

Esther's Choice

Esther 2:19 - 5:2

PPT Title

Esther's Choice

Main Point: God is Sovereign. He is in control of all things.

PPT Verse

Key Verse: *The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. He directs it like a stream of water anywhere He pleases.* - Proverbs 21:1

Props: An umbrella; [Optional Demonstration: rolled up paper with fancy writing for "scroll," playdoh or sealing wax, a ring with engraved top for signet ring]

BACKGROUND/REVIEW



Last week, we learned about a beautiful Jewish, or Israelite, girl named Esther. She was living in the city of Susa with her older cousin Mordecai. Mordecai had raised Esther, because her parents died when she was a little girl. When we left our story last week, King Xerxes had chosen Esther from all the young women of the kingdom to become his new queen. This sounds like something out of a storybook, but danger lies ahead. Mordecai had not taken Esther to live where God wanted them to live. God had instructed all of the Jewish people to return to their homeland to be together and rebuild His temple (2 Chronicles 36:23). Mordecai and many other Jews had ignored God's instructions. They had become comfortable in the foreign land of Persia, and they remained where they did not belong. Furthermore, Mordecai had told Esther not to tell the king that she was a Jew. Esther kept her family a secret. Listen this week as we hear how God orchestrated all the events in Esther's life to carry out **His plan** and keep **His promises**.



PLOT UNCOVERED (Esther 2:18-23)

One day while Mordecai was at the palace gate, he overheard two of the king's officers talking. No doubt, God had placed Mordecai right where God wanted him to be.



Bigthana and Teresh were two of the king's officers. They guarded the door of the royal palace. They became angry with King Xerxes. So they decided to kill him. They made their evil plans while Mordecai was sitting at the palace gate. So he found out about it. And he told Queen Esther. Then she reported it to the king. She told him that Mordecai had uncovered the plans against him. Some people checked Esther's report. And they found out it was true. So the two officials were put to death. - Esther 2:21-23a



All of these things were written in the king's official record book. **God is always at work!** Isn't it amazing how God had Mordecai at that gate just at the exact time that he would overhear this terrible plan to kill the king? By reporting this to Esther, he saved the king's life!

HAMAN PLOTS TO KILL THE JEWS (Esther 3)

Note to Teacher: In 1 Samuel 15:1-35, Israel was commanded to completely destroy the Amalekites - every man, woman, and child. They did not kill Agag, the King of the Amalekites, although they were told to do so. From Agag's family line came Haman, a

consequence of past sin.



King Xerxes had another official, named Haman. Haman was from the family line of Agag, a great enemy of the Jewish people (1 Samuel 15). King Xerxes honored Haman. The king gave him a very high position, and even ordered that everyone bow down to him. Because Mordecai was at the palace gate, he knew of this decree, and he knew who Haman was, yet he refused to bow down to Haman.

But Mordecai refused to get down on his knees. He wouldn't give Haman any honor at all. - Esther 3:2b

When the officials asked Mordecai why he would not bow down, he told them it was because he was a Jew. The officials told Haman that Mordecai refused to bow down to him.

Haman noticed that Mordecai wouldn't get down on his knees. He wouldn't give Haman any honor. So Haman burned with anger. But he had found out who Mordecai's people were. So he decided not to kill just Mordecai. He also looked for a way to destroy all of Mordecai's people. They were Jews. He wanted to kill all of them everywhere in the kingdom of Xerxes. - Esther 3:5-6



Say: Haman was furious that Mordecai would not honor him, and Haman acted in anger. He came up with a plan to kill ALL the Jews in King Xerxes' kingdom. Remember, this was a huge, far-reaching kingdom that included many countries.



Then Haman said to King Xerxes, "Certain people are scattered among the nations. They live in all of the territories in your kingdom. Their practices are different from the practices of all other people. They don't obey your laws. It really isn't good for you to put up with them. If it pleases you, give the order to destroy them. I'll even add 375 tons of silver to the royal treasures. You can use it to pay the men who take care of the matter."



So the king took his ring off his finger. The ring had his royal seal on it. He gave the ring to Haman. - Esther 3:8-10a

This time King Xerxes didn't even go to his counsel of wise men for advice. The king blindly followed the plan of Haman. Haman had the royal secretaries write orders to all the governors and officials. The orders said they must kill all the Jews on a single day, eleven months away. The king gave Haman his ring with the royal seal. Once the orders were marked with the royal seal, they could not be undone. **Optional Demonstration:** Either place a small piece of playdoh or melt a small amount of wax on your rolled up scroll. Press the signet ring into the wax or playdoh to "seal" the document. If using Playdoh, tell the students this was originally done with melted wax. Keep this sealed scroll to refer to next week.

Haman was certainly an evil man. His pride caused him to think he was great and worthy to have an entire kingdom bow down to him. When Mordecai refused to bow to him, he became angry enough to kill an entire race of people. But, would God stand for this? Let's take a quick look back into the history of the Jewish people. Way back in the beginning of Genesis, God blessed Abraham by making him the ancestor of all the Jewish people. The entire Jewish race started with Abraham and his wife, Sarah. God made these promises to Abraham:

PPT Verse

I will make you into a great nation.

I will bless you.

I will make your name great.

You will be a blessing to others.

I will bless those who bless you.

I will put a curse on anyone who calls down a curse on you.

All nations on earth will be blessed because of you." - Genesis 12:2-3

These promises were NOT "if - then" promises. They were "no matter what" promises. There was nothing Abraham's people could do to earn these things. And there was nothing that they could do to stop God from keeping these promises. These promises did not depend on the Jews' obedience. It was based ONLY on God's grace and love.

