

Esther

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I. Introduction.

- A. There are things that distinguish a good story from a perfect story.
- B. It should make you identify with the characters.
- C. It should cause you to be surprised.

II. The story of Esther.

A. Setting.

- 1. Occurred during the reign of Xerxes who ruled under the greatest geographic empire that has ever existed.
- 2. He called for a sixth month banquet and decided to extend it another week.
 - a. There was significant competition at this banquet.
 - b. The king challenged everyone that his queen was the most beautiful queen of the empire.
- 3. The banquet assembled to see the queen Vashti's beauty, but she refused to come.
- 4. The assembly was concerned that their wives would not obey them as a result of this, so the king "fired" the queen and sent out a decree that all wives were to give honor with their husbands.
- 5. God was moving through human fallibility here.

B. Introduction of the heroes.

- 1. Mordecai. He was in charge of the king's personal security and he was the chief of protocol who screened callers on the king. He encouraged his cousin Esther to enter the contest to become the new queen.
- 2. Esther. She became queen to Xerxes.
- 3. Mordecai uncovered a plot to kill the king and saved him.

C. Introduction of the enemy.

1. Haman - a direct descendant of Agag - came to confront Mordecai - a direct descendent of Saul.
2. Xerxes made Haman coequal, which meant that all had to bow down and do reverence to him as one would to the king.
 - a. Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman.
 - b. Haman initiated his plan to Xerxes to exterminate the Jews and he agreed.
 - c. These kings pretended they were god and they could not reverse their decrees. This was sealed with the sign of the giving of the signet ring by the king.
 - d. The real plot is an attempt by Satan to prevent Jesus Christ from being born.

D. Mordecai's plea.

1. He asks Esther to plea with the king to reverse the decision, but Esther responded with the reality that no one can come into the king's presence in such a fashion.
2. Mordecai responded by encouraging her in the opportunity to be the heroine, and she chose to try saving her people at the risk of her life.
3. God is interested not in an empty stomach, but in perseverance.

E. Esther's plan.

1. Esther dressed up for the king and he was so awestruck he promised her anything.
2. She asked for permission to give Haman a banquet in his honor.
3. Haman was puffed up with pride, but he could not enjoy it because he saw that Mordecai again would not bow down to him. He planned to execute him.

F. The plan unfolded.

1. Xerxes realized that he needed to pay honor to Mordecai for saving his life and asked Haman what he should do to a man that should be honored. Haman thinking that it was him, told the king to act lavishly upon this man's behalf

placing a robe and crown upon him. Xerxes commanded Haman to do this to Mordecai. Haman had a bad day.

2. Haman showed up to the banquet disappointed.

3. Xerxes asks for the real petition of Esther. She asked for her life and the life of all her people because the death penalty had been pronounced upon all of them. The king asked who had brought this upon them, and she pointed at Haman - his newly appointed deputy.

4. Haman was hanged upon the gallows for what he had done.

5. But the decree could not be changed, so Esther went in again to plea against the king. He gave her authority to write a new decree. She and Mordecai gave authority to the Jews to defend themselves with the help of every officer of the empire. As a result many became Jews - probably the largest ingathering of people into the Jewish faith.

6. There was quite a slaughter on the day the decree was affected, but not a Jew was affected. The Devil was unsuccessful. The Devil is dominated more by passion than reason. After Christ's death, Satan unknowingly set up witnesses by trying to seal the grave with a Roman seal.

III. Wrap up.

A. God wanted to preserve the ancestry of Christ and evangelize the world through the Jews.

B. Satan was unsuccessful in stopping them. However, for the most part they did not get the job done.

C. Yet God's plan did not fail. The Jews survived. Nebuchadnezzar was unable to kill the remnant who would not bow down (Daniel 3), and he was ultimately converted. Daniel became very influential in the midst of these circumstances, but future leaders still tried to trap him. He was thrown in the lion's den, but God saved him from certain death.

D. Through a few, the whole world became aware of the working of God.

Application questions.

1. What is evident about God through the story of Esther?

2. In what ways does the story of Esther parallel to the story of Daniel? Does the success of God's mission depend on God's people? Explain.

3. How does this story highlight the need and call for evangelism? What have you done in the last week to be a witness to a nonbeliever? Write down some intentional ways that you might gain an opportunity to share the gospel in the life of a nonbeliever.
