

THE PEOPLE RESCUED

CORE PASSAGE: ESTHER 3:7-9,13; 8:5,11-13,17

CONTEXT

Though many Jews returned to Judah to reclaim and rebuild the way of life that had been lost, many stayed put. The original exiles who had survived the deportations settled in their new home, married, and had children, just as Jeremiah had commanded them (Jeremiah 29:4-7). Over the seventy years of exile and beyond, generations were born and raised in the foreign lands of Babylon and Persia. But because of the passage of time, these lands no longer seemed so foreign; rather, they had become home. Yet even in these places distant from their homeland, God was watching over His people.

KEY CONCEPT

God rescues His people even in the face of imminent destruction.

As you examine Esther 3:7-9,13;
8:5,11-13,17:

- Recognize that though it may seem God is not present or working, He always is.
- Rejoice that God keeps His promises and covenants, preserving His people.



TIMELINE

The First Group of Jews
Returns and Rebuilds the
Temple (Ezra 1–6)

STUDY SESSION:
**Esther and Mordecai Rescue God's
People from Destruction (Esther 3–10)**

Nehemiah Returns and Rebuilds
the Wall Around Jerusalem
(Nehemiah 1–6)

Esther Is Made Queen of
Persia (Esther 1–2)

Ezra the Priest Returns to Judah and
Instructs the People in the Law (Ezra 7–10)

Daily Readings

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|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 1: Esther 1–2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 4: Esther 6–7 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 2: Esther 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 5: Esther 8–10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 3: Esther 4–5 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 6: Psalm 71 |



Scan this QR code
to access this session's
Scripture passages.

PERSONAL PREPARATION

ESTHER 3:7-9,13

EVEN AT THE BRINK OF SEEMING DESTRUCTION, GOD IS WORKING AMONG HIS PEOPLE.

Underline the orders given for the destruction of the Jews.

7 In the first month, the month of Nisan, in King Ahasuerus's twelfth year, the pur—that is, the lot—was cast before Haman for each day in each month, and it fell on the twelfth month, the month Adar. **8** Then Haman informed King Ahasuerus, "There is one ethnic group, scattered throughout the peoples in every province of your kingdom, keeping themselves separate. Their laws are different from everyone else's and they do not obey the king's laws. It is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. **9** If the king approves, let an order be drawn up authorizing their destruction, and I will pay 375 tons of silver to the officials for deposit in the royal treasury." . . . **13** Letters were sent by couriers to each of the royal provinces telling the officials to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the Jewish people— young and old, women and children—and plunder their possessions on a single day, the thirteenth day of Adar, the twelfth month.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

GOD'S PLAN AND HUMAN ACTION: God's sovereignty over all of life encompasses the free actions of human beings (Proverbs 19:21). In ways we cannot fully comprehend, the Lord's plan goes forward through the choices of human beings as moral agents. Even freely chosen sinful actions are factored into God's overarching plan, as is the case with the crucifixion of Jesus—an event both purposed by God through foreknowledge and yet also carried out by the wicked decisions of human beings (Acts 2:23). Knowing that God is working all things for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28), we trust in His promise to fulfill His plan, even when we do not understand our present circumstances.

Key Concept: God rescues His people even in the face of imminent destruction.



Embedded in Esther's colorful story—filled with beauty treatments, harems, lavish banquets, and dangerous requests—there was a power struggle. Two men serving the king began to clash. Haman, a descendant of Agag and recently promoted official, took offense when Mordecai, Esther's guardian, refused to honor him. When he learned Mordecai was a Jew, Haman decided to destroy all of Mordecai's people with him (v. 6). Haman would not rest until Mordecai—and every Jew—was put to death.

As the highest-ranking official in the nation, Haman posed an imminent threat to God's people throughout the entire kingdom of Persia. With malicious intent, Haman moved every political mountain he could to eliminate Mordecai and his people. Finally, he manipulated King Ahasuerus to decree the annihilation of the Jews (vv. 8-15).

Why do you think God allows hatred and harm for His people?

Though shocked and in a state of mourning over the deadly decree, Mordecai didn't give up the fight. Five years before Haman had concocted his murderous plot, a young Jewish girl named Hadassah was plucked out of obscurity to become Queen Esther of Persia (2:7,16-17). Mordecai rightly recognized this providential placement and urged Esther to use her influence with the king: "Perhaps you have come to your royal position for such a time as this" (4:14).

