

King Xerxes of Persia Removes Queen Vashti Esther 1

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. God can use national events to accomplish His purpose.

2. God can use domestic squabbles to accomplish His purpose.

Practical Application

1. Read the book of Esther when you are discouraged.

Questions

1. Why were there Jews living in Susa during the reign of Ahasuerus?
2. Where does Esther fit into the chronology of the Bible?
3. What is unique about the book of Esther?
4. What is the theme of Esther?
5. Who was King Ahasuerus?

Answers

1. About 50,000 Jews returned to Jerusalem from their captivity in Babylon, after the decree by Cyrus in 539 B.C. But many Jews had developed roots in their captive land and did not desire to return.
2. The events recorded in Esther occurred after the first return of the Jews from Babylon in 539 B.C., and before the second return in 458 B.C. Esther fits in between chapters 6 and 7 of Ezra.
3. It is the only book in the Bible that does not contain the name of God. However, the hand of God is seen working in every chapter of the book.
4. Providence – God’s divine guidance and protection of His people the Jews
5. He was likely King Xerxes of Persia.

Discuss / Consider

1. It was God’s expressed desire for the Jewish people to return to Jerusalem after their captivity in Babylon. (See Jeremiah 25:12) He wanted them to return and worship Him in His temple. Many of the Jews rejected God’s will and remained in Babylon. Despite their lack of commitment to the Lord, He was still at work behind-the-scenes to accomplish His purpose on behalf of His people. Can you relate this to your life? Have there been times in your past when you were not walking with God, yet now you can see that He was protecting you even then? What a gracious God we serve!

2. Review how God used national events and domestic squabbles to accomplish His purpose in this first chapter of Esther. Discuss how God can use national events and domestic squabbles to accomplish His purpose today.

Challenge

1. Have you ever felt discouraged, as though God was not working in your life? Recognize that, as in the book of Esther, even when God’s work is not evident, He is working behind-the-scenes.

Mordecai and His Cousin Esther
Esther 2

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. God can use personal beauty to accomplish His purposes.

2. God can use political office to accomplish His purposes.

Practical Application

1. Let's remember our roots.

Questions

1. Why was King Ahasuerus seeking a new queen? How long did it take him to find one?
2. What does the historical record tell us about this time span?
3. How did the king choose his new queen?
4. Did Esther commit adultery when she went in to the king
5. What does it mean the Mordecai "sat within the king's gate"?
6. Was the "book of the chronicles" the biblical book of Chronicles?

Answers

1. The king removed Queen Vashti from her position as queen, because she refused to display herself at the king's feast. Four years later Esther was crowned queen.
2. During these years without a queen, King Xerxes lost a major military battle to Greece in 479 B.C.
3. Many virgins from the kingdom were brought to the king's palace, where they underwent a year of beauty treatment. Then they took turns appearing before the king. But God was working behind the scenes the whole time to save His chosen people.
4. No, all of the virgins and concubines were considered the king's legal wives. King Xerxes was a polygamist, with many wives, but only one served as queen.
5. In ancient times, the city gate was the place where civil transactions were carried out. This probably indicated that Mordecai held a political office.
6. No, this book of chronicles or records was the official record of the reign of King Xerxes of Persia.

Discuss / Consider

1. God can use personal beauty to accomplish His purposes. Have you ever witnessed this principle in action? It is easy to be jealous or critical of a man or woman who is more beautiful than yourself. The next time you feel this way, think instead of how the Lord could be using them to minister.

2. Review how God was working behind-the-scenes in this chapter of Esther.

Challenge

1. Esther and Mordecai remembered their roots and did what they could to save the Jewish people. Do you have a heritage of Christianity? What are you doing to preserve this heritage and pass it along to your children? If you are the first Christian in your family, how will you begin a heritage for your children?

