the king ask for?
- 4) What did he find written there?
- 5) Is the saying, "No good deed goes unpunished" true?
- 6) What do the following verses say about humility?  
**Philippians 3:4-8**  
**Philippians 2:1-11**  
**James 4:10**
- 7) How does God use seemingly random things for His purposes?

**B) A Hero's welcome (6:3-11)**

- 1) Who informs the king of his "oversight"?
- 2) What is going through Haman's mind?
- 3) How do we honor heroes today? Has anything changed in 2,500 years?
- 4) What do the following say about pride in our own accomplishments?  
**Proverbs 15:25**  
**Proverbs 16:5**  
**Isaiah 2:11-12**
- 5) How is pride like an ever crouching tiger?
- 6) How does the king identify Mordecai?
- 7) Does God have a sense of irony?

**C) Crest fallen (6:12-14)**

- 1) How did Mordecai react to the king's honors? Why?
- 2) What was Haman's reaction?
- 3) How does this compare to the reaction of the Pharisee in **Luke 14:11**?
- 1) How does God use "in between" times (while). See **Romans 5:8**
- 2) What does this teach us about waiting for God's timing?

- 3) How do Haman's wife and friends shirk responsibility for their counsel about building a gallows for Mordecai?
- 4) When we feel humiliated or misused, what should we do?

**D) This is the feast (7:1-6)**

- 1) What "feast" do you look forward to? What one(s) do you dread?
- 2) Why is it important that the king repeat his question a third time?
- 3) What is Esther's wish?
- 4) What is her request?
- 5) How does God feel about punishing the wicked?  
**Ezekiel 33:11**  
**2 Peter 3:9**  
**Matthew 23:37**  
**Luke 15:7, 10**
- 6) How does this feast show God's perfect timing?
- 7) How is terror (terrified) different from fear?

**E) Today is a good day to die (7:7-10)**

- 1) How do you usually handle betrayal?
- 2) Why did the king go for a stroll in the garden?
- 3) How did Esther reveal herself as the "power behind the throne"?
- 4) How did Xerxes react to finding his queen with another man?
- 5) What do the following say about a king's anger?  
**Proverbs 16:14**  
**Proverbs 19:12**
- 6) When have you been overcome with rage?
- 7) How was the king's wrath abated like the flood in **Genesis 8:1**?

## **The Empire Strikes Back**

### **Esther chapter 8**

#### **Engage the brain:**

- 1) How could “the light at the end of the tunnel” be both good and bad?
- 2) What is the most important part of a house? Of a life?
- 3) How do you make “a vow which may not be broken”?

#### **A) Reversal of fortune (8:1-2)**

- 1) What are the different “reversals of fortune” one might experience?
- 2) How are each of these illustrated in verse 1
- 3) What does God say about the riches / wealth of the wicked?  
**Proverbs 13:22**  
**Matthew 7:24-27**  
**Luke 12:16-21**
- 4) What did Esther reveal to the king?
- 5) What happens in Esther 8:2?
- 6) When have you been given honor and authority without looking for it?
- 7) What awaits us the other side of this life?

#### **B) Orders in the court (8:3-6)**

- 1) What is “the elephant in the room”?
- 2) What’s the best way to eat (dispose of) an elephant?
- 3) What are we to make of Esther’s emotional early pleas?
- 4) Is she still emotional when she makes her formal plea to the king?
- 5) What does that say about being emotional before our King?
- 6) What does it mean to “intercede” for another?
- 7) How “brave” should we be coming before God?

#### **C) So let it be written, so let it be done! (8:7-8)**

- 1) How do you “seal” an agreement?
- 2) When have you begged for crumbs and been served the whole cake?
- 3) When did the king take back his signet ring from Haman?
- 4) Is prayer an opening salvo or a last resort? Somewhere in the middle?