Ask: What was the first promise? *I will make you into a great nation.*

Say: God promised to make Abraham's descendants into a great nation. The word used for great in this verse (*gadol*) means very important, and *large in number*. God promised to keep Abraham's people, the Jews, large in number. Haman planned to kill a very large number of the Jews.

Ask: Also, what did God's promise say about anyone who cursed Abraham's people? God will put a *curse on them*.

Say: Haman had certainly called down a curse on the Jewish people. Remember, God ALWAYS keeps His promises.

However, do not miss this point: God had instructed all the Jews to return to Jerusalem. If Mordecai and the rest of the Jews had obeyed God, there would not have been any Jews left in Xerxes' kingdom for Haman to kill! Following God's command **would have protected the Jews** from the evil plan of their enemy, Haman. It is ALWAYS best to obey God's commands.

Application: Following God's commands keeps us under the umbrella of God's protection (Psalm 91:14). When we choose not to obey God, we remove ourselves from the protection of God (Deuteronomy 23:14, 2 Chronicles 24:20, Joshua 7:10-12).



Teacher: Choose a child from the group, and use your umbrella to illustrate this point. Part of God's plan of protection for children is placing them in the care of their parents. He has given your parents authority over you, and they are responsible for taking care of you. If you follow their commands and obey their rules, you will be under the umbrella of **God's** protection. God promises this! **Open the umbrella and hold it over the child.** (Or point to the power point illustration.) God loves us very much, and wants us to live under His loving protection. But, if you choose to disobey your parents, you step out from under the umbrella of God's protection. **Have the child step out from under the umbrella. Do not move the umbrella, because God's care does not move or change; it is our choice to step away from His care.** It breaks God's heart when we make this choice (Genesis 6:6, 1 Chronicles 21:15). He does not want us to be open to trouble and harm. Listen to God's promise, and remember, God ALWAYS keeps His promises!

Children, obey your parents as believers in the Lord. Obey them because it's the right thing to do. Scripture says, "Honor your father and mother." That is the first commandment that has a promise. "Then things will go well with you. You will live a long time on the earth." - Ephesians 6:1-3

Note to Teacher: God had warned that destruction and hard times would come if Israel was disobedient. So, it is not surprising that the Jews, remaining in Persia and Media, feared for their lives. Speaking through Moses, God told Israel that this would happen if they did not follow Him.

There will be very few of you left, though at one time you were as numerous as the

*stars in the sky, because you will have disobeyed the Lord your God. The Lord will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods that neither you nor your ancestors have known, gods of wood and stone. Among those nations you will have no rest nor will there be a place of peaceful rest for the soles of your feet, for there the Lord will give you an anxious heart, failing eyesight, and a spirit of despair. **Your life will hang in doubt before you; you will be terrified by night and day and will have no certainty of surviving from one day to the next.** - Deuteronomy 28:62, 64-66 NET*

ESTHER'S CHOICE (Esther 4)

Say: As chapter 4 begins, Mordecai and all the Jews in the entire Persian empire were in mourning. A day had been given when all their lives would come to an end. Mordecai sent a messenger named Hathach to tell Esther about the decree against the Jews. It was dangerous for Esther to have this conversation, because the king did not know she was a Jew. Mordecai sent Esther a copy of the order to kill all the Jews.

Mordecai told Hathach to show the order to Esther. He wanted him to explain it to her. He told him to try and get her to go to the king. He wanted her to beg for mercy. He wanted her to make an appeal to the king for her people. - Esther 4:8b

Esther hesitated when she was challenged to go to the king, because there was a very strict law about visiting the king. Anyone who went to see the king without being called for would be killed, unless the king held out his royal scepter, or gold rod.

Esther's words were reported to Mordecai. Then he sent back an answer. He said, "You live in the king's palace. But don't think that just because you are there you will be the only Jew who will escape. What if you don't say anything at this time? Then help for the Jews will come from another place. But you and your family will die. Who knows? It's possible that you became queen for a time just like this." - Esther 4:13-14

Mordecai reminded Esther that even she would not be safe from the order to kill all the Jews. Mordecai was right when he told Esther that if she did not go to the king, then help would come from somewhere else. Mordecai knew that **God had promised that the Jews would be a great nation.** Esther considered Mordecai's challenge, and accepted it. She asked Mordecai to have the Jews fast for three days on her behalf, and she would then go before King Xerxes – unsummoned.



Three days later, Esther put on her royal robes and approached the king's court. Imagine the fear in Esther's heart as she walked toward the throne room. If King Xerxes did not hold out his royal scepter to her, she would be put to death. Not only would she die, but then she could not beg for the lives of her people. Thousands of lives hung in the balance. Esther walked, no doubt, trembling, toward the king.

The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall. He was facing the entrance. He saw Queen Esther standing in the courtyard. He was pleased with her. So he reached out toward her the gold rod that was in his hand. - Esther 5:1b-2a

Against all odds, once again, Esther found favor in the eyes of the King. She was NOT killed, and she began her journey toward rescuing her people.

Say: At her young age, Esther put her life on the line, and bravely went before King Xerxes to save the lives of many. Next week we will see the AMAZING twists that God caused in Esther's story. **We will see that no matter what people do, or fail to do, there is nothing that can stop God from keeping His promises!**

The Lord blocks the sinful plans of the nations. He keeps them from doing what they want to do. But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever. What he wants to do will last for all time. - Psalm 33:11

Main Point: God is Sovereign. He is in control of all things.