Answers

1. Haman is said to be an Agagite, possibly a descendant of the Amakelites, long time enemies of the Jews. Haman was promoted to a high position in the kingdom of Persia by the king.
2. Mordecai showed respect to Haman, but he would not show him reverence by bowing down to him. He knew that Haman was just a man and should not be worshiped as God.
3. When Haman learned that Mordecai was a Jew, he plotted to destroy not only Mordecai, but all the Jewish people in the Persian Empire. This evil wish became a decree when Haman gained the king's approval.
4. This evil wish became a decree when Haman gained the king's approval. The king's treasury had been depleted by recent battles with the Greeks. Haman's promise of plunder from the Jewish people was enticing to the king.
5. Anti-Semitism is hostility toward or discrimination against God's chosen people, the Jews. It has been a problem since Pharaoh sought to kill all the Jewish baby boys in Egypt.

Discuss / Consider

1. Discuss the issue of anti-Semitism. How is it satanic in origin? Trace Satan's attempt to destroy the Jews throughout history. As Christians, what should our reaction be to anti-Semitism?

2. Anti-Semitism is on the rise today. Discuss the role anti-Semitism will play in the end times. When will peace come to the Middle East? When the Lord returns to reign on earth!

Challenge

1. Haman cast lots to see what month to destroy the Jews. God controlled the outcome of the lot. See Proverbs 16:33 and Ephesians 1:11. If your circumstances and future seem to be affected by someone who desires to hurt you, remember that God is in control of the situation.

Esther Goes Before the King on Behalf of Her People
Esther 4

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. There is a time and place for public protest.

2. There is a time and place for personal courage.

Practical Application

1. Can you say, “If I perish, I perish”?

Question

1. Why was Mordecai mourning in sackcloth and ashes?
2. How far did the Persian Empire expand?
3. What should our position be toward civil authority?
4. How does [Ecclesiastes 3:7](#) relate to this passage?
5. What did Mordecai request Esther to do?
6. Why was Esther hesitant to do as Mordecai requested?

Answers

1. When Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman, Haman became furious. He learned that Mordecai was a Jew and then manipulated the king into signing a decree to destroy all the Jews in the Persian kingdom on a certain day.
2. From India to Ethiopia, and as far as Greece
3. Respect, but not reverence. Mordecai showed this attitude when he refused to bow down to Haman, which would have acknowledged him to be a god.
4. Ecclesiastes records that there is a time for everything, including tearing your clothes in mourning. Mordecai realized this declaration against the Jews was a time for mourning and a time to speak out.
5. He asked her to go in to the king and plead to him on behalf of her people, the Jews.
6. Because the king had not invited Esther into his presence for a month. Anyone who appeared before the king without an invitation was subject to death, unless the king held out his scepter to them.

Discuss / Consider

1. Ecclesiastes 3:7 says there is “a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.” Mordecai risked his life to speak out against Haman’s injustice. Are there conditions in society today that you as a believer should speak out against? How are you involved in this time to speak?

2. Mordecai was confident that the Lord would deliver His people (See [Esther 4:13](#)). If Esther had not gone before the king, the Lord could have saved the Jews in another way. But Esther would have missed out on being used by God. Apply this principle to evangelism. We know that all those God has elected to become believers, will believe on Him. You can be part of that process by sharing the gospel with them. If you refuse to share the gospel, God can use someone else, but think of the blessings you would miss out on by refusing to be used by God.

Challenge

1. We read about Esther’s time and place for personal courage. She met the call and rose to the challenge. Is God calling you to show courage right now? How will you answer the call?

Esther Goes Before the King **Esther 5**

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. **“The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord.” Proverbs 21:1**

2. **The path of the wicked is in the plan of the Lord.**

Practical Application

1. **Remember, God has extended His golden scepter.**

Questions

1. Although Esther was the queen, she feared going before the king without an invitation. Why?
2. Recall the stories from the historian Herodotus about Xerxes legendary temper.
3. What was the king’s reaction when Esther appeared before him?
4. The name of God is never mentioned in the book of Esther. How is He seen working behind-the-scenes in this chapter?
5. Why did Esther not expose Haman immediately? Why did she invite him and the king to a second banquet?

