

God Uses Esther to Save His People

Esther 5 - 10

PPT Title

God Uses Esther to Save His People

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: Large fancy scroll, decorated with tassels, [Optional: Sealed scroll from last week]

BACKGROUND/REVIEW

Say: When we left our story, a cruel man named Haman had convinced King Xerxes to command the killing all of the Jews living in his kingdom. By royal decree, the date was set. The Jews had only months to live. Queen Esther was challenged by her cousin, Mordecai, to go before the King and make an appeal for the lives of the Jews. Esther struggled with this challenge. Simply going before the king without being summoned could result in her own death. As she walked into the courts of the king, the most dramatic scene in the Book of Esther unfolded. Certainly, all those who watched the beautiful queen approach the king held their breath in anticipation. King Xerxes extended his scepter to Esther, as a symbol that he would allow her into his presence. Esther found favor in his eyes.



Note to Teacher: Parallel to Salvation and coming into the Presence of God

Salvation is made possible by God, who grants sinful and undeserving men and women to draw near to Him when this should mean death for us. Sin separates men from God. God cannot dwell in the presence of sinful men nor can sinners approach a holy God. We see this illustrated by King Xerxes. The law stipulated that no one could approach the king unless invited by him. Those who came uninvited were put to death, unless the king extended his scepter and graciously spared their life. We cannot approach God apart from His grace in granting that we might come into His presence. And this we can do only because He extended Himself to us in the coming of Jesus Christ. In the righteousness of Jesus Christ, we can approach God boldly.

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ESTHER BEFORE THE KING (Esther 5)

The king asked, "What is it, Queen Esther? What do you want? I'll give it to you. I'll even give you up to half of my kingdom."

Esther replied, "King Xerxes, if it pleases you, come to a big dinner today. I've prepared it for you. Please have Haman come with you." - Esther 5:3-4

After the dramatic entrance of Esther, the King wanted to know why she had come to him. No doubt, Xerxes could tell she was greatly troubled. More than likely, she was trembling, or pale in the face. The king seemed to want to soothe Esther's distress. The king told her she could have anything - up to half of the kingdom! All she asked for was



to have dinner with the king and Haman. So King Xerxes and Haman went to the dinner that Esther had prepared for them. Again, the king asked Esther what she wanted. Again, he told her he would give her anything - up to half of the kingdom.

Esther replied, "Here is what I want. Here is my appeal to you. I hope you will show me your favor. I hope you will be pleased to give me what I want. And I hope you will be pleased to listen to my appeal. If you are, I'd like you and Haman to come tomorrow to the big dinner I'll prepare for you. Then I'll answer your question." - Esther 5:7-8

Say: What a strange request - a second banquet. We don't know for sure why Esther did this. Perhaps she was afraid to tell her husband that she was, in fact, one of the Jews. Perhaps it was because Esther knew that her husband was a man who made quick decisions without much thought. Maybe by her delay, Esther wanted to emphasize to King Xerxes how important her request was.

"The reason she delays is not as important as that she does delay. For it is during this delay, this interval between the first and second banquets, that **God prepares the king to act as He purposes.**"⁽¹⁾ We will see how God used this one extra day to do something incredible.



Say: Haman left Esther's first dinner on top of "his game". He was thrilled at his success, and that people were finally giving him the admiration and praise he felt he deserved. Suddenly, Haman was snapped out of his own little world when he realized there was still one person who wouldn't treat him as greatness: Mordecai.

*That day Haman was **happy**. So he left the palace in a **good mood**. But then he saw Mordecai at the palace gate. He noticed that Mordecai didn't stand up when he walked by. In fact, Mordecai didn't have any respect for him at all. So he **burned with anger** against him. - Esther 5:9*

Application: Haman was an evil man. His heart was filled with sin. He was very **proud** and he **lacked self-control**. First, let's look at pride. Think about a time when you have been angry because someone didn't give you the attention or praise you thought you deserved. Maybe they did not compliment something you are good at, like your sports ability, or your artwork. Or maybe one of your friends chose to invite someone to his or her house instead of you. This might cause you to become angry. This anger is really pride. Pride is thinking too highly of ourselves. We think we deserve to be complimented, or we deserve to be invited over more than another person. The Bible says God hates pride and bragging (Proverbs 8:13) and God is far away from people who are proud (Psalm 138:6). God wants us to know that we are valuable to Him because He created us, He loves us, and His Son died for us. There is no need for us to be proud of ourselves. Everything good in our lives comes from God (James 1:17)! Furthermore, we do not need to beg for the attention of others when we know that the Creator of the universe loves us with an unchanging, unfailing love (Jeremiah 31:3, Zephaniah 3:17).

Secondly, Haman did not have self-control. He **felt** so happy and on top of things in verse 9, and just moments later (in the same verse), he was filled with **anger**. Haman let his feelings determine how he lived. He made decisions according to how he felt. Haman was a very proud man who could not control his emotions, and soon we will see that these characteristics would lead him into terrible trouble.

