

King Xerxes Allows Mordecai to Write an Edict

Esther 8

Esther 8:1-2 - *“On that day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told how he was related to her. ² So the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai; and Esther appointed Mordecai over the house of Haman.”*

Background Notes

In Esther 7, Queen Esther exposed evil Haman and his wicked plans to annihilate the Jews, and as a result, Haman himself was eliminated. Think of the turn of events here. Early that morning, Haman was second only to King Xerxes in power and authority in the Persian Empire. But when Haman came into the royal courts to request of the king that Mordecai be put to death, everything took a turn for the worse for Haman.

Against his will, Haman was forced to exalt his mortal enemy, Mordecai, to parade him through the streets in royal garb, and to proclaim that this was the man whom the king delighted to honor! When Haman came home, his own wife and friends predicted his downfall. By the end of that day Haman was hanged on the very gallows that he himself had constructed for hanging Mordecai. Esther 7:10: *“So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.”* What a change in circumstances - all in one day!

Esther 8:1-2 reveals that, on the same day, Haman's estate was given away to Esther, and she in turn gave it to Mordecai. Furthermore, Haman's political power and authority was transferred to Mordecai, including the king's own signet ring. What an amazing turn of events - all in a very short period of time! Praise the Lord!

Can God do the same thing today? Of course He can. He can change the course of events in a very short period of time, if He so chooses. So don't be discouraged if things look bleak, or if you've been praying about some particular situation for a long time. God can change your situation overnight, if He so chooses. And if He chooses not to do so, it's because He has a very good reason - for you, and perhaps for many others.

Doctrinal Points

1. God can control the rulers of a nation.

Verses 3-8: *“Now Esther spoke again to the king, fell down at his feet, and implored him with tears to counteract the evil of Haman the Agagite, and the scheme which he had devised against the Jews. ⁴ And the king held out the golden scepter*

toward Esther. So Esther arose and stood before the king, ⁵ and said, “If it pleases the king, and if I have found favor in his sight and the thing seems right to the king and I am pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to annihilate the Jews who are in all the king’s provinces. ⁶ For how can I endure to see the evil that will come to my people? Or how can I endure to see the destruction of my countrymen?”

⁷ Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, “Indeed, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows because he tried to lay his hand on the Jews. ⁸ You yourselves write a decree concerning the Jews, as you please, in the king’s name, and seal it with the king’s signet ring; for whatever is written in the king’s name and sealed with the king’s signet ring no one can revoke.”

Even though wicked Haman was removed from the scene, and even though Mordecai was exalted to prime minister and secretary of state, the Jews still were faced with a serious problem. The edict to annihilate the Jews was still on the books. It was still in effect because no law of the Medes and the Persians could ever be revoked. In fact, that’s the origin of the expression that we sometimes use to describe a law that can’t be altered: “it’s a law of the Medes and Persians.”

Once again, Esther risked her life to go in before the king – this time to plead for her people. And once again, the king held out his scepter to Esther. God can control the rulers of a nation! Esther dared to ask the king to revoke the edict that Haman had sponsored (v5), but even King Xerxes could not revoke a “law of the Medes and Persians” that he had signed and sealed.

However, there was a way out: another edict could be written to override or counteract the former edict. So Xerxes gave Esther and Mordecai the authority to write the counter decree in his name, even using the king’s signet ring to seal it.

Was it just coincidence that the king would grant Esther and Mordecai the authority to actually write a decree for the Persian Empire that would counter the decree sponsored by Haman? Of course not! This was God working behind the scenes. Proverbs 1:21 says, “*The heart of the king is in the hands of the Lord.*”

Remember, even though the name of God is not found in the book of Esther, the hand of God is seen. God’s controlling and guiding hand is evident all through the book. God can control the ruler of a nation, then and today.