Answers

1. King Xerxes had a reputation for having a bad temper. He had already punished one queen, Queen Vashti, for disobeying his command.
2. In a bizarre act of revenge after a storm destroyed his bridge, Xerxes ordered his servants to lash the waters of the Dardanelles. Xerxes also ordered a man's eldest son to be killed and cut apart.
3. He not only held out his scepter, but offered to grant her request by giving her up to half his kingdom!
4. God caused the king to be in an exceptionally good mood and accept Esther's invitation for dinner.
5. We aren't given an answer from Esther's perspective. But from God's perspective, it is evident that God has more planned for Haman and Mordecai.

Discuss / Consider

1. God worked behind-the-scenes of the Persian Empire to accomplish His purposes. This is true of government today! See Proverbs 21:1 and 1 Timothy 2:1-2. Discuss this truth in light of current events.

2. Subjects of King Xerxes were afraid until they knew whether he would extend his golden scepter to them. Discuss the contrast to the God of this Universe who has freely extended His welcome to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. Refer to Hebrews 10:19-22

Challenge

1. Haman thought he had gotten away with his evil plot. His pride caused him to plan more evil against Mordecai. If you have been wronged by someone, and it seems they are getting away with it, give the matter to God and remember Proverbs 16:18

Answers

1. Mordecai the Jew refused to show reverence to Haman. Haman angrily plotted not only to annihilate Mordecai, but all Jews in the Persia kingdom. Queen Esther, Mordecai's cousin, went before King Xerxes to plead for her people. She invited the king and Haman to a feast she prepared. Haman's pride grew because of his position for the king, and he made further plans to hang Mordecai on the gallows.
2. Ahasuerus was the Hebrew name for King Xerxes of Persia.
3. He ordered the book of the records of the chronicles to be read to him. He learned of Mordecai's good deed of uncovering the plot to kill the king (Esther 2:21-23).
4. Haman was waiting in the outer courts to ask the king's permission to hang Mordecai on the gallows. The king called him in and asked, "What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?" Haman, thinking this man must be himself, described an elaborate honor to the king. King Xerxes then commanded Haman to do just that for Mordecai!

Discuss / Consider

1. There were many events in this chapter of Esther that could be viewed as coincidences. But we know that God was behind-the-scenes "working all things according to the counsel of His will" (Ephesians 1:11). Can you think of a time in your life when things just seemed like coincidence, but later you realized God was working?

2. Throughout history the principle, "God determines to surprise the wicked with humiliation" has been true in relation to His chosen people. Think of the nations that have tried to destroy the Jewish people. These nations have fallen, and the Jews remain. Read Proverbs 6:14-15 in relation to all who would practice evil and exalt themselves through wicked ways.

Challenge

1. The next time you can't sleep, consider if it is for a reason. Has God laid it on your heart to pray for someone or to confess some sin? Take advantage of the opportunity, and then enjoy a peaceful night's sleep.

Answers

1. Five. Two by King Ahasuerus, one by Queen Vashti, and two by Queen Esther
2. So she could petition him to deliver the Jewish people
3. Yes, he was very angry when he heard of Haman's wicked plot.
4. He was hanged on the gallows that he had intended for Mordecai.

Discuss / Consider

1. The Bible clearly teaches that in the end, all wickedness will be addressed and judged. But right now it seems that people get away with lots of evil. When we as believers are witnesses to some evil deed, what should our response be? See Luke 12:2 and Ephesians 5:11.

2. There is a huge emphasis on tolerance in today's culture. Matthew 7:1, "Judge not that you be not judged," is often misquoted by people with the "anything goes" mindset. Discuss the original context of this verse. Are we as believers to judge wrongdoers?

Challenge

1. Read Proverbs 26:27 and Galatians 6:7. In this chapter Haman reaped what he had sown. Use this principle to check your motives this week.

King Ahasuerus Allows Mordecai to Write an Edict Esther 8

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. God can control the rulers of a nation.**

- 2. God can control the laws of a nation.**

- 3. God can control the emotions of a nation.**

Practical Application

- 1. Don't miss the gospel in Esther chapter 8.**

Questions

1. Review the events of Esther 7.
2. What happened to Haman's estate?
3. Why were the Jews still in danger after the death of Haman?
4. How were the Jews saved?
5. What did this new decree permit?