After Esther's first banquet, Haman went home, gathered his friends and family, and talked all about *himself* and *how great he was*. He talked about how rich he was, about how many sons he had, and about the great job he had with King Xerxes. He boasted that he was more important than any other official in the kingdom, and he even bragged that he was the only person, besides the king, that Queen Esther had invited to dinner. Haman loved to talk about himself!

Ask: Would any of you like to have a friend who bragged about himself all the time?
No!

Then Haman had this to say: *"But even all of that doesn't satisfy me. I won't be satisfied as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the palace gate."* - Esther 5:10b-12

Say: Haman, himself, listed all the incredible blessings he had, but it was still not enough for him. He wouldn't be happy until Mordecai was killed. So his wife and his friends gave him some advice. They told him he should build a tall tower where he could have Mordecai hanged. Haman was thrilled with this idea, and he had the gallows built.

Application: Again, we see that Haman is an example of how **not** to live. We must surround ourselves with godly people who will give us Biblical advice. Not one of Haman's friends talked sensibly. No one told him that he had plenty to be thankful for, and to forget about Mordecai. No one told Haman that his anger would end in his own destruction (Proverbs 29:22). The people that Haman chose to spend time with told him only what he wanted to hear. This is a very important lesson for us to learn. Do you choose to be around people who add fuel to your fire? Or do you choose to be around people who will advise you to do the right thing, according to God's Word? We must choose friends who will encourage us to be more godly (Proverbs 27:17).

MORDECAI HONORED (Esther 6)



Say: That night, the King was unable to sleep. So, he asked for the Chronicles, or history book, of his reign to be read to him. **Hold up large scroll, and pretend to read from it.** Instead of falling asleep, King Xerxes became very interested in one of the stories which was read to him.

Ask: Can you guess which story? *Listen to answers.*

Say: Do you remember at the beginning of last week's lesson, we learned that Mordecai had overheard two of the king's officials plotting to kill King Xerxes? Mordecai told Esther and the plot was stopped. Mordecai had saved the King's life but he had never been rewarded. This was the exact part of the Chronicles that was being read to King Xerxes!

Ask: Do you think it was just a coincidence that the king could not sleep that night and the story of Mordecai was being read that night? *No!* Or, could it have been that something or Someone greater was controlling what was happening? **God was controlling it!**

Say: King Xerxes realized that Mordecai was never honored for saving his life. King Xerxes was determined to reward Mordecai in some way. Just as the King was considering what to do, Haman entered the courts. Haman had come to the King to receive permission to hang Mordecai, for Mordecai had been a problem to Haman long enough.

Before Haman had a chance to make his request, the king asked Haman what should be done to honor a man whom the king favored. Haman described a lavish plan for King Xerxes, because Haman was SURE that **he** was the one the king intended to honor.



"Have your servants get a royal robe you have worn. Have them bring a horse you have ridden on. Have a royal crest placed on its head. Then give the robe and horse to one of your most noble princes. Let the robe be put on the man you want to honor. Let him be led on the horse through the city streets. Let people announce in front of him, 'This is what is done for the man the king wants to honor!'" - Esther 6:8-9

Haman was thrilled about his idea. He could picture himself parading through the

streets on the king's horse, as people admired his greatness.

*"Go right away," the king commanded Haman. "Get the robe. Bring the horse. Do exactly what you have suggested. **Do it for the Jew Mordecai.**"* - Esther 6:10a



Again, Haman's emotions suddenly shifted from joy to fury as the King told him to do all these things for Mordecai. What a blow to Haman's pride. Haman did as the King said. Mordecai was honored, and Haman returned home that day very ashamed and embarrassed as he prepared for the second banquet with Esther. This is an example of God's warning in Isaiah 2:11. It says, "A man who brags will be brought low. Men who are proud will be put to shame."

Note to Teacher: Haman seems to view the king's honor as Satan viewed God's glory. Haman's view of honor was to experience the honor of the king himself. He would love to wear the king's clothing and ride the king's horse. He would love to wear the king's crown. He would love to parade about having the entire city bow down to him as they would the king. Is it not evident that Haman really would like to be the king?

This is to be a day of surprises for Haman. One can almost see the face of Haman glow as the king begins to issue the command based upon Haman's advice. He is already beginning to experience the glory of this event. What a shock when Haman suddenly realizes that indeed he is not the honored servant but Mordecai, his most hated enemy. And worst of all, he ("one of the king's most noble princes," verse 9) must carry out his own recommendations for honoring Mordecai. He is to dress Mordecai like a king. He is to lead him around the city. He is to proclaim to all that this man is being honored by the king, this man he had planned to execute that very morning.

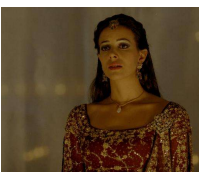
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HAMAN HANGED (Esther 7)



Say: King Xerxes and Haman came to Esther's second banquet. The king intentionally asked what was on Esther's heart. Surely he was extremely curious by this time.

The king again asked, "What do you want, Queen Esther? I'll give it to you. What do you want me to do for you? I'll even give you up to half of my kingdom."



Then Queen Esther answered, "King Xerxes, I hope you will show me your favor. I hope you will be pleased to let me live. That's what I want. Please spare my people. That's my appeal to you."