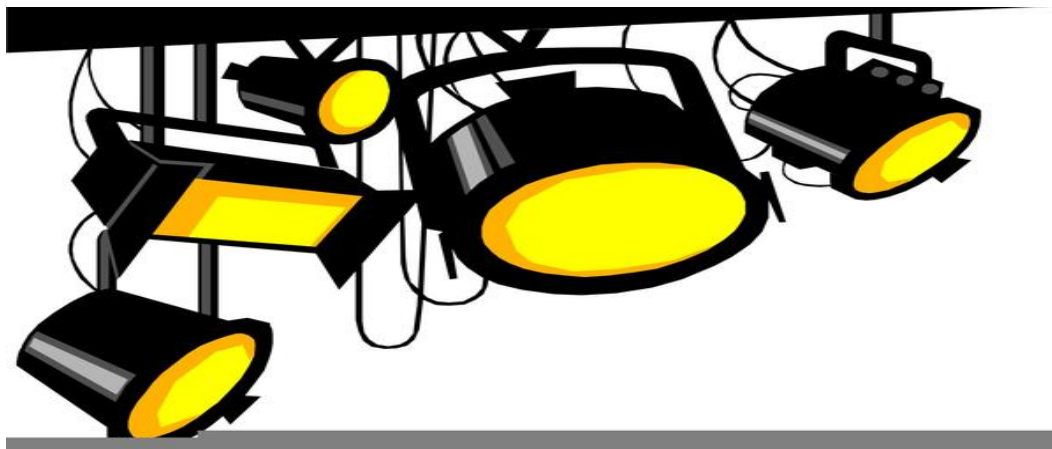
- 5) Why does the king allow Esther to write “as you please”?
- 6) What does it say in **James 5:13-15**?
- 7) What position does Mordecai now hold?

**D) Grace multiplier (8:10-11)**

- 1) What is the basic premise (prime directive) of the Israeli military today?
- 2) Do we see foreshadowing of this in Mordecai’s letter?
- 3) How did he make 127 copies so fast? (no Xerox for 2,500 years)
- 4) Who were the Jews allowed to attack?
- 5) What else were they permitted to do?
- 6) What is a “legal reversal”?
- 7) How often do we need to change direction? What do we call that?

**E) The long wait is over...or is it just beginning? (8:12-17)**

- 1) What was a blessing you waited a long time (or so it seemed) for?
- 2) What happened to Mordecai’s sack cloth?
- 3) Explain the crowd’s reaction to Mordecai. Look at 3:3?
- 4) Can respect be ordered (or forbidden)?
- 5) What does **Nehemiah 8:10** promise?
- 6) What did “many peoples from the country” do?
- 7) What does this say about “let your light so shine before men.”?





Sound the Battle Cry  
Esther chapters 9 & 10

**Engage your brain:**

- 1) How has God brought joy out of sorrow in your life?
- 2) What inspires you to give to others?
- 3) What makes a person “wise”?

**A) And as the sun rose... (9:1)**

- 1) What happened March 7, 473 BC?
- 2) What is a pyrric victory?
- 3) How long did the Jews have to prepare for this day?
- 4) How is the word “reversed” used in each of the following:  
    **I Samuel 10:9**  
    **Exodus 14:5**  
    **Lamentations 5:14**
- 5) How can the cross be seen as the “great reversal”?
- 6) What does **Jeremiah 30:16** have to say about reversals?
- 7) How is **I Samuel 17:47** Esther’s battle cry and ours?

**B) When the battle rages (9:2-10)**

- 1) What is the difference between a fear and a phobia?
- 2) What kind of fear fell upon the Persian aggressors?
- 3) How can fear be more powerful than a sword? (psychological warfare?)
- 4) What do the following say about fear:  
    **I Samuel 12:24**  
    **Acts 9:31**  
    **Psalm 128:1**  
    **Proverbs 9:10**
- 5) On whom did the fear of Mordecai fall? Why?
- 6) Are the Jews being merciless in verse 5? Why / why not?
- 7) How can we stand against seemingly “fearful odds”?

**C) Mopping up (9:11-14)**

- 1) How can hope be both a good thing and a dangerous thing?
- 2) When did most deaths occur from a battle?
- 3) Why does Xerxes seem unconcerned about the Persians slain?
- 4) Why does Esther ask for an extra day of carnage?
- 5) Why put Haman's sons on display?
- 6) Why did the Jews not take the plunder of their enemies?
- 7) Why is plunder a bad motivator for battle? (though often used)

**D) The feast of Purim (lots) (9:17-32)**

- 1) What "feast of victory" is celebrated every Sunday?
- 2) What is the stated reason for the feast of Purim?
- 3) How many days were they to celebrate?
- 4) While not a feast in the Law of Moses, it is still celebrated today
- 5) What was an unique aspect of this celebration?
- 6) What is a *hamantashen*?
- 7) What has God done that causes you to celebrate? How do you "party"?

**E) Mordecai the Mage (10:1-3)**

- 1) What is this "book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia"?
- 2) What made Mordecai a great leader?
- 3) How does the book of Esther help us navigate a world hostile to Christianity?