

Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church

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**DHW
BIBLE STUDY CLASS**

ESTHER

LESSON 7

CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION

The chapter begins where the previous chapter ends with Haman hurriedly escorted to the second banquet which Esther had prepared for the king and him. Up to this point of time, although Haman was unbearably humiliated, the fate of the Jews remained unchanged. It was a time of fear and anxiety for the Jews as they think of the 13th day of the month of Adar. But God would not be mocked. Anyone who goes against God's people is against God Himself; and He will deal with the enemy. In this chapter, Haman, the enemy of the Jews and the chief architect of the decree to exterminate all the Jews, would be removed and executed. The chapter relates the doom and death of Haman.

The king's patience had been tested to the limit. He had asked Esther for her petition on two previous occasions, but Esther procrastinated and promised to put forth her petition on

this second banquet. Ancient Near East kings who were typically despotic could have dismissed Esther and sent her back to his harem and to wait for his call. Esther would be condemned for not petitioning the king when given the opportunities. Again, we realize the unseen providential hand of God working marvellously and interestingly to save His people.

Esther performed excellently

Contrary to what many picture her as a weak and naïve lady, Esther displayed courage, determination and alertness before the king and Haman – the two most powerful men in the Persian Empire. Esther's petition provides some valuable insight in learning to resolve conflicts. On the other hand, Haman hoped to have a good time at least at this second banquet to compensate for the humiliation he had undergone earlier. But he was totally unaware that he was led to his doom. His attempt to seek remission for his evil deeds illustrates what one ought to do.

The following outline would familiarize us with the flow of events in this chapter:

- 1) Esther presented her petition to King Ahasuerus (7:1-4);
- 2) Esther accused Haman as the wicked enemy (7:5-6);
- 3) Haman pleaded Esther for his life (7:7-9); and
- 4) The king hanged Haman on his own gallows (7:10)

STUDY THE WORD

Esther Presents Her Petition to King Ahasuerus

King Ahasuerus came to Esther's second banquet. The king came expectantly to learn what Esther's request might be. He had repeated the offer twice to Esther granting her desire even up to half of his kingdom. On this occasion whether he would repeat the same offer was yet to be seen for one day had passed since the offer was repeated the second time at the first banquet. Esther had promised the king that she would tell him what her request would be this time. Haman was hurriedly escorted from his home. He had not got over the humiliation he had experienced earlier on that day. And added to this, his wife and friends had told him that if Mordecai was of *the seed of the Jews*, he would be doomed. It was with an uneasy and uncertain state of mind and heart that he came to the banquet which Esther also had invited him together with the king. The king then repeated his magnanimous offer to Esther. This was definitely done after dinner. He asked Esther what her petition was. It was a good sign that the king addressed Esther as *Queen Esther*. The king repeated precisely the same offer to Esther, and assured her that whatever she asked would be carried out, even to give her half of his kingdom.

Then Esther presented her request. She began with a humble attitude by putting herself in the mercy of the king: *if I have found favour in thy*

sight, O king, and if it please the king... Then she proceeded straight to the point with her request. She pleaded to the king to let her life be spared, and also the life of her people. She continued that she and her people had been sold *to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish*. But if they had been sold as male and female slaves, she would not have bothered the king with this request; and added that *although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage* (v. 4). By using the passive mood, Esther was careful not to implicate the king for the problem caused in the first decree. The king was not to be blamed. She shrewdly aroused the king's attention by implying that his queen was about to lose her very life. She did not ask for any property or material gains, but she pleaded for her life and the lives of her people. She significantly did not even mention about the decree. She was careful not to refer to it, instead she used the exact words which were incorporated in the decree. She and her people were *to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish*.¹ She also subtly implied that there was monetary transaction which took place when she made the statement that if she and her people had been sold as slaves. No mention of Haman and the king. She was deliberately ambiguous thus arousing the curiosity of the king. Esther's plea was personal and concise.

¹ In the original language that is Hebrew, the phrase which appears here 7:4 is exactly the same as that in 3:13.

Her subtle ambiguity raised more questions arousing the curiosity of the king. Esther showed great courage and resourcefulness for she was speaking to the most powerful man in the empire, and his second in command who was implicated. By now, Haman could be feeling uneasy and perturbed.

The last portion of Esther's words: *although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage* has stirred up some debate as to its meaning. A literal reading would be: *although the enemy is not equal to the damage of the king*. The Hebrew reading is not altogether clear. John C. Whitcomb's comments express very well: "But it may mean that the punishment of Haman for his crime would involve far less financial loss to the king than the destruction of thousands of Jews. By contrast, however, Esther would have remained silent if the Jews had been sold as slaves, for this would doubtless have brought much initial profit to the king."²

Esther Accuses Haman as the Wicked Enemy

King Ahasuerus' curiosity was aroused. Evidently, he was enraged at the audacity of the unnamed assailant who would dare to kill his queen and her people. The king shot out two questions in quick succession: *Who is he, and where is he?* He was clearly angry and outraged. He wanted to

know the identity of the assailant and his whereabouts. His motive was clear. Esther immediately said that *the adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman* (v.6). It was Haman the traitor who wanted *to destroy, to kill and to cause to perish* Esther, the queen; and he was also the enemy of her people. Esther described Haman as wicked. In this incident, Esther revealed his Jewish ethnicity. She had kept it secret until now. Esther should be commended for her straight-forward and forthright speaking with political skill and subtlety. She was like Nathan, who in the same manner, accused King David over his adultery with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12). King Ahasuerus' anger was righteous because it was against injustice which was meted out towards innocent and defenceless Jews. In this regard, the king was angry but did not sin. Haman, on the other hand, was afraid before the king and the queen. He deserved it. He was now being accused but Esther did not falsely accuse him like he had done when petitioning the king to destroy all the Jews.

