

# SHARE THE BIBLE LESSON

## WEEK 32

### God uses Esther to protect His people

Esther 1:1–10:3



## DAY 1

Setting: Jews in high position and remembered • Esther 1:1–2:23

### READ

Esther 1:1–2:23

### EXPLAIN

#### The truth of Esther 1:1–2:23

This story happened between Ezra 6 and 7 during the reign of Ahasuerus (Esth 1:1), also known as Xerxes, who ruled Persia from 486–465 BC. It took place in Susa, one of Persia's great capital cities far away from Jerusalem. Susa was powerful and ridiculously luxurious (1:1–8), but its king lacked power over himself, his family, and his kingdom (1:9–12, 19). At the advice of his silly wise men, Ahasuerus' family problem grew into an empire-wide emergency (1:13–22). How would the Jews survive as God's people in a pagan empire under such a lousy leader? In the 1<sup>st</sup> of at least nine "coincidences" in this story, God used Ahasuerus' passion to select a Jewish orphan, out of all the women in Persia, to replace Vashti as queen (2:1–18). Then in a 2<sup>nd</sup> "coincidence," Esther's cousin and adoptive father, Mordecai, overheard a plot against the king (2:21–22), and his loyalty was recorded in the king's book (2:23). God had put Esther on the throne and Mordecai in the record book, perfectly positioned to protect His people when the time came.

### ASK

1. What was King Ahasuerus like?  
*He was rich and ruled a powerful empire, but he was a terrible leader.*
2. Whose foolish advice did King Ahasuerus listen to?  
*His wise men.*
3. How did God prepare to protect His people?  
*He put His people in the right places: Esther on the throne and Mordecai in the record book.*
4. What were Esther and Mordecai like?  
*Esther was beautiful and Mordecai was loyal and cared about people.*

### DISCUSS

1. How are Christians in your country like the Jews in pagan Persia? What are your culture and your rulers like? Is God still in control?
2. When do you take a break or rest? What does it mean that the Protector of Israel does not slumber or sleep (Ps 121:4)? Why does God never need to rest?

## DAY 2

Crisis: A plot against the Jews • Esther 3:1–4:17

### READ

Esther 3:1–4:17

### EXPLAIN

#### The truth of Esther 3:1–4:17

Things got worse before they got better. Ahasuerus made a poor choice by ignoring Mordecai and promoting Haman. Haman was a descendant of Agag, the wicked Amalekite king captured by Saul and killed by Samuel (1 Sam 15). Haman was Israel's worst nightmare come true, a hater of Israel with immense power. But as Saul had toppled Agag, so Saul's relative would topple Haman. Mordecai was a Benjamite, descended from the same family as Saul (Esth 2:5; 1 Sam 9:1). Consistent with his family background, Mordecai refused to bow before Haman (Esth 3:2). Mordecai and Haman were arch-enemies, the 3<sup>rd</sup> "coincidence." True to his heritage, Haman retaliated against Mordecai by seeking to wipe out all Jews (3:6). Even the non-Jews were horrified, for when a wicked man rules, the people groan (3:15; Prov 29:2). Mordecai urged Esther to take action (Esth 4:4–9). If she did not act, she and her family would suffer for not using her position to honor God and protect His people (4:13–14). When God's providence puts believers in influential positions, He expects them to use their influence for His glory and His people's good.

### ASK

1. Who was the wicked man who tried to kill all the Jews?  
*Haman.*
2. Why didn't Haman and Mordecai like each other?  
*Since the time of Agag and Saul, their families were archenemies. Haman's family always wanted to destroy Israel, and Mordecai's family defended Israel.*
3. How did Mordecai persuade Esther to speak up for her people?  
*He said that God did not need her, but that God had put her in a place of power and would hold her accountable to do the right thing.*

### DISCUSS

1. What opportunities has God given you? What influence do you have? Are you using it to honor God and help God's people?
2. Why is there really no such thing as a "coincidence" (something that seems to happen at random, by chance)?

## DAY 3

Climax: Haman caught in his own plot • Esther 5:1–8:2

### READ

Esther 5:1–8:2

### EXPLAIN

#### The truth of Esther 5:1–8:2

Esther acted boldly, and God arranged events just right. Between the two banquets God arranged a sleepless night for the king, a 4<sup>th</sup> "coincidence" (6:1). The king asked for the book of records to be read, which led to a 5<sup>th</sup> "coincidence": his servants happened to read the part about Mordecai (6:2). Then a 6<sup>th</sup> "coincidence": the king, who failed to reward Mordecai five years earlier, asked about the reward (6:3). Then a 7<sup>th</sup> "coincidence": Haman,

driven by his evil schemes, arrived early in the morning exactly when the king wanted advice (6:5). Finally, an 8<sup>th</sup> "coincidence": when the king asked for advice, he failed to mention who was to be honored (6:6). So Haman, scheming for honor, planned his own humiliation—all this while the man he planned to execute was given the highest honor (6:10–12)! Then, after Esther identified Haman as the Jews' enemy (7:1–6), a 9<sup>th</sup> "coincidence": the king, having stomped off in a rage, came back just in time to see Haman falling onto Esther's couch (7:7–8). This, along with timely news of Haman's plans, sealed Haman's doom (7:9–10).

