

Esther Lesson 8 – The Counter-Edict Is Issued

HOMEWORK FOR NEXT WEEK: Read Esther 9:1-10:3

TEXT

Read Esther 8:1-17

PASSAGE SUMMARY

Ahasuerus gives Esther the estate of Haman and to Mordecai he gives his signet ring. Esther places Mordecai in charge of Haman's old estate. But although Haman is dead, his harmful edict against the Jews is not. Esther again risks her life by going uninvited into the king's presence, who raises the royal scepter once again to grant her audience.

Esther pleads for Ahasuerus to overrule his previous edict and save the Jews, but this is not possible according to the laws of the land. Instead, Ahasuerus directs Esther to write a decree to her wishes and he will seal the decree with his signet ring. The decree was written that allowed Jews to assemble and protect themselves and destroy and plunder their enemies on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, which was the same day the edict was issued for the Jews to be destroyed, killed and annihilated. It was signed by the king and sent to all corners of the kingdom on the fastest horses. In every province and in every city to which the edict of the king came, there was joy and gladness among the Jews, with feasting and celebrating.

STUDY

1. READ

- a. How does Esther respond after Ahasuerus elevates her and Mordecai?
- b. Why can Ahasuerus not reverse his earlier decree against the Jews?
- c. How does Esther influence Ahasuerus to act on behalf of her people?

2. MEANING

- a. After securing her own and Mordecai's safety, what emotions does Esther display when interceding on behalf of her people? What can we infer about her heart at this moment?
- b. What aspects of the edict written by Esther and Mordecai are interesting to you?
- c. From this passage and others in the Bible, what can we infer about the heart of God towards the powerless?

3. APPLY

- a. Esther was persistent in her request to the king to rescue her people. Why is perseverance in prayer often difficult for us?
- b. How would you describe your concern for those who are persecuted for their belief in Christ? How do you feel about those who are outside of Christ?

- c. How is Jesus a better mediator than Esther? How often do you express gratitude to him for his mediation on your behalf?

NOTES

v 3 - Not only does Esther risk her life by entering the king's presence uninvited, she also weeps in his presence, which seems to be taboo (see Nehemiah 2:1-2).

v 8 - Another example of a king's edict not allowed to be reversed is Daniel being thrown into the lion's den (Daniel 6:15).

v 11 - The new decree gave the Jews legal protection to fight back. However, it did not remove the threat against the Jews. It also did not order any subjects of the king to aid in protecting Jews, they were only allowed to defend themselves.

v 15 - The pagan capital city of Susa widely celebrated the new edict empowering Jews to defend themselves. This speaks to the popularity of Jews amongst their non-Jewish neighbors, and perhaps the kingdom celebrating that justice was done.

v 16 - Notice the contrast between the Jews' state here compared to Esther's state in verse three, as well as when Haman's edict was announced. They've gone from mourning, fasting and likely prayer to feasting and celebrating. This became an annual Jewish tradition known as Purim.

COMMENTS

In this passage we can see Esther's passion. Esther's emotion for her people could not be hidden, and she made no attempt to conceal it. Not caring what the king or others in the throne room might think of her, Esther risked her life and fell before the king weeping. The full depth of her emotions was on display. This should make us think about what moves us to such emotion when we make our requests to the Lord.

Esther was also persistent in her request even when Ahasuerus saves her and Mordecai from Haman. She immediately risks her life to seek an audience with the king to plead on behalf of her people. How often do we persistently seek God's presence to enact justice for others?

Furthermore, Esther risks even more by identifying with her people, who are subjects in Persia. "For how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family?" (v 6) By doing this, she connects her welfare with the welfare of the entire Jewish race within the Persian empire. When praying to God to save others, we should identify with them as sinners in need of His grace and ask for the same mercy we received. This should cause us to have compassion for and pray for the salvation of those who do not believe.

Similar to how Esther intercedes with Ahasuerus for the Jewish race, Jesus intercedes on our behalf before the Father. This was summarized well by Dowden Landon:

Without doubt Jesus is a better mediator than not just Esther but anyone. There is no one more qualified to plead on our behalf (Heb 4:14–5:10). And he longs to do this job instead of loathing it! Let that wash over you for a moment. His role as intercessor is full of delight for him rather than drudgery. Esther could barely gain access to the king for herself, but through Christ our

access to the Father is never in doubt. His passion, however, is not just evidenced in his supplications on our behalf but also in his substitution. He does not just ask; he acts.

References

Ladon, Dowden, Exalting Jesus in Esther, 2019, "Chapter 6: Pleading on Behalf of Others," B&H Publishing, Nashville, Tennessee.