Answers

1. Haman and his wicked plot to annihilate the Jews were exposed by Queen Esther. Haman was put to death on the gallows he had intended for Mordecai.
2. Everything Haman owned was given to Esther, and she gave it to Mordecai.
3. The edict that Haman had written to annihilate the Jews was still in effect, and it could not be revoked.
4. The king gave Esther and Mordecai authority to write another edict which would overrule the former one.
5. This decree gave all the Jews in the Persian Empire the right to defend themselves on the day they were to be attacked. The fear of the Jews fell upon those who formerly planned to hurt them.

Discuss / Consider

1. Discuss how quickly things changed for Esther and Mordecai. Their situation seemed bleak, but in just a day's time it was completely turned around. Has God ever done this with you?

2. Discuss the anti-biblical laws of our nation today. Can God overturn these laws? Certainly He can. What is our responsibility in the meantime?

Challenge

1. The blessing in Esther 8 illustrates the blessing of the gospel now. As the Jews were facing death, because of a law that could not be revoked, so mankind is faced with death because of the law of sin. Just as there was a way of deliverance for Esther and her people, there is a way for us. The old edict, the wages of sin is death, was not revoked. But a new edict overruled the old, the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**The Jews Successfully Defend Themselves; The Feast of Purim
Esther 9**

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. There is a time to kill.

2. There is a time to celebrate

Practical Application

1. Watching out for a looting mentality.

Questions

1. What happened on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar?

2. Does the Bible say, "You shall not kill"?

3. What is the Feast of Purim?

4. What does "Purim" mean?

Answers

1. The people who planned to attack the Jews were overpowered, because the king's decree permitted the Jews to defend themselves.
2. No, Exodus 20:13 says, "You shall not murder." Murder is the wrongful taking of life. According to Ecclesiastes 3:3, there is a time to kill.
3. It is an official feast day in the Jewish calendar established to remember God's protection of His people in the days of Esther.
4. Purim means "lots," in reference to the lot Haman cast to determine which day he planned to annihilate the Jews. God caused the lot to fall on the twelfth month, which gave the Jews time to prepare to defend themselves.

Discuss / Consider

1. Discuss when there is a time to kill. When it is right to take a life? Consider capital punishment, and refer to Genesis 9:6 and Romans 13. Also discuss self-defense and military service.

2. The Jews observe two days of feasting in celebration of the Lord's protection. It is good to celebrate what the Lord has done for us. Refer to Romans 12:15. Do you rejoice together with your fellow believers?

Challenge

1. Even though the Jews defended themselves against attack, they did not take advantage of the opportunity and plunder their attackers. They kept their desires under control. We as believers need to guard against taking things by force when we have the advantage. Watch out for a looting mentality.

The Advancement and Greatness of Mordecai Esther 10

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. The righteous are exalted and remembered in due time.**

- 2. The wicked are humbled and forgotten in due time.**

Practical Application

- 1. Let's follow the model of Mordecai.**

Questions

1. Why was the book of Esther not included among the Dead Sea Scrolls?
2. Why should we study the book of Esther, if it does not even mention God?
3. How is the book of Esther prophetic?
4. How is the principle, "The righteous are exalted and remembered in due time," illustrated in the life of Mordecai?
5. Will all righteous people receive honor in this lifetime?

Answers

1. The scribes probably did not put a high emphasis on copying the book of Esther, because it does not mention the name of God.
2. Because the hand of God is seen throughout the book. He was working behind-the-scenes to protect His people.
3. The anti-Semitism in the book of Esther is typical of anti-Semitism in the last days. Just as God delivered His people in the time of Esther, He will return for them in the last days.
4. Mordecai's future did not look promising when he was the target of Haman's hatred of the Jews. But Mordecai did what was right. And God caused Mordecai to be exalted.
5. No, many righteous people will not be exalted until the judgment seat of Christ, after their death. But what an honor it will be!

Discuss / Consider

1. Discuss the apocryphal additions to the book of Esther. Why do we believe they are not part of the inspired text?

2. Review your study of the book of Esther. What have you learned that you did not know before? What have you learned that is most significant to your life?

Challenge

1. We have seen an excellent role model in the book of Esther, Mordecai the Jew. Will you follow his model in your life?