

Sermon Discussion

29 August 2021

Read Esther 8:1-17

Dig Deeper

Haman's "**house**" (v. 1) was his estate. Esther received this probably to compensate her for her suffering. The king gave Mordecai Haman's place as second in authority similar to Joseph (*Genesis 41:42*), Nehemiah (*Nehemiah 1:11-2:8*), and Daniel (*Daniel 5:7, 29; 6:3*).

The Book of Esther is set in the reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes), who was heavily committed to form of **Zoroastrianism**, and who reversed the practice of religious tolerance of his predecessors. He destroyed the main idol of Bel Marduk, the temple of Marduk, Esagila, and many other Mardukian temples. In view of the king's religious intolerance it took great courage for Esther to request mercy for the Jews.

The first decree, to destroy the Jews, had gone out in April (3:12). Ahasuerus published this one, allowing the Jews to defend themselves, in June. The Jews had **over eight months** to prepare for the day their enemies might attack them.

The **the only mention** in the Old Testament that Gentiles "became Jews" is here in v. 17. They became religious Jews, not racial Jews. This testimony to the fact that Gentiles recognized God's blessing on the Jews would have been a great encouragement to the Jews in the postexilic period (*see Exodus 19:5-6*).

1. Esther could not bear to see her people destroyed; Paul had unceasing pain and anguish at the thought of his people perishing. How would you describe your concern for those who are outside of Christ?
2. Why is it difficult to consider the needs of others as being more important than our own? Name someone you know who is particularly good at putting the needs of others before themselves. Explain.
3. Esther was persistent in her request to the king to rescue her people. Why is perseverance in prayer often difficult for us?
4. God placed Esther and Mordecai in two of the three most powerful positions in the Persian Empire. What does this tell us about God? Are you ever prone to think his involvement in your current placement in life is less important to him? How can we steward well what he entrusts to us?
5. What makes Jesus a better mediator than Esther? How often do you express gratitude to him for his mediation on your behalf?

Application & Prayer

When deliverance comes, it's appropriate to rejoice. In what areas in your own life has God delivered you? How did you feel? How have you rejoiced?

- Take time to write down or reflect on how God has delivered you from some difficult circumstances. Pray for those who are currently in tough times and awaiting deliverance.
- Think about the spheres of influence you have in your life right now...how God has uniquely positioned you to influence people. Ask God to help you to resemble Jesus before those people in specific ways.
- Jesus came with the power to reverse the decree of death on your life and make you a new creation. Have you had the opportunity to share that with someone who does not know Him? Is there such a dramatic difference in your own life that someone might ask you why? If you haven't had this opportunity lately, how can you and your home group create one?