2. God can control the laws of a nation.

Verses 9-14: “So the king’s scribes were called at that time, in the third month, which is the month of Sivan, on the twenty-third day; and it was written, according to all that Mordecai commanded, to the Jews, the satraps, the governors, and the princes of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, one hundred and twenty-seven provinces in all, to every province in its own script, to every people in their own language, and to the Jews in their own script and language. ¹⁰ And he wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, sealed it with the king’s signet ring, and sent letters by couriers on horseback, riding on royal horses bred from swift steeds.

11 By these letters the king permitted the Jews who were in every city to gather together and protect their lives—to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the forces of any people or province that would assault them, both little children and women, and to plunder their possessions, 12 on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar. 13 A copy of the document was to be issued as a decree in every province and published for all people, so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies. 14 The couriers who rode on royal horses went out, hastened and pressed on by the king's command. And the decree was issued in Shushan the citadel.”

In our study of Esther, we have already mentioned that origin of anti-Semitism is satanic. Certainly Satan was behind Haman's edict to annihilate the Jews. However, God knows how to foil Satan's strategies, and here we see a prime example in the way the counter decree **more** than neutralized the former evil edict. The Jews were given the right to defend and avenge themselves on the day that they were to be attacked, and they had a number of months to prepare to go on the offensive.

Do you think this was all by chance, or a coincidence? No way. God can control the laws of a nation. Think of the anti-biblical laws in our own nation today allowing the killing of unborn babies, and the rulings that redefine marriage. Can God overturn these laws? Yes, He can! Let us pray and do our part. It may not happen overnight, but this chapter in the book of Esther certainly shows that God can control the laws of a nation.

3. God can control the emotions of a nation.

Verses 15-17: “So Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, with a great crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple; and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. 16 The Jews had light and gladness, joy and honor. 17 And in every province and city, wherever the king's command and decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a holiday. Then many of the people of the land became Jews, because fear of the Jews fell upon them.”

God now turned the hearts of the people in favor of the Jews. After the first edict that gave everyone the right to kill the Jews and take their property, there would certainly have been a wave of anti-Semitism - it would have swept through the entire Persian Empire. But God reversed the anti-Semitism! The Persians rejoiced for the Jews, and many Persians even became Jewish proselytes. And fear of the Jews fell on all those who had planned to harm the Jews. Verse 17: *“Then many of the people of the land became Jews, because fear of the Jews fell upon them.”*

God controlled the situation, even to the point where the emotions of the people became favorable to the Jews. God can control the emotions of a nation, then and today. For example, after World War I, God moved the emotions of Great Britain to look with favor on the creation of a Homeland for the Jewish people, and the result was the well-known Balfour Declaration of 1917. God can control the emotions of a nation.

The favorable position of the Jews in Esther 8 is a type, or picture, of the favorable position that the Jews will have among the nations after the Tribulation period of the future. In that day, the fierce anti-Semitism of the Tribulation period will be over, and the nations will look upon the believing remnant of Israel with favor. Speaking of this future time, the prophet Zechariah wrote: *"...many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you" (Zechariah 8:22-23). God can control the emotions of a nation.*

Practical Application

Don't miss the gospel in Esther 8!

The blessing of Esther 8 is not only a picture of the blessing that will come to the believing remnant of Israel after the time of Tribulation in the future, but it also illustrates the blessing of the gospel now. As the Jews were facing sure death because of a law that could not be revoked, so mankind is confronted with death because of a law that cannot be revoked. *"The wages [penalty] of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).*

But just as there was a way out for Esther and her people, so is there a way of salvation for us! The old edict was not revoked - but a new edict overcame the old.

Do you see the illustration? God's **law** says that "the penalty for sin is death," and it cannot be revoked. But God's **gift** of eternal life can override that penalty and give us life through Jesus Christ our Lord. *"...he who believes in the Son of God has eternal life" (John 3:36).* The new edict does not revoke the old edict, but the new edict overrides it, and counteracts it, and overcomes it.

Don't miss the good news of the gospel in Esther 8!