Haman Pleads with Esther for His Life

In his anger, the king stormed out of the banquet hall into the palace garden which apparently was located near to the hall. One wonders why he walked out of the hall. Was it because he was angry at Queen Esther for her accusation against Haman, the Prime Minister? This could not possibly be the reason because the king was

² John C. Whitcomb, "Esther, the Triumph of God's Sovereignty", p.94.

delighted with Esther and he had shown much favour towards her during these few days having attended her banquets, merrily eating and drinking, and even repeated three of his magnanimous offer to her. A more probable reason could be that the king was furious at the shockingly revealed intention of Haman, and was trying to calm down and avoiding at the spur of the moment to make a decision between Esther his queen and Haman his prime minister.

As the king stormed out of the banquet hall, Haman saw that *there was evil determined against him by the king* (v.7). Haman now feared for his life. He was now experiencing the same way how the Jews in Shushan and in the empire had been feeling when the decree was proclaimed to destroy all the Jews. Haman instinctively stood up by taking advantage of the king's absence to approach Esther apparently to beg for his life. Esther was unmoved as she reclined on her couch. Haman had gone too far by falling upon Esther's couch. The text does not state what Haman was saying to Esther, and at that very moment, the king returned to the banquet hall. His eyes caught Haman in a position which he interpreted Haman's action as an attack on Esther. King Ahasuerus commented: *Will he force the queen also before me in the house?* As he spoke these words, the king's chamberlains *covered Haman's face*. This indicates that there were chamberlains present in the banquet hall as in all the other instances. The

chamberlains understood the meaning of the king's remark against Haman. The covering of the face was Persian practice, indicating that a person was sentenced to be executed.

The King Hangs Haman on His Own Gallows

As Haman was escorted away to be executed, Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, who was present approached the king. Harbonah was one of the seven personal chamberlains of the king, who was ordered by the king to bring Vashti to the king's banquet (1:10). He said to the king that Haman had erected a gallows fifty cubits high (one cubit equals 18 inches or approx. 45 cm) by his house for Mordecai, who had been loyal to the king. The king ordered: *Hang him thereon* (v.9). So they hanged Haman on his own gallows. Then was the king pacified.

PRACTICAL VALUE

Haman deserved to be executed and the mode of his execution befits his crime. Out of his pride and arrogance, he concocted the evil plan to destroy, kill, and annihilate the Jews for no other reason than for the fact that Mordecai refused to pay homage to him. His pride was hurt, but he was greedy and had schemed to amass his personal wealth when the riches and property of the Jews would be confiscated. In his arrogance and anger, he erected an exceptionally high gallows to hang Mordecai on it. But

God would not be mocked. Anyone who would harm the seed of Abraham would suffer the curse that God had pronounced upon them.³ Haman met his death because he became an enemy of God. Moreover, God's Word has warned that anyone who would cause evil on another, that evil would befall him.⁴ We learn that we are loved and protected by the LORD God. Anyone who is against us is against God and his curse on us would turn back towards him. It happened to Haman, and it will happen to the enemies of God.

God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and all therein. Everything belongs to God, and He is Sovereign over the world. Therefore, God is in control over the affairs of men. We see this clearly in the lives of the protagonists in the book of Esther. Mordecai, Esther and the people of God were at the mercy of Haman, but God was able to use the king and Esther, as they naturally were, to deliver His people. Both of them acted responsibly on their own and yet their actions fulfilled the purpose of God. This is a wonderful and comforting truth.

Esther's presentation of her request aptly illustrates the Lord Jesus' teaching about communication with one another. We should be brief and

³ Genesis 12:3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

⁴ Proverbs 26:27 Whoso diggeth a **pit** shall **fall** therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him.

forthright: *But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil* (Matthew 5:37). Esther did not beat around the bush. She chose which facts to present to get the desired impact on the king. She could have said that she was Jewish and a victim of the decree. But she mentioned only that her life and the life of her people, leaving out the revelation of her ethnicity. On this note she struck a sensitive chord in the king's heart, and the king was then determined to find out the identity and whereabouts of the assailant. A careful and detailed study of Esther's short and powerful presentation should yield interesting insights and benefits.

Our life is more important than material gains even on a very big scale. Esther could be tempted to choose material gains by accepting the king's offer of giving her half of his kingdom. But she knew her mission and the importance of her life and that of her people. There is good and practical sense in her thinking. Many people would opt to work themselves to the detriment of their health in order to become very rich so that they can have all the good things that money can buy. But little did they realize that having acquired the wealth, they are too old and too weak to enjoy it. Is this not foolish? If a person keeps his body, soul, and spirit healthy, he can always work to meet the needs of his life and still enjoy all the good things in life and be happy. And more so as Christians, as Paul states that *godliness*

with contentment is great gain.
AMEN