The events of the book of Esther read quickly, yet they take place over a decade (483–473 BC). We see the sudden seismic shifts in the story, but we must recognize that many mundane moments passed by in the meantime and that God was working all along. The events that turn our lives upside down do not come as a surprise to God. He's been preparing us for "such a time" all along.

How has God prepared you for particular opportunities or seasons you didn't see coming?



PERSONAL PREPARATION

ESTHER 8:5,11-13,17

GOD CARRIES OUT HIS PURPOSES OF RESCUE AND DELIVERANCE.

Circle the orders given for the defense and preservation of the Jews.

5 She said, “If it pleases the king and I have found favor with him, if the matter seems right to the king and I am pleasing in his eyes, let a royal edict be written. Let it revoke the documents the scheming Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the king’s provinces. . . . **11** The king’s edict gave the Jews in each and every city the right to assemble and defend themselves, to destroy, kill, and annihilate every ethnic and provincial army hostile to them, including women and children, and to take their possessions as spoils of war. **12** This would take place on a single day throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month Adar. **13** A copy of the text, issued as law throughout every province, was distributed to all the peoples so the Jews could be ready to avenge themselves against their enemies on that day. . . . **17** In every province and every city where the king’s command and edict reached, gladness and joy took place among the Jews. There was a celebration and a holiday. And many of the ethnic groups of the land professed themselves to be Jews because fear of the Jews had overcome them.

Key Concept: God rescues His people even in the face of imminent destruction.



The theme of favor runs through the story of Esther. She first found favor “in the eyes of everyone who saw her” (2:15) and then with the king, gaining “more favor and approval” than all the other women (2:17). Later when Esther risked her life before the king, “she gained favor with him” (5:2) and appealed to that favor in her petitions (5:8; 7:3; 8:5). Esther’s rise to royalty was not due to her pretty face and charismatic personality. She didn’t earn the crown. Esther had the gracious hand of God upon her life orchestrating these events for His glory and good purposes, even though He is not explicitly named in the story.

How have you experienced the unmerited favor of God in your life?

see that God, indeed, was working. But there is no glaring internal evidence from the book itself that Mordecai or Esther possessed the heroic faith we hold them so high for having.

Granting that Esther and Mordecai were the best versions we hope they were, although there are lessons we can learn from their example, ultimately neither of them is the hero of the story. The main takeaway of the book is not to become more like Esther or Mordecai; it is to trust in the provision and power of our all-seeing, all-powerful, all-faithful covenant-keeping God. He is the hero of the story.

What characteristics of God stand out to you as clearly displayed in the book of Esther?

We tend to read stories seeking a hero to emulate, distilling them down into three alliterative application points for self-improvement. Yet a careful, honest reading through Esther reveals both Mordecai and Esther as works in progress. Even in their correspondence back and forth, there is no mention of trust in God. We can read between the lines and

GOSPEL CONNECTION

God remains true to His covenant in having a people for Himself and will provide a way to trust in Him. This was true for Esther, even in a foreign land, and it is true for believers today who trust in Jesus to rescue us from sin and death.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Read the case study below and consider Esther's and Mordecai's examples for possible ways to respond. Finally, consider what you would do.

CASE STUDY: Recently, a new government law has declared that churches must submit all sermon manuscripts for approval before preaching. Failure to comply could lead to heavy fines, imprisonment, or even the closure of the church. You and your fellow church members must decide how to proceed.

CONCEAL

Esther 2:10-11,20

DEFY

Esther 3:1-5

SUBMIT

Esther 7:1-4

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

How can we know the wise and godly response when facing persecution?

How does knowing that God not only rescues but also preserves His people shape our decisions?

Key Concept: God rescues His people even in the face of imminent destruction.



HEAD

What verses could we memorize this week to help us remember God's power and sovereignty?

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Read Psalm 71, and pray specifically through verses 1-8. Seek the Lord for refuge and rescue from your troubles (vv. 1-4). Express your reasons for hope in the Lord and praise Him for His faithfulness to you (vv. 5-8).

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



HEART

How might a better grasp of God's favor and providence affect your peace?



HANDS

How will you honor God with the influence He has given you "for such a time as this"?