DAY 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

**ASK** 

1. How did Esther act cleverly?  
*She used two banquets and the king's physical attraction to get the king to commit before she risked accusing Haman, who was the king's favorite.*
2. How did God shame Haman?  
*By causing him to publically honor Mordecai.*
3. How was Haman executed?  
*On the gallows he had built for Mordecai (Esth 5:14).*
4. How many "coincidences" can you remember? What do they show us about God??  
*See above. They show us that God is in control even of events that seem "random."*

**DISCUSS** 

1. Have you ever tried to make yourself look good? How does Haman warn you not to?
2. How does Haman illustrate God's exact justice (Prov 26:27)?

**DAY 4***Resolution: The plot against the Jews undone • Esther 8:1–9:19***READ** 

Esther 8:1–9:19

**EXPLAIN** **The truth of Esther 8:1–9:19**

All along selfish Ahasuerus never really cared about the Jews. He was still selfish, and he had only taken action because Esther wasn't as pretty when she was sad. Haman was dead, but the Jews were not safe yet. So Esther cleverly appealed to her own happiness again, essentially telling the king that if he didn't help, she wouldn't smile for him (Esth 8:3–6). It worked. The king gave Mordecai the power to issue a new decree (8:8–14). Confusion in the city (3:15) turned into rejoicing (8:15; Prov 29:2). The Jews' mourning and fasting (Esth 4:3) turned into joy and celebration (8:17a). The Jews' fear of others (4:4) turned into others fearing them (8:17b). The anticipated hateful destruction of the Jews (3:5, 13) turned into the destruction of those who hated the Jews (9:1–16). Because of God's providential power, all the evil intentions of wicked men were undone, bringing about just the opposite of what had been planned (9:1).

**ASK** 

1. Were the Jews safe after Haman was executed?  
*No. Haman's plan had not been stopped.*
2. How was Haman's evil plan stopped?  
*Esther persuaded the king with her beauty and words again, and Mordecai wrote a new decree allowing the Jews to defend themselves.*
3. What did God turn the plans of the wicked upside down?  
*Haman honored the man he hated. Haman was hanged on his own gallows. Those who planned to kill the Jews were themselves killed.*
4. How did God turn the disaster for the Jews into blessing?  
*God made Mordecai 2<sup>nd</sup> in command, saved the lives of all the Jews, and caused them to be honored by the other people in Persia.*

**DISCUSS** 

1. Esther trusted God, but she also used wisdom. How did she behave cleverly?
2. How has God continued to faithfully protect Israel throughout history?

## DAY 5

Outcome: Jews remember and enjoy high position • Esther 9:20–10:3

### READ

Esther 9:20–10:3

### EXPLAIN

#### The truth of Esther 9:20–10:3

This sudden reversal has been remembered ever since by a holiday called Purim (Esth 9:20–32). Purim is named after the lots Haman had cast to determine the fateful day. This holiday is a reminder that God is faithful to preserve the line of the Messiah despite the ongoing attempts of Satan to eliminate it (Gen 22:17–18). In addition, Mordecai's rise to power and care for the Jews show that God's people can live successfully even in a foreign, unbelieving world (Esth 10:3). About 450 years later, the Messiah came and brought about a reversal even greater than the one in Esther. He overthrew the evil one, turned death into life, defeat into victory, slavery into freedom, and sin into righteousness (Col 2:13–15). Because of Christ's victory, you, like Israel, can hope in God as you live in a foreign, unbelieving world. For as God was faithful to send the Messiah once, He will do so again, when Jesus comes to take over the government and rule as the Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6–7; Zech 9:9–10).

### ASK

1. What is Purim?  
*Purim is the holiday when Jews remember how God used Esther to rescue them and crush their enemies.*
2. Why did Satan want to destroy the Jews?  
*He wanted to destroy stop the Messiah from coming. He failed. Again.*
3. Who caused an even greater reversal than the one in Esther?  
*Jesus.*
4. What kind of a reversal did Jesus bring?  
*He overthrew the evil one, turned death into life, defeat into victory, slavery into freedom, and sin into righteousness.*

### DISCUSS

1. We have many reasons to celebrate! How do Christian holidays help you to remember who God is and what He has done? Is it right to rejoice in God's just vengeance (Ps 58:10)?
2. Parents: How does God's care for the Jews in Persia encourage you as you raise children in a godless world?

## NEXT WEEK

### God uses Daniel to interpret the king's dream

*Daniel 2:1–49*