"My people and I have been sold to be destroyed. We've been sold to be killed and wiped out." - Esther 7:2b-4a

Say: Esther finally said it! She asked the king to spare her life and the lives of her people. Remember, the king did not yet know that she was a Jew, so he did not realize that Esther was talking about Haman's wicked plot.

King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, "Who is the man who has dared to do such a thing? And where is he?"

Esther said, "The man hates us! He's our enemy! He's this evil Haman!" - Esther 7:5-6a

Burning with anger, King Xerxes walked away from the banquet trying to process all that Esther had just told him.



Ask: What do you think would have been going through your mind if you were Xerxes? *How could I have ordered my wife's death through my very own decree? The decree had my royal seal and cannot be taken back.*

Say: King Xerxes returned to the banquet and found Haman desperately begging Esther to have mercy over his life. Haman knew his day would not finish any better than it began. At this very moment, one of the King's servants arrived with a message which took King Xerxes' anger over the edge.

Then Harbona, one of the king's personal servants, said, "Your Majesty, Haman built a tower seventy-five feet high beside his house, so he could hang Mordecai on it. And Mordecai is the very one who spoke up and saved your life."

"Hang Haman from his own tower!" the king commanded. - Esther 7:9 CEV

Say: What timing! Over and over, the right people entered the scene at the right time. Notice how **God moved people** to be at certain places at certain times.

- Mordecai overheard the two officials plotting to kill the king.
- Haman entered the King's court after the King's restless night of sleep.
- Esther had a second banquet which allowed Mordecai to be honored, and Haman to be humbled.
- The King's servant entered with news of the gallows Haman had built for Mordecai, just as the King was determining Haman's fate.

These events were not just *incredible timing and coincidence!* **God works in the lives of all different kinds of people to bring about what He wants.**

Say: Last week we reviewed the promises that God had made to Abraham way back in Genesis 12.

Ask: Who can remember what God said He would do to anyone who cursed Abraham's family, the Jews? *God promised to curse them.*

PPT Verse

I will put a curse on anyone who calls down a curse on you. - Genesis 12:3b

Say: God destroyed Haman because God promised that He would.

CONCLUSION (Esther 8-10)

Say: Xerxes decided to replace Haman with Mordecai, elevating him to a position of great power. Although Haman was dead, the killing of the Jews in Persia and Media was still "on the calendar." The King had decreed it, and it was irreversible.

Esther was very sad, to the point of weeping. She asked for the impossible: for King Xerxes to take back his decree against the Jews. This time, the King was not able to fulfill Esther's request. The royal decree had the king's seal on it, and it could not be taken back. **Teacher:** If you did the **Optional Demonstration** last week (using the signet ring to seal the scroll) show the scroll and seal to the students again. Mordecai came up with a plan to send out an additional decree allowing the Jews to take up weapons and defend themselves. The Jews in Persian and Media were able to fight back. Their enemies became afraid of them, and **the Jews were not destroyed.**

Ask: Does anyone remember the first promise God made to Abraham? *He would make Abraham's people into a great (important & great in number) nation.*



PPT Verse

I will make you into a great nation. - Genesis 12:2a

Saving the Jews was also part of God's promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:2-3, Psalm 68:20). Again, we see **God was faithful to keep His promises**, even when His people were disobedient.

Make no mistake - God is in control. He will accomplish what He sets out to do (Psalm 33:11). Nothing can interrupt His plan. Proverbs 21:30 says, "No wisdom, wise saying or plan can succeed against the Lord." God may even choose to use ungodly people, and twist the sinful schemes of people to accomplish His plan (Genesis 50:20). But it would have been FAR better for all the Jewish people in the book of Esther to have done things God's way and return to their homeland. They would have avoided heartache and bloodshed.

Application: At times, we will all have things in our lives that are difficult. Sometimes we are in hard circumstances because of poor choices we have made. For instance, if you choose to play video games instead of studying for a test, more than likely you will earn a poor grade. Even more serious than that, there are bad circumstances that follow when we choose to sin. For example, when you hit someone because you are angry, you will hurt the other person and you will get in trouble. But sometimes, hard circumstances come even when we have not done anything wrong. Examples of this are death of a loved one, illness, moving to a new town, or being teased for following Jesus.

No matter what situation comes your way, remember that God is sovereign. Other words for sovereign are: controlling, absolute, highest, kingly, majestic, master, principal, ruler. All this means God is in control! God is bigger than any circumstance in our life. God is bigger than any person in our life. God is bigger than the mistakes we have made, and God can work everything together for our good (Romans 8:28).

This is not to say we should go out and do anything we want, because God will pick up the pieces and make everything alright. No, the Bible says not to test, or challenge, God (Deuteronomy 6:16). We should ALWAYS try to follow God's instructions from the Bible and our prayer time. Following God's instructions gives us God's BEST for our life. But when you fail, turn back to Him. And if you are in a difficult time that you cannot control, know that you serve a mighty God who can do anything. Ask God to give you grace to get through it, and for Him to use it for His glory (2 Corinthians 12:10-11).

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

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